

Living Well with a Serious Illness:

Talking with your clinician about the future

Understanding what matters to you about your health is important to us at MGH. Over time, your clinician would like to talk with you about your goals and wishes so, together, you can plan for your care together. These discussions are an important part of the care we provide for all of our patients.

A good time to talk about your goals and wishes is often when you are feeling well and before there are any big decisions to be made about your medical care. Patients who think through what is important to them and what their wishes are often feel less anxious, more at peace, and more in control of their situation.

Here are some questions you can think about:

- What would you like to know about your illness and what may happen in the future?
- What kind of information would help you make decisions about your future?
- What does living well look like to you?
- Thinking about your medical problems, what are you worried about?
- What kinds of medical care do you want or not want?
- What do you think it would be like to share these thoughts with your family?
- If you haven't already identified a Health Care Agent, who would you want to fulfill that role?

The following can be helpful for your team:

- If you have a Health Care Proxy form that names someone to be your agent, please bring a copy.
- If you have a Living Will or Advance Directive, please bring a copy.

If you don't have these documents or have questions about them, talk with your clinician.

Why is this important? Thinking about and sharing your wishes will give you more control over your care. It also helps to prepare your loved ones to make decisions for you if you can't make them yourself at some point in the future. Talking with your family ahead of time will ease the burden on your family of making hard decisions for you if you can't speak for yourself.

You may find it helpful to bring other people to your visit. You can choose to bring the person who is your Health Care Agent, other family members, or a close friend to your visit so they can be a part of the conversation.

Talking about the future won't change your ongoing care. Talking about the future won't change the plans made so far about your treatment unless you want it to. We will continue providing the best possible care to treat your illness.

We understand that your wishes may change over time. This is the beginning of an ongoing conversation and you can always change your mind. We know that you may have other questions or concerns in the future. We will continue to support you and answer your questions so that you can make informed decisions about your care.