

# SERIOUS ILLNESS CONVERSATION GUIDE

## CLINICIAN STEPS 1-2-3

### #1 Set up:

- Thinking in advance
- Is this okay?
- I will be using this guide, so I don't forget anything. Is that OK?
- Hope for best, prepare for worst
- Benefit for patient/family
- No decisions necessary today

#### FOR EXAMPLE:

"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? We will hope for the best and prepare for the worst. This conversation will be a benefit to you and your family. Fortunately, no decisions are necessary today."

### #2 Conversation:

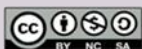
<b>Understanding</b>	What is your understanding now of where you are with your illness?
<b>Information preferences</b>	How much information about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me? FOR EXAMPLE: Some patients like to know about time, others like to know what to expect, and other like to know both.
<b>Prognosis</b>	<b>Share prognosis as a range, tailored to information preferences</b> E.g.: "I <b>wish</b> we were not in this situation, but I am <b>worried</b> that time may be as short as months to a year."
<b>Goals</b>	If your health situation worsens, what are your most important goals?
<b>Fears/Worries</b>	What are your biggest fears and worries about the future with your health?
<b>Function</b>	What abilities are so critical to your life that you can't imagine living without them?
<b>Trade-offs</b>	If you become sicker, how much are you willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?
<b>Family</b>	How much does your family know about your priorities and wishes?

### #3 Act:

- Make recommendations about next steps
  - Acknowledge medical realities
  - Summarize key goals /priorities
  - Describe treatment options that reflect both
- Provide patient with  
"Family Communication Guide"

#### FOR EXAMPLE:

"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. How does this plan seem to you? I will do everything I can to help you through this."



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## Surrogate Language

### #1 Set up:

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- Is this okay?
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- Benefit for patient/family
- No decisions necessary today

### FOR EXAMPLE:

"I am hoping we can talk about where things are with your \_\_\_\_\_'s [e.g. wife's, husband's, other relationship description or name] illness and where they might be going. Is this okay?"

### #2 Conversation:

<b>Understanding</b>	"What is your understanding about where things are now with your _____'s illness?"
<b>Information Preferences</b>	"How much information about what is likely to be ahead with their illness would you like from me?"
<b>Prognosis</b>	<p><b>Share prognosis as a range, tailored to information preferences</b></p> <p>"I'd like to share my understanding of where things are now with your _____'s illness. Is that ok?" (PAUSE to assess/respond to emotion or surrogate questions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss uncertainty: "It can be difficult to predict what will happen with _____'s illness. I hope he/she will be stable for a long time, but I'm worried that he/she could get sicker quickly. I think it's important to prepare for that possibility."</li> <li>• Share and discuss time-based prognosis: "I wish we weren't in this situation, but I am worried that time might be as short as (days-weeks, weeks-months, months to a year)."</li> <li>• Discuss function and progression of illness: "I hope this isn't the case, but I'm worried that this may be as strong as your _____ feels, and that things are likely to get more difficult for him/her."</li> </ul>
<b>Goals</b>	<p>"What is your sense of what your _____'s most important goals are if his/her health situation worsens?"</p> <p>"Are those your goals as well?"</p>
<b>Fears/Worries</b>	<p>"What would your _____ say are his/her biggest fears and worries about his/her health?"</p> <p>"What gives your _____ strength in difficult times?"</p> <p>"And what gives you strength as you think about the future with your _____'s illness?"</p>
<b>Function</b>	"What abilities are so critical to your _____'s life that he/she could not imagine living without them?"
<b>Trade-offs</b>	"If your _____ would become sicker, how much do you think he/she would be willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?"
<b>Family</b>	How much does your family know about your priorities and wishes?

### #3 Act:

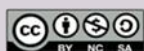
- Make recommendations about next steps
  - Acknowledge medical realities
  - Summarize key goals /priorities
  - Describe treatment options that reflect both
- Provide patient with "Family Communication Guide"

### FOR EXAMPLE:

"It sounds like \_\_\_\_\_ is very important to your \_\_\_\_\_ (or you and your \_\_\_\_\_)."

"Given \_\_\_\_\_'s goals and priorities and what we know about his/her illness at this stage, I recommend \_\_\_\_\_."

"Please know that we are here to help and that we will continue to work together to help your \_\_\_\_\_ meet his/her goals."



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