

# End of Life Conversations

## PRACTICE GUIDE



<b>Introduce the topic</b>	Begin simply by asking the individual if it is okay to start the conversation. This could be phrased as "I would like to speak with you regarding your end of life wishes, would now be a good time to do it, or would you like to speak later today/tomorrow?" Allowing choice while also being direct is important.
<b>Get them involved in a friendly and loving way</b>	Ask follow up questions to their answers, sound interested and thank them for what answers they do give you. For some, it may be best to start the conversation when the individual is in a happy place, doing something they love.
<b>Be willing to push through the discomfort</b>	If you're speaking with someone you have a rocky relationship with, or, a person who you know will not want to speak of anything relating to death or their wishes - accept that it will be uncomfortable for the both of you. With that said, try to get through it anyway. If there is major push back then you can again, simply ask what a good time would be to have the conversation and explain that it is important that you do so.
<b>Allow space and time</b>	Allowing space and time so that your loved one or client can think, reflect and answer is important as well. Maybe they've thought about all of this before, but chances are - they haven't. You may also be asking questions that the person cannot easily answer the second you ask, so be patient.
<b>Reiterate that you understand the conversation is difficult and thank them</b>	Ensuring they feel loved, heard and accepted are important. Thank them for allowing you to listen and being open, gaining trust is helpful going forward.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

### **Medical:**

- If you need it, would you want CPR to be performed on you?
  - If not, would you sign a DNR?
- If you're involved in an emergency and need further assistance with medical equipment (such as a ventilator or feeding tube, etc.), would you like those measures to be done?
- In the event where you are no longer of sound mind, who would you like to act and make decisions on your behalf?

### **Actively Dying:**

- When you are actively dying, where would you like to be?
  - In a hospital, hospice house, at home?
  - What would you like the atmosphere to be like?
  - Who would you want to visit you?

### **After Death:**

- Do you know what you want to be done with your body?
  - Casket, cremation, green burial, human composting, aquamation?
  - Ask follow up questions for these answers (i.e. if you're cremated, what would you like to be done with your cremated remains?)
- Do you want a funeral or memorial service?
  - What would you like it to look like? Sound like? Feel like?

### **Legal:**

- Do you have a Will, Advance Care Directive, Healthcare Directive, etc?
  - Who is responsible for making medical decisions on your behalf?
  - Who is responsible for making financial decisions on your behalf?
- Do you have any changes that need to be made to your documents?

### **Spiritual/Emotional/Mental/Physical:**

- Is there anything that worries you?
- Is there anything you are afraid of?
  - Is there anything I can do right now to help ease these feelings?
- Is there anything you want me/us to do after you die?
- How can I help comfort you?