

Live with Care

The Questions Good Doctors Ask Patients

From *Being Mortal* by Dr. Atul Gawande

- (1) What is your understanding of your health or condition?
- (2) What are your goals if your health gets worse?
- (3) What are your fears?
- (4) What are the trade-offs you are willing, and not willing, to make?

You can help your doctor with these questions and open the conversation.

You can say:

- 1) “I am not sure I fully understand my health condition. This is what I think is going on...” GIVE YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION [1] ABOVE ... and then add, “Is that correct in your view?”
- 2) “I would like to talk about what goals we should be setting in my current condition and what would change if my health gets worse. I want to think about these goals in terms of my whole life and not just medical treatment goals.” GIVE YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION [2] ABOVE. You may want to include *what a great day would look like for you*– given your state of health.
- 3) “I have concerns about what will happen to me if/when this illness worsens. Mostly I really fear” GIVE YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION [3] ABOVE. (E.g. pain; having my kids properly cared for.) “Do you know who can help me? Could you?”
- 4) “Some things are more important to me than others. You need to know that I would favor... GIVE YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION [4] ABOVE. (E.g. to have higher quality of life for a shorter time rather than more days of life [or vice versa]; enduring pain over being unable to communicate [or vice versa].

If you have a serious illness, tell your doctor that you know she is the illness specialist and that you rely on her for medical advice about the illness. However, **YOU WOULD LIKE AN EXTRA LAYER OF SUPPORT, SO COULD SHE PLEASE HELP YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH A PALLIATIVE CARE SPECIALIST.**

Live With Care is a project of the Westchester End-of-Life Coalition



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