

Re-evaluating Meaning, Purpose, Values and Goals

Re-evaluation of Life Goals

Share your reflections on how you and your family member's life goals have changed over the course of this illness, **pg.132**

How Values can Shape Life Plans

Reflect on which values underlie your life goals and determine your everyday actions, **pg.136**

Communicating Values & Goals

Think about how you and your family member might live as active and fulfilling a life as possible in accordance with personal values and goals, **pg.138**

Summary

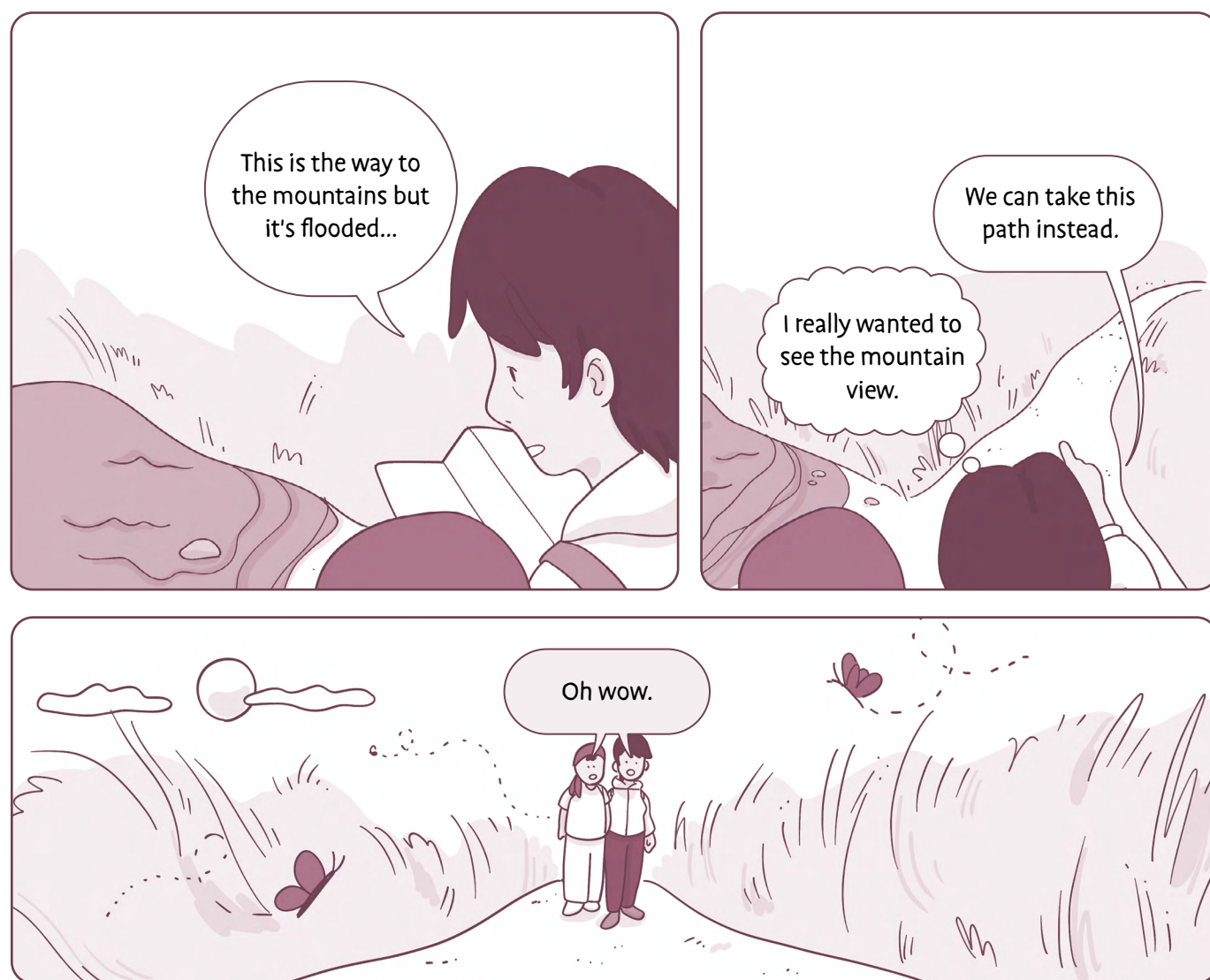
One-page summary for this section, **pg.141**

Re-Evaluation of Life Goals

Many people find that there are drivers that guide them through life. For some, this might be achieving success at work, maintaining friendships, or completing projects, such as building a house or creating works of art. Others may dream of traveling the world or starting a family. These dreams and wishes may become short-term or the long-term goals.

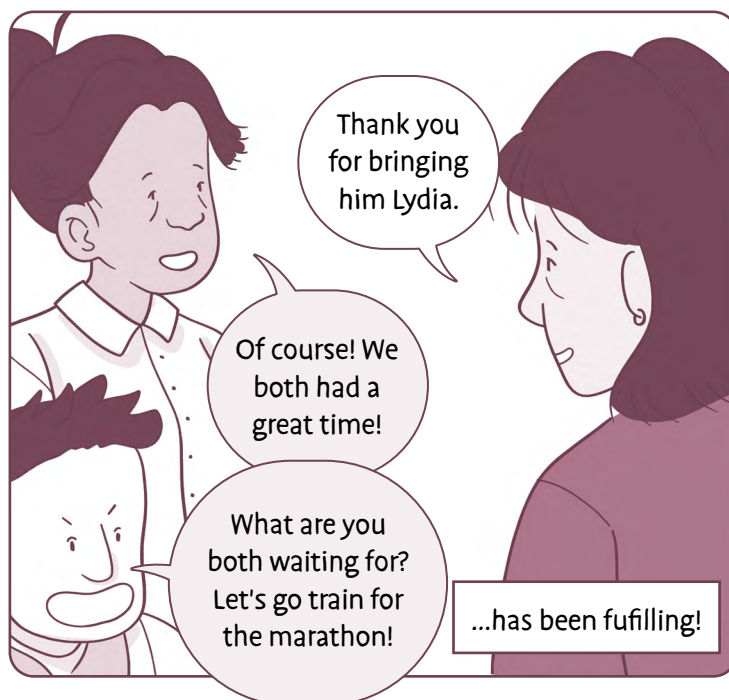
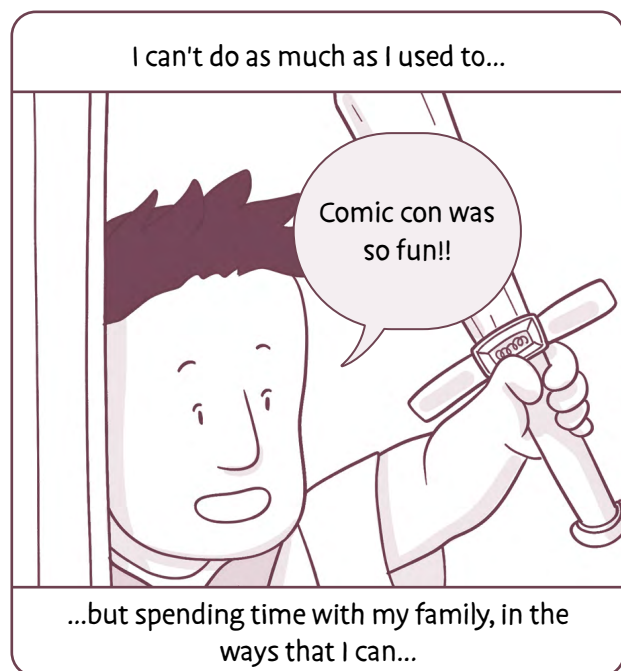
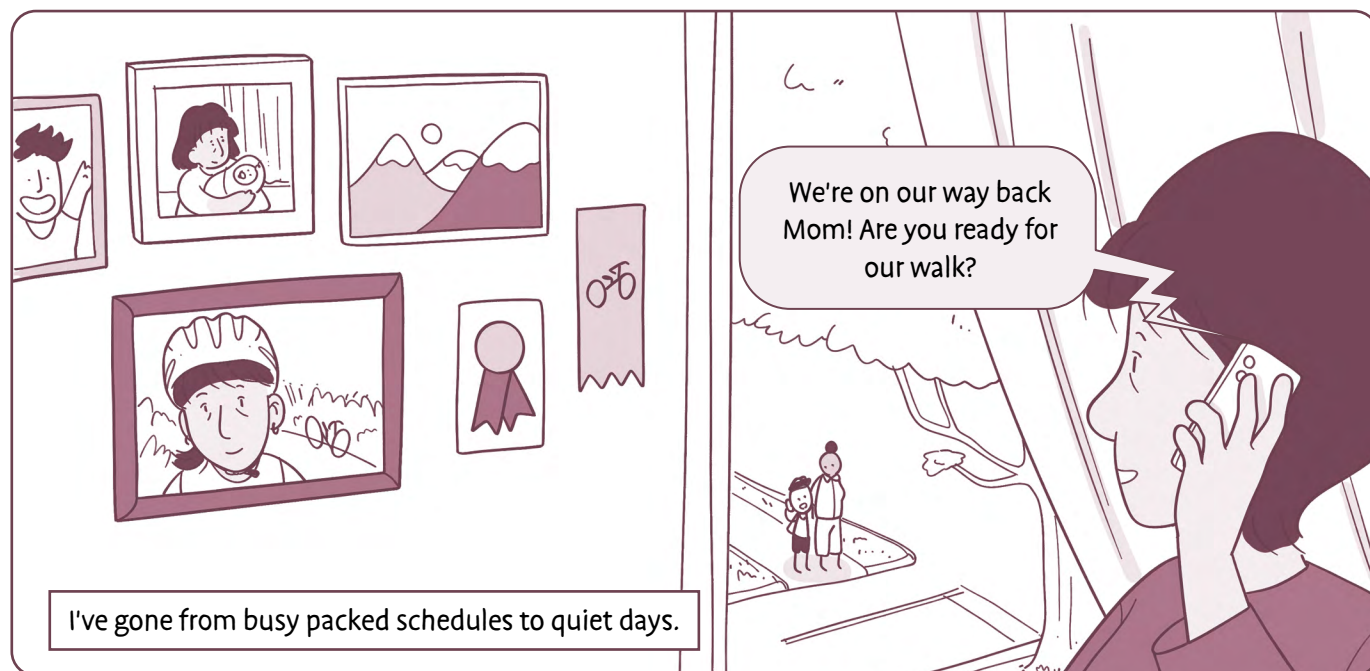
However, cancer can affect one's ability to work towards these goals. What may have seemed important before the diagnosis may move into the background or become beyond more difficult to achieve over the course of the disease. On the other hand, other aspects of life may come to the forefront, and new goals and opportunities may emerge.

Within the *Meaning, Purpose, Values and Goals* section, there was an opportunity to reflect on how your family member's life goals may have changed over the course of cancer. Depending on your level of involvement in caregiving, you may have had to make changes to your own goals and plans as well.



Akiko's Story

Akiko is a 49-year-old woman with acute myeloid leukemia that is not responding to treatment. Akiko lives with her mother in a small town and has a 12-year-old son, Nathan (from a former marriage). Akiko has always had a lot of stuff on the go. She likes to be busy with travel, exercise, and spending time with family and friends. However, since Akiko got sick, she has had to cut back on her busy schedule.



Reflection

What have you and the person you care for already achieved and what were some of goals, wishes and dreams for the future?

Here are some examples to think about:

Relationships. e.g., connection or reconnect with loved ones (friends, sibling, child, spouse, self, etc.), find life partners/marriage

Profession and career. e.g., a new job, participate in advanced training, career advancement, retirement

Social engagement. e.g., volunteer work, political engagement

Education and further development. e.g., complete school, vocational training, study, develop a skill

Health and well-being. e.g., living a healthy lifestyle, managing stress, self-care, meditation, religious practices

Leisure and activities. e.g., travel, new pet, time to enjoy a hobby

Movement and sport. e.g., regular exercise, dance classes, tai chi

Creativity. e.g., learn an instrument, paint, write stories/poems

Closeness to nature. e.g., more time in nature, gardening, hiking

Achievements

Goals, wishes and dreams

Re-Evaluation of Life Goals

The cancer experience may interfere with life plans for both patients and their caregivers, although new opportunities and goals may emerge. It may be upsetting when long held dreams and goals do not seem in reach because of illness. Identifying new and achievable goals may create a sense of new hope and direction.

Have you found that some activities and goals are less possible due to cancer? If so, what are they?

What thoughts and feelings do you and the person you care for experience in connection with these activities or goals that now seem difficult or impossible?

What new goals, wishes or dreams might have emerged for you both?

How Values Can Shape Life Plans

Values are qualities or principles that may guide our actions and decisions.

Here are some examples of values:

Honesty	Love	Friendship	Learning
Reliability	Humour	Health	Responsibility
Respect	Self-realization	Modesty	Openness
Prosperity	Partnership	Independence	Sincerity
Loyalty	Safety	Family	Tradition
Enjoyment	Solidarity	Authenticity	Kindness
Curiosity	Career Pursuits	Caring	Security
Creativity	Hard work	Order	Tolerance

Values can be integral to your identity, give direction in life, and be helpful in navigating challenges.

What values are most important to your identity? What top three values provide a guiding influence in your life (consider the above list or feel free to come up with your own)?

Your values can change over the course of your life, perhaps in response to challenges. Has cancer caused you to change or reprioritize what you value? What about your experience caregiving?

You've been focusing on your own goals and values. You can now take a moment to reflect on the values of the person you are caring for and what might be important to them, and how the illness experience has influenced their values. Perhaps you both share some values and perhaps some are different.

Communicating Values and Goals

Being aware of your life goals and underlying values can help to guide you during times of significant life changes. These values can act as a compass to point you in the right direction. Patients with cancer may have found new ways to reach goals or may form new goals. Some people find that their previous goals are not as important as before. This is the same for caregivers in the face of another's illnesses, especially when it comes to shared goals or plans for the future. Discussing values and life goals with people close to us may make them clearer to us and may allow others to join with us in achieving them.

For patients, it can also be helpful for their medical team to understand their personal values and goals so that they can better support them in treatment plans and decisions. It is often beneficial to speak with the person you care for about their values and goals prior to making treatment decisions.

Do you feel that the people close to you understand your values and goals?

Are there goals or values that you share with people close to you? Reflect on why or why not?

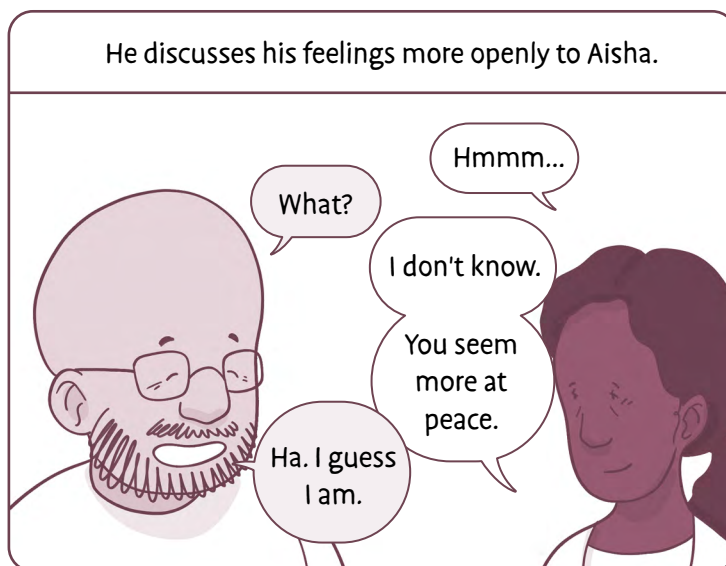
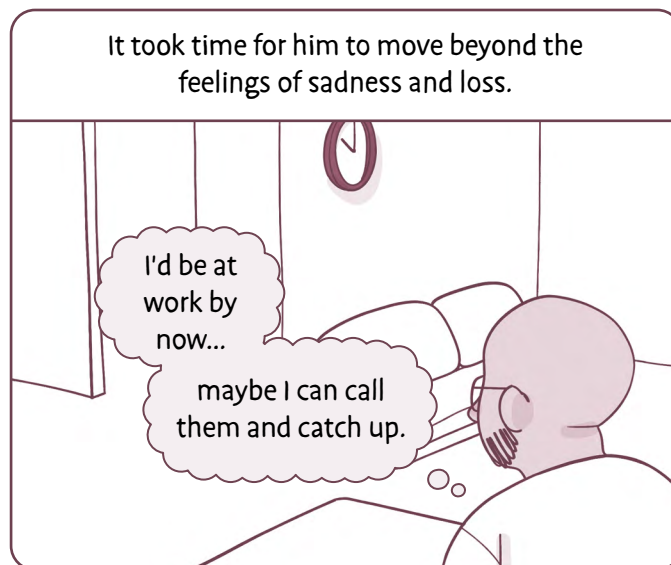
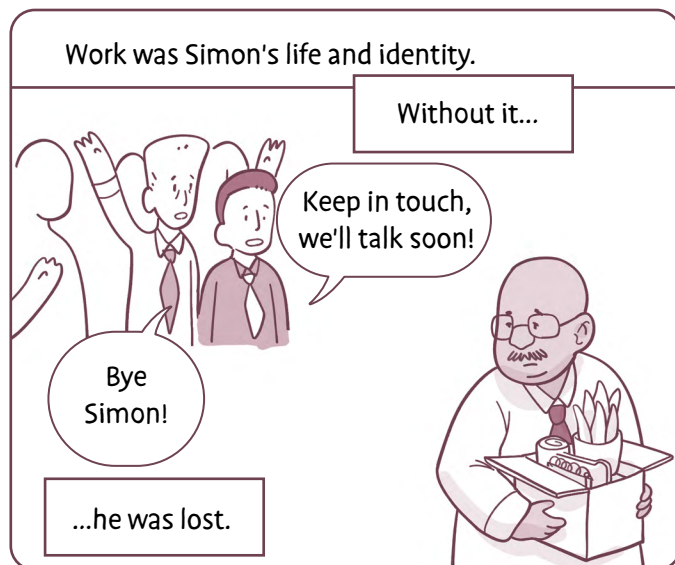
How do people close to you help you to achieve your goals?

Do your values and goals sometimes differ significantly from them?

Have you and the person you care for ever talked to the health care team about values and life goals? Do you think this could be helpful? Why or why not?

Simon's Story

Simon is 37 years old and has advanced colon cancer. Before being diagnosed, he worked in asset management at a bank.



Pause and Consider

Pause for a moment. *How are you feeling?*

Consider what you need right now. *What might help to support you in the next few minutes, hours, or the coming days?*

Summary of Domain 3: Re-evaluating Meaning, Purpose, Values and Goals

Life Goals Before and After

Cancer

- A cancer diagnosis often disrupts long- and short-term goals, shifting what feels important or achievable.
- What once felt like a priority may fade, while new goals or values may rise to the surface.
- This shift affects both the person with cancer and their caregiver, especially if goals were shared.

Adjusting to Change

- Caregiving may require you to put personal goals on hold or redefine your future plans.
- It's natural to feel a sense of loss or sadness when long-held dreams seem out of reach.
- Creating new, realistic goals can offer a sense of hope, motivation, and renewed direction.

The Role of Values

- Values are the core principles that guide choices and actions—such as honesty, connection, or resilience, like a compass helping you navigate life.
- Reconnecting with your values can help anchor you during uncertain times.

Communicating Goals and Values

- Talking openly with the person you're caring for about both of your evolving goals and values can...
 - Strengthen connection and mutual understanding
 - Help with shared decision-making, especially around care and treatment
 - Allow both of you to align your energy toward what matters
 - It can also be helpful to communicate goals and values to the medical team, so they can tailor care accordingly

