

What to Talk About

Use this form to help begin conversations with your spokesperson, loved ones and health care providers.

What you are asking a spokesperson to do

When you ask someone to be your spokesperson, you're asking for a big responsibility. You and your spokesperson want to be comfortable with this. You don't want this person to agree to be your spokesperson if they really have strong doubts.

To start the conversation, you can ask questions like:

"I've been doing some thinking about who might be able to speak on my behalf regarding my medical care if I can't speak for myself. Would you consider doing it?"

"Would you feel comfortable doing this?"

"Do you think you can make decisions for me that are based on my values, preferences, and wishes, even if they're different from yours?"

If the person agrees to be your spokesperson, you can reassure them that you aren't expecting them to be "superhuman" or "all knowing." Tell them they have your permission to make decisions for you. This is especially important for situations that you haven't discussed or can't predict. Encourage them to make decisions according to how they think you would.

Whom you have chosen as your spokesperson

Once your spokesperson has agreed, you should let your loved ones know that you have chosen a spokesperson and tell them who that person is. This is especially important if your spokesperson isn't a member of your family. You might say something like this:

I've asked [name of the person you've chosen] to be my spokesperson in case I need medical care and can't speak for myself. After careful thought, I feel that [person's name] is the right person to handle this responsibility.

Also, you should let family and friends know if you filled out a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care document to legally appoint your spokesperson as your health care agent. You should provide your loved ones with a copy of the document.

Your beliefs

If you couldn't speak for yourself, what would be meaningful or important to you? The worksheets "Imagining Different Situations" and "My Strongly Held Beliefs" will help you think about and talk about these things. The worksheet "My Last Days" will help you discuss what is important to you at the very end of your life.

Life-sustaining treatments

Life-sustaining treatments are medical treatments that keep you alive for a period of time but will not cure you or make you better. Use the worksheet When I Would or Wouldn't Want Life-Sustaining Treatments to help you express your views.

Your mental health care preferences

If you have a serious mental health condition, you may want to use the worksheet Mental Health Care Preferences to record your views and to help you speak with your spokesperson, family members, and close friends.

Who to contact

You may have specific preferences for certain people you want your health care providers to contact—or not to contact—if you have a medical emergency or a mental health crisis. You can use the worksheet Who to Contact in an Emergency to discuss your preferences.

What you value

You may have specific preferences for who you would like to care for your children, pets, home, or other things if you are unable to do so. You can use the worksheet Taking Care of What I Value to guide your discussion.

What you want to happen after your death

The worksheets Organ Donation and Autopsy and Burial and Funeral Arrangements will help you think about and discuss what you want to happen after you die.