

Preparing for the Possibility of Hospitalization During the Pandemic

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It is important to talk with your family and loved ones about how you will cope as individuals and as a family unit should one of you be hospitalized for COVID-19 or any other reason during the pandemic. Please start the conversation today.

Here are some tips:

- try to imagine how you will feel as a patient and not have visitors
- try to imagine how you will feel if a loved one is in the hospital and you may not visit

If you have a significant other; take time to share how you will feel. Then take time with your broader circle (you decide who needs to be included) to talk about how you will feel. Children living at home with their parents or guardians may need lots of extra hugs during and after these conversations. This will not only console them in the moment, but the memory of these hugs will console them if a member of the family is hospitalized.

Be honest about your feelings and then explore them further. For example, if you imagine you will feel guilty for not being able to visit – your loved one can assure you that you do not need to feel guilty and they understand why you cannot be at the hospital.

If you imagine you will feel anger or despair – explore that. Write down or draw everything about the situation that you imagine will make you angry or feel despair. Then, talk about it and talk about it some more. Pray about it. Explore other feelings you may have. If you imagine you will feel lonely and frightened in the hospital – talk about that feeling. What will help to support you through your feelings of loneliness and fear? Can you think of a time in your life when you felt lonely and/or afraid? What helped you during that time? If you are missing your loved ones ... Can you visit through face time? Maybe listen to a favourite piece of music together? Can you pray together? Can your priest call and provide a pastoral care visit by telephone?

People usually feel several feelings although one feeling may dominate for a time. If you and your family can sort through some of your more intense feelings now, it will help you later. This is more important than can be expressed because in situations of hospitalization with no visitors allowed, everyone is suffering in some way. Talking ahead of time will ensure that you know what each other is feeling, and you won't be experiencing regret about things unspoken.

Even more difficult conversations...what if you or your loved one is in the hospital and is too ill to communicate - talk about that too! If you are the very ill person, think about what your hopes would be for your loved ones? If you are at home and not permitted to visit – think about what your hopes would be for your loved one in the hospital? Talk about how you imagine you would feel. Do not hold back. These are very important and potentially very comforting conversations.

If you or your loved one is dying – your family or a representative of your family may not be able to come to the hospital. Although this may feel unspeakable, it may happen. Try to talk about that possibility. Go slowly as this may be one of the most difficult conversations you will have.



Talking about it now however may be what will give you and your loved ones the strength they will need through a profound and sad time.

Try to imagine for yourself what will be the most difficult for you?

If you are the patient and will die without a member of your family at your bedside, what do you imagine will be the most difficult for you? Talk about it ... and keep talking about it. What will be your hope for your loved ones and family while they hold vigil at home and cannot be with you? Where do you imagine you will find or receive comfort? Or, hope? What do you imagine will be important for you? Be honest.

If you are the one at home and your loved one is dying what do you imagine will be the most difficult for you? Talk about it ... and keep talking about it. While you and your loved ones hold vigil each in your own homes, what will be your hope for your loved one who is dying? How do you imagine you will find or receive comfort? Or, hope? What do you imagine will be important for you? Be honest.

This may be a very good time to talk together as a family about your values, what you believe and talk about your faith in God. It can be a time to reassure each other of your awareness that God is always with each one of you – and in all circumstances God's love, grace and peace are given freely. You can remind each other how God promises to be with you. Bring to mind how you experience God's presence and faithfulness in your life and family life. Talk about those memories and – remember.

Let these conversations continue and evolve over many days and even weeks if necessary. If it comes to pass that you or someone in your family is hospitalized, these conversations will bring all of you strength during a very, very difficult time.

