

Serious Illness Conversation Guide

WELCOME TO OUR UPDATED GUIDE

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Updated: May 2023

Ariadne Labs' Serious Illness Care Program is excited to share with you an updated Serious Illness Conversation Guide, which has been refined through an iterative, community-engaged process. The revised Guide is designed to be more inclusive and accessible for diverse patients with serious illness and their important people.

The newest version of the Guide retains its original structure and flow while incorporating patient-tested changes to the language, making the tone of the Guide more conversational and emotionally safe. Responding to additional patient input, we have also added a question about hopes to the *Explore* section of the Guide.

USE THE GUIDE TO:

- Talk to patients about their goals and values
- Set up the conversation
- Assess the patient's illness understanding and information preferences
- Share prognosis
- Explore key topics
- Close and document the conversation

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PATIENT-TESTED LANGUAGE

SET UP “I would like to **talk together** about what’s happening with your health and **what matters to you. Would this be ok?**”

ASSESS “To make sure I share information that’s helpful to you, can you tell me **your understanding** of what’s happening with your health now?”

“How much **information about what might be ahead** with your health would be helpful to discuss today?”

SHARE “Can I share my understanding of what may be ahead with your health?”

Uncertain: “It can be difficult to predict what will happen. **I hope you will feel as well as possible** for a long time, and we will work toward that goal. **It’s also possible that you could get sick quickly**, and I think it is important that **we prepare** for that.”

OR

Time: “I **wish** this was not the case. I am **worried** that time may be as short as *(express a range, e.g. days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year).*”

OR

Function: “It can be difficult to predict what will happen. **I hope you will feel as well as possible** for a long time, and we will work toward that goal. **It’s also possible that it may get harder to do things** because of your illness, and I think it is important that we prepare for that.”

Pause: Allow silence. Validate and explore emotions.

EXPLORE “If your health was to get worse, what are your **most important goals?**”

“What are your biggest **worries?**”

“What **gives you strength** as you think about the future?”

“What **activities** bring joy and meaning to your life?”

“If your illness was to get worse, **how much would you be willing to go through** for the possibility of more time?”

“How much do the **people closest to you know** about your priorities and wishes for your care?”

“Having talked about all of this, **what are your hopes** for your health?”

CLOSE “I’m hearing you say that ____ **is really important to you** and that you are **hoping for** _____. Keeping that in mind, and what we know about your illness, I **recommend** that we _____. This will help us make sure that your **care reflects what’s important to you. How does this plan seem to you?**”

“**I will do everything I can** to support you through this and to make sure you get the **best care possible.**”