



LEGACY—SESSION I

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Health Care Directives, Living Wills, 5 Wishes, POLST

This exercise is a gift to yourself, and a gift to your loved ones. It is a LIFE & DEATH conversation, but mostly a conversation about living well for as many days or years as you will be allotted, and dying well with the knowledge that your legacy is in place and your final wishes will be acknowledged.

I call these exercises courageous conversations, because they are just that. They require courage—talking about things that are hard to talk about is courageous, and they are conversations because they should be shared with loved ones.

Too often, these conversations come at a time clouded by death, and often they take place after a death. What I want to encourage is moving these conversations to a time when everyone is in good health, of sound mind, and fully alive. I am passionate about this for 3 reasons: It is a great gift to be a privileged listener to a life story and to the growing legacy that is present in every person. It is a gift to the person him/herself and to the listener. And secondly, we all know that death is part of life, the natural ending so to speak. Acknowledging that, gives us the momentum to use each remaining day that we have to its fullest. And finally, to have this conversation and making the difficult decisions regarding the end of our days, is a gift to the loved ones who will go on beyond us. The underlying goal is to eliminate or minimize guilt, regret, and confusion at the time of death, so that there can be a joy-filled celebration of a life well lived.

This is about living well to the last moments of your life. This is an encouragement to consider how you will live the days you have left, how you want to share them with others, and also about making informed decisions now, about end of life care, living arrangements, services and legacy.

IMPORTANT NOTE: These documents will only be used when you can no longer make decisions for your own health care. Up until that time, they can be updated and changed.



When is the right time to put these documents in place or to update them? The simple answer is NOW. And also:

The Five D's

- Decade
- Death
- Divorce
- Diagnosis
- Decline in health

FAMILY=The real value of doing this work.

- Discussion—talk about it, make sure family members know about these documents and are familiar with what you desire.
- Genogram/Family Tree—This can be very helpful for younger and future family members.

DIFFERENT FORMS AVAILABLE:

- A. Legal Wills—For distribution of material assets. Usually drawn up with a lawyer. Legal wills name a Power of Attorney to make sure they are enforced.
- B. Health Care Directive: A health care directive is a written document that informs others of your wishes about your health care if and when you are no longer able to make those decisions yourself. It allows you to name a person ("agent") to decide for you if you are unable to decide for yourself. It also allows you to name an agent who will decide for you, if that is your wish. You must be at least 18 years old to make a health care directive. Health Care Directives can be easily accessed online. They are offered by the State of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Honoring Choices and others. All are good. The most common is the Minnesota Health Care Directive.
- C. Living Wills=Older term that was used and is still used to talk about two things: Health Care Directives and Health Care Agent.
- D. 5 Wishes—goes a little further with
 1. Health Care Agent=The person I want to make health care decisions for me when I can't make them for myself.



2. Health Care Directive/Living Will/Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care=My wish for the kind of medical treatment I want or don't want.
3. Comfort Care=My wish for how comfortable I want to be.
4. People Care=My wish for how I want people to treat me.
5. Legacy=My wish for what I want my loved ones to know.

THEN WHAT?

- Fill out form and have it notarized, get help if you need it.
- Discuss with Health Care Agent, Physician, Power of Attorney and Family
- Make of the completed document and keep master on file in designated location.
- Give copy to Health Care Agent, Physician, Lawyer, Family
- Date every document
- Keep a list by date of who has a copy of your directives.