

End-of-Life Management 101

Making Time for Life Matters

Most of us plan to have the best life possible. We plan almost everything from our daily schedules to our families, careers, weddings, vacations, and retirement. One topic many of us avoid planning for is our end-of-life. Yet planning for this event is as important as planning for any other life event. Facing end-of-life honestly and talking about end-of-life management can be as empowering as it is inevitable.

Sharing our ideas and thoughts on end-of-life can bring peace of mind and knowledge that our wishes are heard, respected and will be honored. And, discussing end-of life matters and issues helps you to make choices in a time frame and environment that is comfortable.

How-to Begin

End-of-life management and the related end-of-life planning may seem challenging at first. However, you can begin simply by thinking about yourself and your preferences. Consider these end-of-life management questions:

- Whom do you want to make decisions about your healthcare and finances if you are unable to do so? Consider and select as many people as necessary to meet your specific needs.
- What medical treatments and care are acceptable to you? Are there any procedures or treatments that you are certain you do not want?
- Do you want to be hospitalized, or stay at home, or be moved to a care facility if you are seriously or terminally ill?
- How will you pay for end-of-life care and funeral arrangements?
- Are your loved ones prepared for the decisions they may have to make at the time of your death?
- To whom might you want to leave personal assets, items and heirlooms after you pass away?

End-of-Life Planning Guidelines

Follow these suggestions as a guide to help you manage end-of-life planning:

- **Think about your preferences and gather information for end-of-life decision making.**
Then talk with your healthcare provider, loved ones, and other trusted advisors about your wishes, questions, and concerns.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider about your treatment options and prognosis if you are diagnosed with a terminal illness.**
Be sure to appoint a trusted friend or loved one to make financial and medical decisions for you if you are unable to do so yourself.
- **Prepare your Advance Healthcare Directive.**
Research end-of-life management issues including palliative care, pain management and hospice care. Consider including these provisions in your Advance Healthcare Directive.
- **Review your health and life insurance plans.**
Check your existing health care plan and life insurance policy to identify what benefits that you may already be entitled.
- **Learn about the costs associated with end-of-life, including nursing home care and funeral services.**
While difficult to predict your future needs, it is useful to learn about financial resources and benefits you may be entitled to. Check existing plans first and conduct research on plan provisions and options. Go to www.medicare.gov to learn more about Medicare and Medicaid benefits.
- **Create a financial inventory to help your family manage your affairs after your death.**
Create a file of information about your financial accounts, location of important documents, and online account numbers and passwords. Consider having both online and hard copy versions.
- **Prepare a Will, Estate, or Financial Plan.** Include your final end-of-life wishes, and your intentions for distributing your financial assets and possessions upon your death.

- *Keep your plans safe and accessible, and communicate to your loved ones or healthcare provider the location of important documents.*

Your final plans will only be useful if others can refer to them. Make multiple copies of important documents and give them to your loved ones, healthcare providers, and anyone who may be involved in your healthcare or after-death care.

Keep a personal copy in a safe and accessible place. Sharing important information with those you trust ensures comfort for both you and your loved ones to know that your final wishes will be followed.

Prepare for Life's Important Passages

In the words of American author Stanley H. Judd, "A good plan is like a road map: it shows the final destination and the best way to get there."

We may not know what the future holds. However, we can make a significant difference in our own lives and those of our loved ones by planning ahead. It's important to plan for how we ultimately want to be remembered, and how we want our legacy to live on.