



# Dying Matters

How to talk  
about death  
and dying

## How to talk about death and dying

# Why it matters

There are lots of reasons to talk about death. It can help you get things organised, let the people closest to you know your wishes and make the most of the time you have together.

Talking about death also won't bring it closer, and lots of families tell us it's a relief to have the conversation and get everything into the open. It can help your loved ones cope better with the emotional and practical impact of death.

# What to talk about

There can be a lot of issues to talk through, so don't feel you need to cover everything at once. Subjects could be:

- The type of care you'd like
- Where you'd like to die
- How long you want doctors to treat you
- The kind of funeral you'd like
- The details of your Will
- Who will care for any dependents
- Whether you want to donate your organs
- How you would like to be remembered
- Anything you want people to know before you die.

# Ways to talk about dying

There's no perfect way to talk about dying, but there are a few things you can do to make it easier.

## **Choose your moment**

It's not easy to have a serious conversation when you're in a rush or stressed, so try and find a time when you don't have to look at the clock and a place where you feel relaxed. It can sometimes help to look for signs another person is happy to talk about the future. It could be you're talking about retirement plans, for example. Or maybe someone you know, or someone famous, has died.

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## **Start with a question**

Questions like 'Have you ever wondered what would happen if...?' or 'Do you think we should talk about...?' can be a more a natural way into a conversation than starting with a statement.

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## **Be reassuring**

Phrases like 'I know that talking about these things is never easy' and 'We've never talked about this before but...' can be useful too.

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## **Be honest about how you feel**

It helps to be open. There might be laughter or tears, but there's no reason to be afraid of either response. Make sure you listen to what the other person is saying too, and don't feel the need to fill silences. They can give people a chance to bring up what's important to them.

### **Test the water**

If you're worried about saying the wrong thing, could you try out what you want to say with a friend or colleague first? (And, if you are worried, remember that it's usually the things we don't say, rather than the things we do, that we regret.)

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### **Take it one step at a time**

Don't feel like you need to cover everything in one conversation. It might be easier to speak about things a few times, bit by bit.

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### **Try a different approach**

If talking about death feels too tough, there are plenty of other ways to bring it up. You could write a letter explaining what you'd like to say. Or you could give someone a list explaining what you've loved most about your life, what you still want to do and what you want to happen in the future.

**Whatever you do, remember that no conversation is perfect, but by talking about death you're helping to make the future easier for everyone.**



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Thank you.



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