



## 5 Best Ways to Better Prepare for End-of-Life Care

It's hard to talk about end-of-life care and decisions. Yet 9 out of 10 people say talking with their loved ones about end-of-life care is important. The problem is fewer than 3 in 10 actually do.

Whether it's called "wishes," "decisions" or "directives," we all know we need to communicate better for a peace-filled end of life. Decisions will be made regardless if we plan or not, but will they be the best decisions for you and your family? The hard truth is that death is a reality we all have to deal with. Through planning and discussion we can lessen some of the burdens that negatively impact the grieving process for our loved ones.

At the MedQuarter, we've researched and conducted seminars on end-of-life planning. From that foundation of information and experience, here are the 5 best ways to better prepare for end-of-life care:

- 1 Speak up.** You are the only one who can make your wishes known. Sure, there is legal and medical planning that is necessary, but it's also important to let your family know the details that you feel are meaningful and wishes that you have. One suggestion is to write letters (dictate if you must) to your loved ones letting them know your thoughts, dreams for their lives and special remembrances.
- 2 Start the conversation with a simple question.** This is a difficult discussion for both the one approaching end of life and the loved ones who will remain behind. The key is to start the conversation. One way to do that is with this simple question: "What kind of quality of life do you want at the end of your life?"
- 3 Talk with your physician.** Have a discussion with your doctor about the medical impact of your wishes. What are the impacts of the medical decisions you make? Many times, you need to make these decisions before you are too ill or unable to make them. You also need to decide who will speak for you if you can't. (In a recent survey, only 7% of respondents had this conversation with their doctor.)
- 4 Make it legal.** Make sure you have a living will with advanced medical directives in place. It's important to ensure these documents and your directives are available to the person who is going to speak for you when or if you can't speak. They should not just reside in your safe-deposit box.

**5 People need to know.** Sharing your wishes is important for you and the people you care most about. The conversation does not stop with legal and medical issues; you also need to share your thoughts with your loved ones. This will relieve stress with your entire family, friends and relatives.

## Important Declarations to Consider

According to Stephen Jackson, an attorney in Cedar Rapids, there are really 3 areas to consider in terms of declarations that need to be made as you plan for end of life. These are:

**Living Will.** This is a written statement detailing a person's desires regarding medical treatment when they are no longer able to express informed consent; also known as an advanced directive.

**Medical Power of Attorney.** This names someone who you trust to act as your agent on healthcare decisions if you are unable to speak for yourself. You can have separate financial and healthcare powers of attorney.

**Directions for Your Remains and Ceremony.** There are many options for services after death and it would lower the stress and anxiety on your loved ones if you inform them of your wishes.

The MedQuarter Regional Medical District in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is a strong medical community with organizations within the district that offer religious and spiritual support, allowing us to help provide a holistic approach to end-of-life care.

We believe we are the right catalyst to be the conversation-starter concerning end-of-life planning in the region. It's time people speak up, and we want to help.