



CONVERSATION STARTERS ABOUT HOSPICE CARE

FOR RESIDENTS OR PATIENTS

Beginning a conversation about hospice care can be difficult. Below are examples on how to approach the subject with a patient or their family member.

TO THE RESIDENT OR PATIENT:

This may sound odd because I don't think you are dying anytime soon. In fact, I think you've got a lot of living yet to do. But I want to talk to you about hospice care. You know that I want the best care for you, and hospice focuses on comfort care and on helping people live well until they die. That's what I want for you. You've lived well for 88 years and I want the last months to be good, too. Plus, I would like to offer additional support for your family. Hospice can help. What do you think? Would it be okay if I had someone from hospice come and talk to you and your family about how they might be able to help?

Having to make a trip to the emergency room to manage your breathing really took a toll on you again, didn't it? If you're interested in avoiding those trips, there is a way to manage it here, without you making that trip again. When there isn't really a way of fixing the problem, another approach that works well for many people is hospice care. With hospice, the focus is on managing your symptoms and keeping you comfortable. If you're interested, I can arrange to have someone from Hospice visit with you to tell you more about the benefits. I hope it would make a real difference and make your life more enjoyable. If you'd like to hear more, I'll be happy to make the call for you.

You recently told me you think your heart is wearing out. Your leg and chest pain are tough reminders that your heart is working too hard and can't keep up anymore. We can keep doing what we are doing, but there really is no treatment that will help heal your heart, and sadly, you're right - your heart is wearing out. Can we talk about a way of managing your symptoms without so much effort on your part? It might be a good time to ask Hospice to help us. Their goal would be to make you comfortable and allow you to make the most of whatever time you have left. Does that sound like something you'd like to learn more about?

You are struggling so much with Parkinson's. I wish we had some miracle we could offer that would make all of this go away, but I think we both know there is probably not going to be a miracle. So, I wonder how you'd feel if we asked someone from Hospice to visit with you and tell you about how they could help you be more comfortable. Your life isn't over yet and I'd like to help you feel better so you can get back to enjoying life again. Do you think it's time for us to ask for their help?

Your breathing is just getting so difficult for you, isn't it? If your doctor could make this go away, I know she would, but my understanding is that everything that can reasonably be done has been done. Maybe it's time we talked about ways to make you more comfortable, even though we can't fix the problem for you. Have you ever heard about hospice?

You are making many trips for chemotherapy and lab work, and I'm wondering if you have thought about how long you might want to continue treatment, or when you'll know the time is right for you to stop it. You might want to try every treatment possible for you and it's up to you to decide whether the benefits outweigh the risks and the side effects. It's also OK to say when you've had enough. Any decision you make is the right one. And when you stop treatments and are ready to focus on comfort instead of cure, Hospice will be available to you. Do you want to hear more about that now, or should we set up another time to visit about it?

TO THE FAMILY MEMBER:

We have been noticing quite a change in James recently. He seems to be more uncomfortable and doesn't seem to enjoy things the way he used to. I'm wondering if it's time to get some additional help for comfort. We could call Hospice and talk to them together. Their goal would be to make him comfortable so that he can make the most of whatever time is left. They will also have resources for you. Would you like me to set up a time for them to come and visit? We could have an initial conversation with them first, and then with James.

Harriet's last trip to the emergency room seems to have taken a toll on her. There is a way to avoid those trips and manage things here. The approach I'm thinking of that works well for many people is hospice care. With hospice, the focus is on managing symptoms and comfort care. If you're interested, I can arrange to have someone from Hospice visit and tell you more about the benefits. They will help you talk to Harriet about it. I'm quite sure it will make a real difference for her and I'll bet you would find comfort in what they tell you also. I'd be happy to make the call for you.

I know you have been going with John on his many trips for chemotherapy and lab work, and I'm wondering if you two have thought about how long to continue treatment, or when you'll know the time is right to stop it. I know that Hospice can help people determine if the benefits outweigh the risks and the side effects, and they will definitely respect your decision either way. We just want John to be as comfortable as possible and for both of you to enjoy the rest of your life together. I hope you will let me know when you are ready to hear about how Hospice can help both of you and then I'd be happy to set up a visit with them.

You have been coming to visit almost every day and I can tell it is hard for you to watch Joan decline. I'm also concerned that you are not getting the rest you need. I wish we had some miracle we could offer that would make all of this go away, but I think we both know there is probably not going to be a miracle. So, I wonder how you'd feel if we asked someone from Hospice to visit with you and tell you about how they could help Joan be more comfortable and also give you some additional support. Do you think it's time for us to ask for their help?