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Advocating for Yourself As You Age

Doctors today, especially in hospice and palliative care, are trained in patient-centered care, that focuses on shared decision-making with the patient's wants and wishes at the forefront. Therefore, advocating for yourself has become an essential part of healthcare. It's important to lay out your desires for care now so that in the years to come, you can ensure both your family and caregivers are aware of them. Here are some steps you can take to start your advance care plan.



Think about your goals and values.

What is your goal for living well as you age? What lines up with your values and belief system? Think about what good aging looks like you too, and also think about what you don't want. It's also important to be aware that this can change over time. Evaluating and reevaluating your goals and values as you move through life's journey is important.



Do what you can while you can.

If you're still very active and healthy, starting to think about aging can feel out of place. But the reality is that life can happen fast, and getting things done while you are able to will be a tremendous help in the future. Whether that's moving into a senior living community, downsizing your home, researching home care agencies, or picking a hospice provider, starting early will always pay off in the long run.



Have meaningful conversations.

An advance care plan doesn't always have to be put in writing, but you should share your wants and wishes with your loved ones. In these conversations, it's important to be honest and never assume that people will know what you want. It can be a difficult topic to discuss, but it's a necessary one.



Pick a trusted patient advocate.

There may come a time when you become incapacitated and can no longer make decisions yourself. Having a patient advocate in place—or even more than one—will help ensure that your wants and wishes are still being honored. Ask yourself, "Who can do the job, and who is willing to take on that role?"



Start early.

We can't predict when an accident or illness can lead to a decline in our health. So it's never too early to start thinking about the care you want if these situations arise. The decisions you are making now can affect your health as you age. Taking time to ask yourself, "Do they align with my goals?" is a good place to start thinking about what you want your life to look like in the future.

We're here to help.

Have more questions about advance care planning and hospice care?
Give us a call at 616-235-5113 or visit faithhospicecare.org/resources for more information.