



**Let's talk
about dying**

Why we need to talk more about death and dying

Talking about death doesn't bring death closer. It's about planning for life, helping us make the most of the time that we have. However, starting the conversation, particularly with those close to you, is never easy. We don't want to upset people, or sound gloomy. Still, families commonly report that it comes as a relief once the subject is brought out into the open. You are able to express your wishes about how you'd like to die, or what you'd like to happen after you die. This helps you and your loved ones to cope better both emotionally and practically with what your death could mean.



Subjects you might need to talk about

- The type of care you'd like towards the end of your life.
- Where you'd like to die.
- How long you want doctors to be treating you.
- Funeral arrangements.
- Your will.
- Care of dependents – children or parents, for example.
- Organ donation.
- How you'd like to be remembered.
- Worries you'd like to discuss about being ill and dying.
- What you'd like people to know before you die.
- How you feel about people.

Sowing the seeds for conversation

Choose the right place, the right time. No one finds it easy to talk when they're rushed or in a stressful situation.

Look for a prompt that the other person is happy to talk about the future – discussing retirement plans might provide a good opportunity, for example. Or perhaps the recent death of someone close has raised issues in both your minds about your own deaths.

Directly starting a conversation

Consider beginning with a question rather than a statement: "Have you ever wondered what would happen...?"; "Do you think we should talk about...?"

Or you could start with something direct but reassuring, like "I know that talking about these things is never easy..." or "We've never talked about this before but..."

If you're starting the conversation, you may need to reassure the other person that you're not raising the subject because you're very ill, and have been withholding the information from them.

Be totally honest about how you feel from the start. If you're open, there may be either laughter or tears – don't be afraid of either.

Listen to what the other person is saying, rather than always steering the conversation yourself. Don't feel the need to fill silences – leave room for the other person to bring up subjects that are important to them.

Bear in mind...

Remember that we are all dying, in one sense or another. Conversations can be held on an equal footing, with both participants talking about plans, fears and hopes for their own death and after.

If you're worried about getting it wrong with those you love, you can discuss it first with someone else you respect and trust – a nurse, friend or work colleague, for example.

We all worry about hurting people by talking openly. But it's generally true that in the long run, you hurt people more by the conversations you don't have rather than the conversations you do have.

Sometimes talking about important subjects like this isn't a matter of having one 'cover all' conversation – it can be many small ones.

Why not try...

Write a letter, explaining how you feel, and setting down the things you'd like to talk about.

Give a present that has some emotional significance to you or the person you are giving it to, with a note explaining it, your feelings and wishes.

Give someone a list of the things you've loved about your life, and the things you still want to do, along with a list of the things you want to get sorted out.



Create a lasting memory of someone special. Donate to Hospice UK.

The Dying Matters coalition is led by Hospice UK, the national charity for hospice and palliative care. We support over 200 hospices throughout the UK that care for over 200,000 patients and their families a year.

A gift to Hospice UK is a special way to honour the life of your loved one. By doing so, you are remembering them through helping others to receive the very best care at the end of their life.

You can create a lasting memory of someone special by:

- giving a donation to celebrate their life
- dedicating a leaf on the beautiful Hospice UK Tree of Life in their name
- undertaking a challenge or hosting an event to honour their memory
- leaving a gift in your Will to support the sustainability of our work as a lasting legacy of your loved one.

We are here to help

However you choose to remember someone, we are here to help. To create your memory, please see our website: www.hospiceuk.org/support-us or call 020 7520 8266.



Hospice UK leads the Dying Matters Coalition. Charity registered in England and Wales No. 1014851 and in Scotland No. SC041112.



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For more information visit:
www.dyingmatters.org