



Helping families manage
the hospital and end of life

End-of-Life Planning Guide





The best time to have sensitive conversations about the end of life is before a health crisis occurs.

During a period of great emotional stress, the less you and your family need to focus on making critical decisions, the more you can fully focus on caring for a loved one according to the individual's wishes. Developing and sharing an end-of-life plan in advance helps families avoid conflict about how to handle details and brings greater peace of mind for all during the final days.

Use this planning guide to create an end-of-life plan for yourself or members of your family.

Your Quality of Life

1. How do you want to spend your remaining time?

What activities and locations bring you the most joy?

2. Do you have goals you want to accomplish?

How can you meet those goals? What might you regret not doing?

3. Whom do you want to spend time with?

How can you arrange more time with those individuals?

4. Do you have feelings about the end of life that you haven't had the right opportunity to express or share?

How can you find the right person to talk to about your fears, faith?
(Clergy, counselor, family member, friend)

5. Do family members or friends have feelings about the end of life that they haven't had the right opportunity to express or share?

How can you help them find the right person to talk to about fears, faith?
(Clergy, counselor, family member, friend)

6. Do you have a legal document noting who can make financial decisions if you're unable to do so — in order to pay for your care?

Have you appointed a financial power of attorney, and has that person agreed to take on this role?



Notes

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Your Legacy

- 1. How do you want people to remember you? Are there specific pieces of wisdom you want to share?**
- 2. Do you want to create a legacy project — something your loved ones will cherish?**
Individualized videos (so your family can hear your voice later), letters, photo albums?
- 3. Do you want to make amends or smooth things over with anyone?**
How can you arrange more time with those individuals?
- 4. Is there someone in particular you want to meet with to share how much that person has meant to you?**



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In Case of a Hospital Stay

1. Have you created legal documents noting your medical treatment preferences and overall care preferences in the event you're unable to communicate about such information?

Living will? Medical power of attorney/healthcare proxy? Do Not Resuscitate form? Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST), a document your doctor creates that conveys your wishes to other medical professionals?

Have you discussed the information in the legal documents with your doctors and family and given them copies? Who else may need copies? Nurses or aides who help at home?

2. Do you want your doctors to sustain your life no matter what's involved and what the cost may be? Or, under certain circumstances, would you consider ending treatment and instead seek comfort care and/or hospice?

Who knows how to access your medical insurance to find out what is and isn't covered?

Do you want your final days to be in the hospital, hospice center, at your home, at a family member's home?

3. If you're unable to take care of yourself during a prolonged hospital stay, who will be able to access your financial resources to pay your medical bills?

Who will actually pay the hospital bills and other bills? Has that person agreed to take on that role?

4. If you're unable to take care of yourself after a hospital stay, who will help you make decisions about where you will go after discharge and who will take care of you?

Where will you live? Home, adult child's home, friend's home, nursing home?

Who will provide day-to-day care? Spouse, adult child, friend, nurses, aides?

If paid care is involved, who will arrange for and monitor that care? Who will pay for that care?

If you will pay for the care, who will access the financial resources needed and manage ongoing payments?

Which financial resources should be liquidated first? Last? Which will have tax consequences? Does the financial institution require the account owner to sign a form ahead of time?

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With the right information
at the right time, you and your
family can plan and prepare
instead of react and regret.

Your Final Days

1. What exactly do you picture when thinking about your final days?

2. Who will make medical decisions if you are unable to do so?

One person? Multiple family members as a group?

3. Who do you want with you during your final days?

At what point will you share your wishes with those individuals?

4. Who should be notified as time gets short?

Two weeks ahead, one week, one day, one hour? Who will contact these individuals?

5. Where do you want to be?

Hospital or hospice center? At home, in the living room, outside if weather permits?

6. What type of atmosphere do you want?

Streaming guests, family only (who does that include and exclude?), one visitor at a time, solitude, music, children, pets?

7. Do you have feelings about the end of life that you haven't had the right opportunity to express?

How can you find the right person to talk to about fears, faith?
(Clergy, counselor, family member, friend)

8. What type of funeral arrangements do you want?

Who will talk with the funeral director? Do you want to participate in discussions?

Do you want to write your obituary? Who will coordinate posting it? (It's necessary to get a required death certificate.)

Who will ensure funds are available to pay the funeral home? Who will make the payment?

Who will handle your estate? Do you have a recent legal document outlining the details?

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Your Final Moments

1. What exactly do you picture when thinking about your final moments?
2. Do you want an end-of-life doula to guide you and your family through planning, preparations, or your vigil?
3. Who will make decisions?
4. Who will organize and maintain contact with doctors, home health aides, hospice?
5. Who do you want with you during your final moments?
6. Who should be notified two weeks ahead? One week, one day, one hour ahead? Who will contact these individuals?
7. Where do you want to be? Home, living room, outside if weather permits?
8. What type of atmosphere do you want? One person, the entire family, solitude, music, candles, children, pets?



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Resources

For helpful materials on starting conversations about end-of-life planning, visit theconversationproject.org/starter-kits.

To learn more about managing the hospital stay and the end of life, visit Caregiving Pathways at caregivingpathways.com.

Caregiving
Pathways™

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