

Ensuring your wishes at end of life are honored

In Iowa, the ability to get a Do Not Resuscitate order from a physician depends on having a fatal condition. Being alive, although technically fatal, does not count. Many people desire to have an advanced care plan or directive in place.

If you are one of these people, Honoring Your Wishes might be just the process for you.

Honoring Your Wishes was created by Iowa City Hospice in 2010. It is an advanced care planning process where individual future health care preferences are discussed, documented, and honored by families, friends, and the health care community. This process allows you to ask yourself questions about what health care treatments you may want in the case of an accident, a heart attack, stroke, or other debilitating condition when you are not able to communicate your wishes.

For example, some people want no medical intervention if their heart should stop; some may want intervention under certain circumstances; and still others would desire intervention under any and all circumstances.

There are intimate results of going through Honoring Your Wishes. One is that you are challenged to clarify your values and beliefs about your quality of life while you are in good physical, cognitive, and emotional health. This process encourages you to communicate these values and beliefs to those closest to you now, so that in the event you are not able to communicate, they can assist you in carrying out your wishes.

Incorporated into this discussion is the ability to name a health care agent, who would be responsible to ensure the values and beliefs outlined in your Honoring Your Wishes documents are carried out. You can ask your health care agent to consult with certain people in their decision making pertaining to your health care treatment or lack thereof in the event your plan does not speak to a unique circumstance.

Honoring Your Wishes also gives you the opportunity to outline what your final days and good-byes might entail:

- Whom do you want near you when you pass?
- Do you want certain sounds, smells, experiences?
- Do you want pain medication that may dull your last moments, or is the trade off of pain balanced by your ability to be fully aware near the end?
- What kind of desires for your celebration of life do you have?

If you want a woman in a red dress to tango at your funeral, you can outline this specific desire (or any of your choosing) in Honoring Your Wishes.

If you are interested in learning more about Honoring Your Wishes or to find a certified advanced planning facilitator, go to <http://iowacityhospice.org>. Facilitators can be contacted through Iowa City Hospice, the Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center and Mercy Iowa City.

An advanced care plan through the process of Honoring Your Wishes is a great gift to yourself and to those who love and care for and about you.