



## AGING TODAY

# Begin with the End in Mind

By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions



**Last weekend while out to dinner with close** friends, I committed a social faux pas. The conversation came to a screeching halt followed by radio silence. You're probably thinking politics, religion, #metoo... No to all.

Initiating a discussion of advance care planning seemed like a logical progression after discussing a relative undergoing treatment for cancer. Pushing a bit harder to engage in the topic, I was swiftly admonished with the disapproving quip, "Not exactly a conversation to have out on a Saturday night."

Honestly, that's fair. I would so much rather be that fun guy laughing over light-hearted topics. When do we set aside the time for these serious conversations? What if we tried to just lighten it up a bit to get the discussion started.

Perhaps Hallmark needs a card like this to include their offering:

Let's talk about life, My dear family or friend:  
To be clear, the subject is how mine will end.

The exact details unknown, still it's time to discuss  
Tomorrow I may choke or get hit by a bus.

The world is uncertain, 'cept for taxes and death.  
I don't want you fighting 'bout how I take my last breath.

These topics are tough, this conversation a gift.  
You won't have to guess, just how far I should drift.

The coffee is brewing, Sit down by my side.  
To kick off this session let's use this book as our guide.

I choose you as trustee, we agree and you're nodding. Tell the doctors when it's time to stop poking and prodding.

We'll talk now and more later, about complex decisions. Remember in the future we can always make some revisions.

What a great start, wrap it with a hug!  
A hearty laugh that you may just trip over the plug.

National healthcare decision day is April 16th. This is about six months from now. Let's have these conversations now so that by this day our desires are memorialized, and we can get on with our journey.

There are a few desired outcomes of advance care planning:

- To know and to honor a patient's informed plans
- Creating an effective plan including selecting a well-prepared health care agent or proxy who is willing and able to speak on your behalf even if they don't agree with you.
- Creating specific instructions that reflect informed decisions that are geared to that person's state of health.
- Having those plans available to the treating physician.

In the digital age, to say there is an abundance of resources available online is an understatement. Unlike, searching a medical diagnosis, researching advance care planning brings these issues into focus. The Conversation Project is dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end-of-life care. Go to their website where you can procure a free starter kit. You can follow them on Instagram and Twitter which will give you reminders to work towards your goals or exhilarating confirmation that this gift of knowledge of your wishes is in the can.



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