



EXPLORE YOUR
VALUES AND
WISHES TOGETHER

Family Conversation Starter Guide



*Hereafter
Partners*





www.hereafterpartners.org

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Congratulations

You understand that bringing a loved one into the conversation about End of Life Planning can accomplish two things:

- ① Help you clarify your own thinking and maybe recognize other questions you should consider
- ② Help convey to your loved ones how their tackling End of Life Planning will bring you greater peace of mind

We hope the following pages give you ideas for how to start talking together.

Let's start the conversation





As you begin...

Are you looking to clarify your own values and End of Life wishes?

Or are you more concerned with guiding someone else through this journey?

Either way, take a moment to consider the questions in this guide on your own. You will be more grounded in your own truth and will also recognize how difficult coming to that personal truth can be.



When bringing a loved one into the conversation

First,
Explain why you are interested in talking about aging, death, and End of Life Planning.

Here are some potential openings:



Even though I'm healthy right now, I don't want to leave anyone left guessing about what to do should I come close to death. I've started my End of Life Planning but could use your help in thinking about the future.

A friend of mine has been bringing people together to talk about End of Life Planning—from the financial and legal to the medical and emotional. I've been thinking about what's most important to me as I approach the end of life, but I realized I don't know what you might be thinking. Can we talk about it so that I can help make sure you get what you want?

Someone close to me just went through the death of a loved one. I've seen how advanced planning would have made things easier in that situation. It made me realize that I don't have all the information I would need if the same thing happened to me. I'd like to talk about it.



Next,

Find the right time and setting to have these conversations.

Ready-made times for this conversation include:

- **The next family gathering or holiday**
- **At a life milestone (birth, marriage, child leaving home)**
- **After a friend has gone through an illness or loved one's death**



Find the right place, too.

If sitting around a family meal table is a treasured tradition, that might be the perfect venue for a conversation.

For others, sitting around a table facing family members might feel like an interrogation.

Here are other potential settings for a conversation:

- **On a walk or sitting someplace in nature**
- **Over the phone**
- **At a place of worship**
- **On a drive**
- **A favorite spot at home**



Lastly,

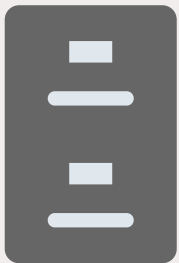
Think about how the topic of End of Life Planning might be best approached with this particular loved one.



Some people may not want to talk about the end at all and would much rather talk about family traditions or knowledge to be passed down.



Others might have specific thoughts or beliefs that have strongly influenced the way they are thinking about the medical or spiritual parts of End of Life Planning and would be comfortable sharing those.



Yet others are more organizationally-minded and would prefer to start talking about where files are kept and what assets are important to safeguard in the future.

*Look for the right entry points
in our conversation prompts*



When guiding a loved one through this conversation

...what you ultimately want to know is...

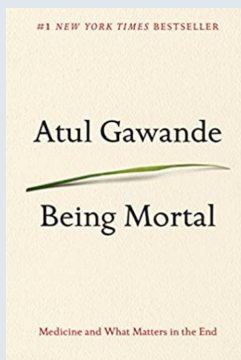
- 1 How can I help you live out your values until the very end of your life?
- 2 What are the most important things I should keep in mind when you are in your last stages of life?
- 3 Do the people who you want involved in your care know how best to make decisions on your behalf if you are not able to do so?

You won't get these answered overnight, but use this guide to help you get there in time.

Start the End of Life conversation with LIFE

If you've never talked about aging, death, or End of Life Planning—and particularly for those not yet comfortable with those topics—begin by talking about life. Try these questions for starters:

- What activities **give your life the most meaning**?
- Over the course of your life, what have you found has been able to **bring you the most comfort** in times of stress or uncertainty?
- What do you wish you would have **spent less time worrying** about?
- What **family traditions** are important for us to keep alive for future generations?



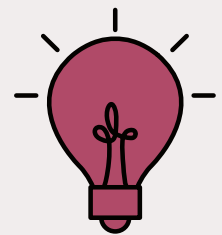
A Hereafter Partners Book Discussion Selection

Atul Gawande's classic *Being Mortal* tackles what quality of life means and what issues we most grapple with when contemplating aging and death for ourselves and our loved ones.

End of Life Planning is about living out our own values

For those realizing that End of Life Planning is really about living our own values to end, these prompts may be fruitful:

- What **values are most important** to you as you imagine the last stage of your life?
- What aspects of your End of Life care do you think would **uphold** these values and which are you afraid might **hinder** the expression of these values?
- When you think about the type of care you want in the end stages of life and the type of death you will have, who would you want your **partners** to be in the journey? Have you talked to all (or any) of them about **what is important to you?**



TIP:

Use our **Values Worksheet** on the next page to probe for these values.

Values Worksheet

- 1 Consider the list of values below.
- 2 Check off the ones that mean something to you, adding those missing from the list that are important to you.

- 3 In the second column, rank the top 5-10 values that speak to your greatest needs/desires **right now**.
- 4 Use the third column to rank how you think those values might resonate with you in the future, particularly as you face the last days of your life.*

✓	Now	Future	Value
			ACTIVITY
			AFFECTION/LOVE
			ALERTNESS
			AWARENESS
			CALM/PEACE
			CHEERFULNESS
			COMFORT
			COMMUNICATION
			COMPETENCE
			COMPOSURE
			CREATIVITY
			DIGNITY
			ENDURANCE
			ENERGY/ENTHUSIASM
			ENVIRONMENTALISM
			FAITH
			FAMILY

			FORGIVENESS
			FRIENDSHIP
			GENEROSITY
			GRACE
			HUMOR
			HYGIENE
			INDEPENDENCE
			JOY
			MODESTY/PRIVACY
			NATURE
			PLAYFULNESS/FUN
			REFLECTION
			RELIEF
			RESILIENCE
			STRENGTH
			USEFULNESS



*Remember:
There is no one right way to
have these conversations*



Medical-Focused Conversation Starters

For those ready to talk about the medical aspects of aging and death, try these:

- Would you prefer to be actively **involved in decisions** about your care? Or would you rather have your health care team do what they think is best?
- Who do you want (or not want) to be involved in your care? **Who would you like to make decisions** on your behalf if you're not able to?
- What do you feel are the **three most important things** that you want your friends, family, and/or health care team to understand about your wishes and preferences for End of Life care?
- What role do you want your loved ones to play? **Do you think that your loved ones know what you want?** Who else should we involve in this conversation?
- Do you have **any particular concerns** about your health? About the last phase of your life?



Business-Minded Conversation Starters



For those who are more business-like in their approach to death, try these questions:

- What **advice do you have for preparing all the necessary legal documents** related to End of Life Planning? Where are your completed will, advanced directive, and other documents?
- If you haven't completed the recommended legal documents, **what has been holding you back?**
- What **items/possessions are important for you to pass down** to other family/friends and why?
- What one thing do you want to **appear in your obituary** if nothing else? What do you not want included in your obituary?



Relationship-Centric Conversation Starters

For those who center their End of Life thinking around relationships, these prompts will be important:



- Who are the people you need to **gain closure** with (e.g. forgiveness) before you die, for both yourself and for them? What is the basic idea of what you need to say/ask?
- Whom do you **wish to thank**? What is the basic idea of what you need to say/ask?
- How do you most **want to be remembered** when you are no longer alive?
- What would your **ideal service of remembrance** look like? Where would it be? Who would be there? (Who would not be there?)
- What other questions are **weighing on your mind** as you think about your own end of life?



Cut these out
and take them
on the go

CONVERSATION CARDS

FINDING COMFORT

Over the course of your life, what have you found has been able to bring you the most comfort in times of stress or uncertainty? How important is comfort to you as you think about the end stages of life?



FAMILY TRADITIONS

What family stories and traditions are important for us to keep alive for future generations? How can we best ensure that they will get passed on?



YOUR MENTAL MODELS

What is the most significant end of life experience that has affected you thus far? What elements would you want to avoid or recreate at your own end?



REMEMBERING YOU

What one thing do you want to appear in your obituary if nothing else? What do you *not* want included? How else might you like to be memorialized?



YOUR END OF LIFE CARE

What do you feel are the three most important things that you want your friends, family, and/or health care team to understand about your wishes and preferences for End of Life care?



A GOOD DEATH

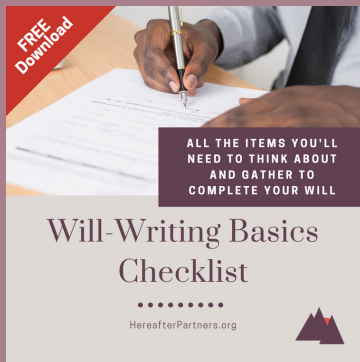
How do you envision your best/ideal death? Where are you, who is surrounding you, what are the sounds/sights/ smells/tastes/sensations that you encounter?



Just the beginning

Hopefully, this guide has provided you with both food for thought and some practical ideas for how to approach End of Life planning conversations with your loved ones.

And check our other downloadable resources at www.hereafterpartners.org.



FREE Download

ALL THE ITEMS YOU'LL NEED TO THINK ABOUT AND GATHER TO COMPLETE YOUR WILL

Will-Writing Basics Checklist

HereafterPartners.org

This cover features a close-up of hands writing on a document with a pen. A red banner in the top left corner says 'FREE Download'. The text is centered on a white background with a dark purple mountain icon at the bottom right.



FREE Download

ALL THE ITEMS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING YOUR ADVOCATES & COMMUNICATING YOUR WISHES

Advanced Directives Basics Checklist

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This cover shows a stethoscope on a white surface. A red banner in the top left corner says 'FREE Download'. The text is centered on a white background with a dark purple mountain icon at the bottom right.



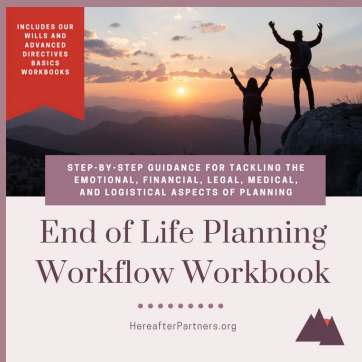
FREE Download

ALL THE ITEMS YOU'LL NEED TO THINK ABOUT AND GATHER JUST AFTER A LOVED ONE'S DEATH

Post-Death Basics Checklist

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This cover depicts a person in a puffy jacket with their hands on their head, looking out over a body of water. A red banner in the top left corner says 'FREE Download'. The text is centered on a white background with a dark purple mountain icon at the bottom right.



INCLUDES OUR WILLS AND ADVANCED DIRECTIVES BASICS WORKBOOKS

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE FOR TACKLING THE EMOTIONAL, FINANCIAL, LEGAL, MEDICAL, AND LOGISTICAL ASPECTS OF PLANNING

End of Life Planning Workflow Workbook

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This cover shows two silhouettes of people on a cliff with their arms raised against a sunset. A red banner in the top left corner says 'INCLUDES OUR WILLS AND ADVANCED DIRECTIVES BASICS WORKBOOKS'. The text is centered on a white background with a dark purple mountain icon at the bottom right.



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE FOR GETTING THROUGH THE YEAR AFTER A DEATH FROM THE FIRST CHAOTIC DAYS TO SETTLING THE ESTATE

What To Do Now Workbook

HereafterPartners.org

This cover features a long, straight road stretching into the distance under a bright sky. The text is centered on a white background with a dark purple mountain icon at the bottom right.



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