

ACP Conversation Guide: Understanding What Matters Most

Setting Up the Conversation: *“An important part of advance care planning is thinking about what matters most to you. The more I know about you and what’s important to you, the better the team and I can care for you and support you in making decisions about your health. I’m hoping we can have a conversation about the things that are important to you. How does that sound?”*

1. What should I know about you as a person to provide you with the best possible care?

Other Option: *What should I know about you **and your culture** that can help me provide you **and your family** with the best possible care?*

Probes: *For example, some people may value their job and find meaning in going to work every day. Others tell us about their faith/spirituality or how much they love spending time outside. It’s important we know these things, because it’s our role as your healthcare team to support you in continuing to do the things you love throughout your treatment.*

Probes: *Tell me about the important people in your life? What brings you joy or fills your cup? How can we help you honour your journey?*

2. You or your loved ones may have had healthcare experiences that influence how you want to receive care. Are there things you already know about your preferences for health and personal care?

Probes: *Is this something you’ve thought of before? Sometimes patients share stories of how their loved one’s experienced care that they know they wouldn’t want, or others share how they like healthcare information communicated to them (e.g., only when their loved one is around).*

3. You’ve had some difficult news lately. A cancer diagnosis is a lot to take in and can impact your whole family. What are some things you’re worried or concerned about? Is there anything that has been on your mind you would like to talk about?

Other Option: *Do you have any fears that you might be willing to share with me so I can help you feel safe and supported?*

Probes: *Some people are worried about symptoms such as losing their hair, others have cultural or faith-based practices that are very important to hold on to as part of their regular routines and their journey through life. And others may have logistical concerns such as getting to all their appointments. As your healthcare team, we’re here to support you, and want you to feel comfortable discussing your concerns with us at any time.*

4. One part of advance care planning is deciding who you would want to be your substitute decision maker. If you were unable to make healthcare decisions yourself, who might you trust to make those decisions for you?

Probes: *Who supports you currently in making healthcare decisions? You don’t need to decide this today, think about it and let us know.*

Closing the Conversation:

“I really appreciate you having this conversation with me. Thank you for sharing.”

Summarize what you heard: *“I want to make sure I’ve got everything here. I heard you say x, y, z, is important to you, your worries include x, y, z, etc.”*

Next steps: *“I plan to share this information with your [oncologist/nurse practitioner] to make sure the whole team can provide you with the best possible care. I’ll also document our conversation in your chart. We hope to revisit advance care planning with you throughout your care to make sure the care you receive aligns with what you want throughout your treatment. Is there anything else you think might be important for us to know?”*