

Top **10** Things We Would Have Rather Not Learned This Month

By Stan and Sharon Dardis

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Note: BOLD, Stan's lines; light, Sharon lines

- 1** Listen to your body: Aches, pains, and general fatigue may be more than just “pending retirement.”
- 2** Never use a pen to write in your planner; better to use a light-leaded pencil with a **BIG** eraser!
- 3** Don't close your eyes in an ambulance, especially if you are the patient! Like an old fisherman once told me, always keep your eyes on the horizon!
- 4** Never Google medical diagnoses or symptoms; especially if your husband is hospitalized and it's past your bedtime already. Even “trusted websites” will keep you awake for hours with scary misinformation!
- 5** When your friends ask, “What can I do to help?” Tell them! Accepting help is never a sign of weakness but rather one of strength.
- 6** Plan less, live more, savor every moment; life is a most precious gift. We've learned nothing is more important than simply getting better, unless it's not missing the big retirement party! And, oh yes, when the time is right, make a graceful exit!
- 7** Marry a nurse (or your childhood sweetheart) ... or maybe both; and if possible, pick her out early!
- 8** Remember to always include the part about “in sickness and in health” in your wedding vows. Like good insurance, you never know when you might need to use it!
- 9** Get a **PRIMARY** doctor who knows you well and can direct your care in the hospital. Without that health advocate, things can get more than a little rocky.
- 10** Although we may think we are the pilot in command, God is always the air traffic controller, co-pilot and the FAA, all rolled into one. Today, we are especially grateful that He has allowed us, yet another “safe landing.”

This top 10 list was written by Stan and Sharon Dardis while Stan was recovering from an unexpected and serious illness shortly before his anticipated retirement. Stan presented this list, with the assistance of Sharon, during his retirement reception. The couple hopes others will find this information valuable as they navigate through similar challenges.

Sharon Dardis, RN, BSN, is a former Hospice of the Red River Valley employee. Beginning as a volunteer, she later became a hospice staff nurse and bereavement specialist. Sharon developed and facilitated “Kids Grieve, Too,” for Hospice, a support and educational program for young people experiencing the death of a loved one. Moving to the Twin Cities in 1993, she helped develop and coordinate “Kids In Grief” another children's grief support group in Stillwater, Minn. Now retired, Sharon is a board member of the [Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support](#) and also edits their quarterly newsletter, “Coalition News.” In 2000, Sharon coauthored and published, “As I Journey On: Meditations for Those Facing Death.” The proud mother of three and grandmother of eight, Sharon spends her time with husband, Stan, in St. Paul, Minn., and Alpine, Wyo.

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