

Clinician Conversation Guide

An approach to discussing what matters most with a seriously ill person's decision maker



GRATITUDE AND CHECK IN

"Hi, my name is _____. I am a doctor/nurse/social worker on [patient's name] team. Thank you for taking time to talk to me today. How are you doing?"

PURPOSE

"I'd like to spend time today sharing information and also hearing about any concerns you may have about their illness. This will guide us in knowing how to best care for your loved one. Is this okay?"

EXPLORE UNDERSTANDING

"I've read the medical chart. However, it's helpful to hear directly from you. What is your understanding of where things are at **now** with their illness?" OR "What have the doctors told you is going on right **now**?"

VALIDATE

"You have a great understanding of what's going on. I have the same understanding as you do."

OR

RELAY

"Thank you for sharing that. Would it be okay if I share some information?" [Relay information]

"While I'm hoping for the best, I'm worried that even with more treatment for their _____ they may continue to get weaker over time and I think it's important to plan for that possibility. Can we discuss this now?"

OR

REFRAME

"Thank you for sharing that. Would it be okay if I share some information? I'm worried they're in a different place now. At this point there are unfortunately no additional treatments to help them get stronger."

Pause for emotion and respond with empathy (e.g., "I can't imagine how upsetting this must be to think about." OR "I wish things were different.")

MAP OUT VALUES AND GOALS

"Given this news, have you ever had conversations with them about what would be most important to them if they got sicker?"

"What do you think they would be **hoping** for if their condition worsens or if time were short?"

"What **worries** might you or they have as you think about (the possibility of) them getting sicker?"

"Is there anything else that comes to mind as you think about their future?"

ALIGN

"What I'm hearing is most important to them is _____ and that they'd be concerned about _____. Did I get that right?"

PLAN

"Based on what matters most to you and them, and based on my understanding of what's likely to come, would it be okay if I make a recommendation?"

"I recommend the following..... [say what you will do before what you will not do]. How does this plan sound to you?"

KEEP THE DOOR OPEN

"Thank you for taking the time to have this conversation today. I'll update the chart and follow up [say when]."



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