

Serious Illness Conversation Guide

CONVERSATION FLOW	PATIENT-TESTED LANGUAGE
1. Set up the conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce purpose Prepare for future decisions Ask permission 	<p>"I'd like to talk about what is ahead with your illness and do some thinking in advance about what is important to you so that I can make sure we provide you with the care you want — is this okay?"</p>
2. Assess understanding and preferences	<p>"What is your understanding now of where you are with your illness?"</p> <p>"How much information about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me?"</p>
3. Share prognosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share prognosis Frame as a "wish...worry", "hope...worry" statement Allow silence, explore emotion 	<p>"I want to share with you my understanding of where things are with your illness..."</p> <p><i>Uncertain:</i> "It can be difficult to predict what will happen with your illness. I hope you will continue to live well for a long time but I'm worried that you could get sick quickly, and I think it is important to prepare for that possibility."</p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>Time:</i> "I wish we were not in this situation, but I am worried that time may be as short as ___ (express as a range, e.g. days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year.)"</p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>Function:</i> "I hope that this is not the case, but I'm worried that this may be as strong as you will feel, and things are likely to get more difficult."</p>
4. Explore key topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals Fears and worries Sources of strength Critical abilities Tradeoffs Family 	<p>"What are your most important goals if your health situation worsens?"</p> <p>"What are your biggest fears and worries about the future with your health?"</p> <p>"What gives you strength as you think about the future with your illness?"</p> <p>"What abilities are so critical to your life that you can't imagine living without them?"</p> <p>"If you become sicker, how much are you willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?"</p> <p>"How much does your family know about your priorities and wishes?"</p>
5. Close the conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize Make a recommendation Check in with patient Affirm commitment 	<p>"I've heard you say that ___ is really important to you. Keeping that in mind, and what we know about your illness, I recommend that we ___. This will help us make sure that your treatment plans reflect what's important to you."</p> <p>"How does this plan seem to you?"</p> <p>"I will do everything I can to help you through this."</p>
6. Document your conversation	
7. Communicate with key clinicians	



Serious Illness Conversation Guide with Substitute Decision Maker

Conversation Flow	Suggested Language
1. Set Up	<p>I would like to talk about what is ahead with your [relative/friend]'s health and what would be important to them, is this okay?</p> <p>Are there others you feel should be involved in this conversation? (if Yes: When would be a good time to discuss this?)</p>
2. Assess	<p>What is your understanding of your [relative/friend's] health?</p> <p>What changes have you observed with your [relative/friend] over the past [e.g. 3 to 6 months]?</p> <p>Has anyone talked with you about what to expect?</p>
3. Share concern/ prognosis	<p>I would like to share with you my understanding of where things are at.</p> <p>I see that your [relative/friend] is becoming weaker over time (<i>give examples such as staying in bed more, not participating in activities, or eating less</i>). It can be difficult to predict exactly what will happen and when. Generally, for someone with your [relative/friend] condition(s), we can expect [describe trajectory] over the coming months.</p> <p>OR: Each time your [relative/friend] becomes sick (e.g. <i>goes to the hospital/has another bad infection</i>), they don't seem recover as well/end up weaker and more frail than before.</p> <p>OR: I hope this is not the case, but I'm worried that this may be as strong as your [relative/friend] feels and things are likely to get more difficult for them.</p> <p>OR: I wish we were not in this situation, but I worry that your [relative/friend] may be nearing the end of their life (<i>days/weeks/short months</i>)</p>
4. Explore	<p>I would like to understand a bit more about your [relative/friend's] values and beliefs and what has given their life meaning...</p> <p>If your [relative/friend] could express their wishes and make their own care decisions, what would your [relative/friend] say was most important to them? (Attempt to understand the values and beliefs of both the client and the SDM.)</p> <p>What might your [relative/friend's] biggest fears and worries be? What are your biggest worries or fears for your [relative/friend]?</p> <p>If your [relative/friend] became sicker, how much would they be willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?</p> <p>Has your [relative/friend] spent any time in hospital? How did they seem to feel about being there?</p> <p>What is most important to you for your [relative/friend]?</p> <p>Do you have any other hopes for your [relative/friend]?</p>
5. Summarize	<p>So, I've heard you say that (<i>summarize important points</i>) Does this sound right?</p> <p>Based on what you've said, I recommend that we</p> <p>How does this plan sound to you?</p> <p>We will do everything we can to support your [relative/friend] and you through this.</p>