# Serious Illness Conversation Guide

<table>
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<th>Step</th>
<th>Script</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduce</strong></td>
<td>“I’d like to talk with you about what is ahead with your illness and what is most important to you, so that I can make sure we provide you with care that matches your values- <strong>is this okay?</strong>”</td>
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| **Prognosticate**  | **What is your understanding** of your illness?”  
|                    | “How much information about what to expect with your illness would be helpful for you?”  
|                    | “Would it be ok if I share my understanding of what lies ahead with your illness…”  
|                    | **Uncertain:** “It can be difficult to predict what will happen with your illness. I hope you will continue to live well for a long time, and I’m also worried that you could get sick quickly or unexpectedly (or even die from your disease).”  
|                    | **OR**  
|                    | **Time:** “I wish we were not in this situation, I am worried that time may be as short as ___ (express in ranges weeks to months, months to years).”  
|                    | **OR**  
|                    | **Function:** “I hope that this is not the case, I’m worried that this may be as strong as you will feel, and things are likely to get more difficult overtime.”  |
| **Expect Emotion** | “You seem surprised.”  
|                    | “I can’t even imagine…”  
|                    | “I am impressed that…”  
|                    | “I am here to help you through this.”  
|                    | “Tell me more…”  |
| **Map out what’s important** | “Knowing this information, what is **most important to you** if your health worsens?”  
|                    | “When thinking about the future, what would you like to be doing?”  
|                    | “What would be an unacceptable quality of life for you, or a life worse than death?”  
|                    | “When thinking about your health, what are your biggest fears and worries?”  
|                    | “Has anyone in your life been seriously ill or even died?” “How does this impact your decisions?”  
|                    | “What gives you strength as you think about the future with your illness?”  |
| **Align**          | “It sounds like ____ is really important to you.”  |
| **Plan**           | “Thank you for sharing that with me. I’d like to reflect together on what you’ve shared and make a plan forward. Would that be ok?”  
|                    | “Based on what you have shared with me, I recommend ____.”  
<p>|                    | “Does this sound ok? Is there anything else we should think about?”  |</p>
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| **Introduce** | Set up the conversation  
- Introduce purpose  
- Prepare for future decisions | Foundational/Rapport building  
Ask permission |
| **Prognosticate** | Assess understanding and preferences  
- Provide context for the conversation  
Share prognosis tailored to preferences:  
- Express prognosis as a range, e.g. days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year  
- Share prognosis framed as a “wish/worry”, “hope/worry” statement | ASK: Patient/family understanding  
ASK: Permission to share information  
TELL: Deliver a prognosis with information + meaning  
ASK: Check for understanding or agreement |
| **Expect Emotion** | Allow silence, explore emotion  
Emotion means they heard the reframe | Naming  
Understanding  
Respecting  
Supporting  
Explore |
| **Map out what’s important** | Explore key topics  
- Goals  
- Critical abilities  
- Tradeoffs  
- Fears, worries  
- Sources of Strength | Values  
Activities  
Living Well  
Uncertainties/Worries  
Experience with Illness  
Strength/Story  
“What else?”, Tell me more  
Bookmark, to keep on task |
| **Align** | Summarize  
- Affirm commitment  
- Make sure you heard it correctly | Reflective statements |
| **Plan** | Close the conversation  
- Make a recommendation  
- Check in with patient  
- Document your conversation  
- Communicate with key clinicians and patient communicates with loved ones | Ask permission  
Show your work  
“Because you said X, I recommend Y” |

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