

ENGAGE WITH GRACE

DISCUSSION GUIDE • QUESTION 3

Could a loved one correctly describe how you'd like to be treated in the case of a serious or terminal illness?

Not knowing whether or not a loved one will pull through a serious illness is unsettling. Worrying that you may make an end of life decision for that loved one that flies in the face of what that they would've wanted may be even worse.

Conversations about end of life care aren't easy to have, but they have the potential to lessen some of the psychic burden on your loved ones down the road.

As you think about whether or not to have this conversation with a loved one, consider the following:

- Will you be comforted knowing that someone understands your preferences before it becomes harder to communicate?
- If you've spent a lifetime making purposeful decisions, why should this experience be any different?
- If you were a loved one's advocate, would you want to clearly understand their preferences?

Before you approach them with an end of life care discussion, though, it may be helpful to think through your answers to Questions 1 and 2, perhaps even write down your responses. By being confident in your own wishes, you can help loved ones feel more confident in their ability to make these decisions on your behalf -- in case you aren't able to -- or to advocate for you if you're not feeling well.

Here are some suggestions for broaching the conversation:

- "I know that it's not easy to talk about death, but I will be comfortable if you know how I would like my end of life experience to be. Would it be okay for us to have that conversation?"
- "Am I able to talk with you about my hopes for medical care if I were to become terminally ill?"

When you open the conversation, you may get a response like, "Oh, you aren't going to die anytime soon." That is okay- it is a hard conversation to have and it may take time to get someone comfortable with the topic. It may be helpful to emphasize how having this conversation would put you at ease.

The following link offers more suggestions for addressing the topic: <http://www.mycarecommunity.org/Making-Decisions/AdvancePlanningToolkit/GettingStartedonAdvancePlanning/tabid/519/Default.aspx>