

## Communicating Your Wishes

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### **Nine important issues to discuss**

We recommend that you talk about the following issues. Discussing them will help avoid confusion, conflict, and hurt feelings between loved ones and care providers.

**1. Your Choice of a Spokesperson**—Let your loved ones and care providers know who you have chosen to be your spokesperson—and why. This is especially important if your spokesperson is not a member of the family. You might say something like this:

*“I’ve asked so-and-so to be my spokesperson in case I need medical care but can’t speak for myself. My choice is not a reflection of my relationship with you. But after careful thought, I feel that he/she is the right person to handle this responsibility for these reasons...”*

**2. Your Beliefs**—Tell those close to you what it is that makes life worth living, as well as what would make it unbearable—and why. If you have fears about being a burden, explore these feelings with those who will care for you. Family members often view caring for loved ones as an honor—not a burden. Use the exercises in this workbook to help you talk about these issues.

**3. Health Conditions**—Share how you feel about being kept alive in conditions that could leave you unable to speak for yourself.

**4. Life-sustaining Treatments**—Share how you’d feel about different medical treatments, including hospice, and under what circumstances you would or would not want to receive them.

**5. Your Vision Of A Good Death**—If you hope to die in a certain way—whether it’s at home, in your sleep, with family by your side, or free of pain—tell people.

**6. Organ Donation**—If you’d like others to benefit from your healthy organs after your death, make sure you family understands this because they *must* give their permission.

**7. Funeral Arrangements**—Share your thoughts about what you want to be done with your remains. If you have ideas about what you would like for a memorial service or how you’d like an obituary to read, talk about that too.

**8. Documentation Of Your Wishes**—If you’ve decided to complete an advance directive or write a personalized statement, tell people where they can find this information in the *future*.

**9. Helping others use your personalized directive**—Instructional directives and personal statements can be understood either as specific instructions, or as general guidelines. You can help others interpret your written wishes by including something like this in your document:

*“I would like the statements in my personalized directive followed to the letter.”*

*“I would like the statements in my personalized directive to be used as a general guide.”*

*“I want those statements that I’ve marked with a star (\*) followed to the letter because I feel very strongly about them. Use the rest of my statements as a general guide.”*