

# Serious Illness Conversation Guide

## Step

## Script

### Introduce

“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- **is this okay?**”

“What is your **understanding** of your illness?”

“How much **information** about what to expect with your illness would be helpful for you?”

### Prognosticate

“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** \_\_\_\_.”

“Does this sound ok? Is there anything else we should think about?”

# Serious Illness Conversation Framework

Step	Description	Skills
<b>Introduce</b>	<b>Set up the conversation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce purpose</li> <li>Prepare for future decisions</li> </ul>	<i>Foundational/Rapport building</i> <i>Ask permission</i>
	<b>Assess understanding and preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide context for the conversation</li> </ul> <b>Share prognosis</b> tailored to preferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Express prognosis as a range, e.g. days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year</li> <li>Share prognosis framed as a “wish/worry”, “hope/worry” statement</li> </ul>	<i>ASK: Patient/family understanding</i> <i>ASK: Permission to share information</i> <i>TELL: Deliver a <b>prognosis</b> with information + meaning</i> <i>ASK: Check for understanding or agreement</i>
<b>Expect Emotion</b>	Allow silence, explore emotion Emotion means they heard the reframe	<i>Naming</i> <i>Understanding</i> <i>Respecting</i> <i>Supporting</i> <i>Explore</i>
<b>Map out what’s important</b>	<b>Explore key topics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals</li> <li>Critical abilities</li> <li>Tradeoffs</li> <li>Fears, worries</li> <li>Sources of Strength</li> </ul>	<i>Values</i> <i>Activities</i> <i>Living Well</i> <i>Uncertainties/Worries</i> <i>Experience with Illness</i> <i>Strength/Story</i>  <i>“What else?”</i> , <i>Tell me more</i> <i>Bookmark, to keep on task</i>
<b>Align</b>	<b>Summarize</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affirm commitment</li> <li>Make sure you heard it correctly</li> </ul>	<i>Reflective statements</i>
<b>Plan</b>	<b>Close the conversation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make a recommendation</li> <li>Check in with patient</li> <li>Document your conversation</li> <li>Communicate with key clinicians and patient communicates with loved ones</li> </ul>	<i>Ask permission</i> <i>Show your work</i> <i>“Because you said X, I recommend Y”</i>