

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:

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



SERIOUS ILLNESS CONVERSATION GUIDE

Surrogate Language

#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 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:

Understanding	"What is your understanding about where things are now with your _____'s illness?"
Information Preferences	"How much information about what is likely to be ahead with their illness would you like from me?"
Prognosis	<p>Share prognosis as a range, tailored to information preferences</p> <p>"I'd like to share my understanding of where things are now with your _____'s illness. Is that ok?" <i>(PAUSE to assess/respond to emotion or surrogate questions)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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." • 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)." • 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."
Goals	"What is your sense of what your _____'s most important goals are if his/her health situation worsens?" "Are those your goals as well?"
Fears/Worries	"What would your _____ say are his/her biggest fears and worries about his/her health?" "What gives your _____ strength in difficult times?" "And what gives you strength as you think about the future with your _____'s illness?"
Function	"What abilities are so critical to your _____'s life that he/she could not imagine living without them?"
Trade-offs	"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?"
Family	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:

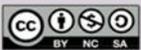
"It sounds like _____ is very important to your _____ (or you and your _____)."

"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."



SERIOUS ILLNESS CONVERSATION GUIDE



This material has been modified by us. The original content can be found at <https://portal.ariadnelabs.org> and is licensed by Ariadne Labs under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). Ariadne Labs licenses the original content as-is and as-available, and makes no representations or warranties of any kind concerning the original content or concerning this material, which Ariadne Labs has not reviewed or endorsed.