

Conversations About End of Life Issues

Conversations about end of life can be emotionally challenging. Listening may be more important than speaking in these conversations. It is important to show empathy but do not pretend to understand the client's emotional state of mind unless you have been through a similar situation with a close family member or friend (in which case, disclose that you have had a similar personal experience).

Opening Comments

I am so sorry to hear your news. I want to be of the greatest help and support possible to you and your family.

Please tell me a little more about your situation.

General Discussion

There is a lot we need to think about and to review to be sure that everything is taken care of as you want it to be. We have a process in place for exactly this kind of situation, to make it more manageable.

I know this is a challenging time for you and your family. Please tell me what is foremost in your mind right now.

[It is important that at this juncture you let the client take the lead in determining which issues are top of mind/where the client wants to begin. If the client is too overwhelmed to have a starting point, however, you should be prepared to suggest one.]

These are the issues I have concerns about.

[Discuss the issues that are a concern to you that the client has not addressed.]

We need to prioritize and work through each of your concerns and my concerns as quickly as you can while minimizing the stress and allowing you to take care of your health.

Is this a good stopping point, or is there anything else you would like to discuss?

When is a good time to meet again?

You might consider bringing another family member. Might that be feasible for you?

Thank you. I am sad you are going through this. Please reach out to me with any questions before our next meeting. I will send you a note summarizing this meeting and outlining what we need to do in our follow up meetings.