### Serious Illness Conversation Guide

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| **1. Set up the conversation**  
Introduce the idea and benefits  
Ask permission | “I’m hoping we can talk about where things are with your illness and where they might be going — is this okay?” |
| **2. Assess illness understanding and information preferences.** | “What is your understanding now of where you are with your illness?”  
“How much information about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me?” |
| **3. Share prognosis**  
Tailor information to patient preference  
Allow silence, explore emotion | **Prognosis:** “I’m worried that time may be short.”  
or “This may be as strong as you feel.” |
| **4. Explore key topics**  
Goals  
Fears and worries  
Sources of strength  
Critical abilities  
Tradeoffs  
Family | “What are your most important goals if your health situation worsens?”  
“What are your biggest fears and worries about the future with your health?”  
“What gives you strength as you think about the future with your illness?”  
“What abilities are so critical to your life that you can’t imagine living without them?”  
“If you become sicker, how much are you willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?”  
“How much does your family know about your priorities”  
“It sounds like __________ is very important to you.”  
“Given your goals and priorities and what we know about your illness at this stage, I recommend...”  
“We’re in this together.” |
| **5. Close the conversation**  
Summarize what you’ve heard  
Make a recommendation  
Affirm your commitment to the patient | |
| **6. Document your conversation** | |

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Serious Illness Conversation Guide

Conversation Flow

1. **Set up the conversation**
   - Introduce the idea and benefits
   - Ask permission

2. **Assess illness understanding and information preferences**

3. **Share prognosis**
   - Tailor information to patient preference
   - Allow silence, explore emotion

4. **Explore key topics**
   - Goals
   - Fears and worries
   - Sources of strength
   - Critical abilities
   - Tradeoffs
   - Family

5. **Close the conversation**
   - Summarize what you’ve heard
   - Make a recommendation
   - Affirm your commitment to the patient

6. **Document your conversation**

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Patient-tested Language

**SET UP**

“I’m hoping we can talk about where things are with your illness and where they might be going — is this okay?”

**ASSESS**

“What is your understanding now of where you are with your illness?”

“How much information about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me?”

**SHARE**

*Prognosis:* “I’m worried that time may be short.”

or “This may be as strong as you feel.”

**EXPLORE**

“What are your most important goals if your health situation worsens?”

“What are your biggest fears and worries about the future with your health?”

“What gives you strength as you think about the future with your illness?”

“What abilities are so critical to your life that you can’t imagine living without them?”

“If you become sicker, how much are you willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?”

“How much does your family know about your priorities and wishes?”

**SHARE**

“It sounds like __________ is very important to you.”

“Given your goals and priorities and what we know about your illness at this stage, I recommend...”

“We’re in this together.”