



## Hospice Conversations:

### Words That Make It Easier for Patients and Their Loved Ones

Hospice conversations can feel emotionally charged and uncertain, but with the right words, we can create space for clarity, connection, and patient-centered decisions. Consider using these five phrases to help bridge the gap between fear and understanding, invite open-ended conversation, and foster shared decision-making with patients and their loved ones.

#### What are you (both) hoping for, right now?

Validate both patient and caregiver voices.

#### Would it be okay if we talked together about what's ahead?

Set a collaborative tone and signal safety.

#### If things do not go as we hope, what would be most important to you and your family?

Ease into planning, while honoring hope.

#### I wish things were different. Can we talk together about what this means and what matters now?

Combine empathy with realism and invite unity.

#### What does a good day look like for you, and how can we protect that?

This phrase is value-based and actionable.

### Tips for Timing and Approach:

#### Normalize Early, Revisit Often:

Frame the conversation as something many people find helpful to start early.  
Emphasize that it can be revisited as things evolve.

#### Anchor in Shared Values:

Identify what matters most to the patient and family (e.g., being home, avoiding pain, seeing family) and shape the care plan around those values.

#### Be Mindful of Presence:

**Posture:** Sit at eye level. A relaxed, open posture invites connection.

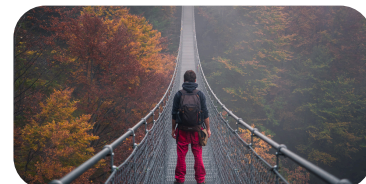
**Tone:** Use a compassionate voice. Pauses and silence are okay. Let emotions breathe.

**Environment:** Choose a quiet, private space. Limit distractions. A peaceful setting helps patients and families feel safe and heard.



### Common traps to avoid:

1. Leaving the caregiver out: Caregivers may have unspoken fears or misunderstandings. Invite them in.
2. Rushing the conversation: Let the silence and pauses do the work. Patients and caregivers need space.
3. Using euphemisms like "comfort care only": Be clear, respectful, and honest. Clarity is kindness.



### Mindset Reminders

**Presence > Perfection**  
Show up, listen well.

**Two Voices, One Conversation**  
Speak to both the patient and their support person with compassion and clarity.

**Make it Safe, Not Final**  
One conversation rarely does it all. Open the door and let them walk through at their pace.