

# Medical Values: What Matters Most

## A Guide to Making Meaningful Medical Decisions

What matters most to you and makes your life meaningful may affect the kind of medical care you would want. For some people, staying alive as long as medically possible, or long enough to see an important event like a grandchild's birth, is the most important thing. Advance care planning can help make that possible. The questions below can help you think through what you might want. You can pick and choose which ones you want to respond to or discuss with your loved ones.

### Would you rather live as long as possible or focus on quality of life?

For example, is it more important to live longer or would you rather focus on being able to function physically or mentally even if you may not live as long? Is there a point

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### How do you feel about using life-sustaining measures in the face of terminal illness?

**Permanent coma? Irreversible chronic illness or disability (e.g. Alzheimer's disease)?**

For example, would you want to try every available treatment even if it's uncomfortable or painful, or would you want to avoid treatments that may impact your quality of life?

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### Who do you trust to make decisions about your care?

For example, would you like to leave decisions up to your health care provider or a member of your family?

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Do you want to have finances taken into account when treatment decisions are made?

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Do you always want to know the truth about your condition?

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What does a “good death” mean to you?

For example, would you like to die at home with family around you? Avoid pain? Are there other important things like having prayers read or certain music played?

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Are there religious or spiritual beliefs that affect the types of care you want?

For example, is it important to have a religious leader involved in certain care decisions? What should loved ones know about the spiritual or religious part of your life

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Your decisions about how to handle any of these situations could be different at age 40 than at age 85. Or they could be different if you have a chronic condition compared to being generally healthy. An advance directive enables you to provide instructions for these types of situations. You can adjust the instructions as you get older or if your viewpoint changes.