

Having a life-giving Conversation

Dear Faith Community Leader,

We all know that our lives are in God's hands. We live and die in God's time. Yet the end of our lives is a time that most of us hesitate to think about. More and more, however, humans are being asked to make difficult medical decisions that can be confusing, even as we acknowledge the sovereignty of God in our lives. In the healthcare environment, we are faced with technological advances that give us choices for how long we live and how we die.

At OhioHealth our faith base gives us the desire to be with families during these difficult moments. We sometimes witness the pain that happens when a family member nears the end of life. Some of this pain is inevitable, as it is difficult to lose someone we love. But there is also suffering that happens near the end of life that can be minimized. Some suffering happens when families have to make medical decision for their loved one. Without knowing their loved one's wishes, it can be painful to feel like they might be guessing at what that person wanted or didn't want.

To help relieve some of that suffering, OhioHealth would like to assist your congregation in having conversations with your congregants about these difficult situations. In this folder you will find several resources that can serve as guides to use when families talk about their desires for medical treatment. Some of the questions are more "big picture", talking about who you are and what you value. Other questions ask you to think about some medical choices you might have to make and what you might prefer. Some questions may be ones that you need to talk over with a doctor, nurse, or other medical professional that you trust.

We would like to offer another resource, as well. Chaplains from OhioHealth's Mission and Ministry team are available to help lead a talk in your congregation about end of life decisions and medical decision-making. We can talk with your congregants about how and when to have these discussions, giving concrete ideas for how to engage loved ones in talking about the legacy they would like to leave behind. We are available to your congregation at a time convenient for you—perhaps an evening meeting, during an educational hour, or another regularly scheduled congregational meeting. Some congregations have even had workshops that include Scriptural perspectives on end of life, help with medical decision-making, writing wills, planning a funeral, and creating a legacy.

Congregations are some of the best places to have end-of-life conversations. Congregations keep faith at the forefront of these discussions, emphasizing our values and what we believe to help us make difficult decisions. This is key in being a loving decision-maker for family members.

If you would like help in having these discussions, in whatever format you desire, please contact us. We would be honored to help your congregation.

Blessings to you,



Kristin.Langstraat@OhioHealth.com



"The ultimate content of this conversation is not about death. The ultimate topic that's being discussed is how people care for each other... What comes out of the conversation is 'I love you, and now I know how to care for you.'"

Bud Hammes, clinical ethicist at Gunderson Lutheran Hospital and founder of Respecting Choices

Various Resources

Videos to share

https://www.ted.com/talks/bj_miller_what_really_matters_at_the_end_of_life A hospice doctor talks about finding meaning near the end of life.

<http://www.nextavenue.org/tom-brokaw-what-he-wants-at-lifes-end/> A conversation between Tom Brokaw and his daughter who is a physician.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/being-prepared-for-the-final-days/> CBS Sunday Morning report on LaCrosse, WI hospital program called "Respecting Choices."

<https://www.nbcnews.com/video/talking-about-death-brings-end-of-life-benefits-44575811655> NBC news report about end of life conversations.

Readings

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawande

We Know How This Ends: Living While Dying by Bruce Kramer and Cathy Wurzer

"Letting Go: What should medicine do when it can't save your life?" By Atul Gawande in the *New Yorker*

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/02/letting-go-2>

Two-thirds of American adults haven't completed an advance directive.

Education Ideas

• • •

Have a "Talking about what matters most" workshop

Possible topics:

- Advance Directives
- Having End of Life conversations
- leaving a legacy,
- What does our faith say about life and death?
- Planning for your funeral
- completing a Will

Invite experts from your congregation or community (nurses, doctors, lawyers, etc.)

• • •

National Healthcare Decisions Day aims to help people across the U.S. understand the value of advance healthcare planning.

April 16

<https://vimeo.com/36052824>