

ESTATE PLANNING

Suggested Topics to Discuss with Your Health Care Agent

The ability of your health care agent to make appropriate health care decisions for you depends upon how well you prepare your agent. You should think about the following topics and discuss them with your agent and your alternate agent before they are required to make health care decisions for you:

1. What is the current status of your health and how do you feel about it?
2. Do you have any medical problems now? If so, how do they affect your ability to function?
3. Do you like your doctor? Why or why not?
4. Do you think your doctor should make the final decision about medical treatments you might need?
5. How important to you are independence and self-sufficiency? Would your feelings change if your physical or mental abilities were decreased?
6. How do you feel about living in a nursing home?
7. How do you feel about the use of the following medical treatments if your doctor recommends them:
 - a. Kidney dialysis (if your kidneys stop working)?
 - b. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation or CPR (if your heart stops beating)?
 - c. Respirator (if you are unable to breathe on your own)?
 - d. Artificial nutrition (if you are unable to eat food)?
 - e. Artificial hydration (if you are unable to drink fluids)?
8. Do you think your family and friends will support your agent's decisions about your medical treatment?
9. What are your attitudes toward serious illness and death?
10. What are your religious beliefs and how do they affect your attitude toward serious illness and death?

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11. What will be important to you when you are dying (for example, physical comfort, no pain, family members present, etc.)?
12. Where would you prefer to die?
13. How do you feel about the use of life-sustaining measures in the following situations:
 - a. If you have an irreversible chronic illness such as Alzheimer's disease?
 - b. If you are in a permanent coma?
 - c. If you have a terminal illness?
14. Do you want to donate parts of your body to someone else at the time of your death?
15. Is there anything else which you feel your agent should know?

You should inform your health care agent if any of your beliefs or attitudes change over time. You should also inform your agent if your health changes, especially if you are diagnosed as having a serious or terminal illness.

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