Now Is the Time to Make Life Choices

Today when admitted into a hospital, people are asked about their advanced care plans. But such determinations are best made while you are healthy – in advance of hospitalization, serious illness or an accident. Making these decisions when you are well and can more easily process information results in choices that truly reflect your wishes.

There are several advantages to determining your preferences now and discussing them thoroughly with your loved ones:

† You and they have time to think through and discuss feelings, fears and wishes.
† Your loved ones are spared ever having to guess your wishes and instead can honor what you have explicitly told them.
† Conversations with your faith leader, your health care provider and other advisors about significant options and important issues can help you make the very best decisions.
† Taking time, talking, going through the process – all this will crystalize your beliefs. Important feelings have room to surface and be aired. Fears may be lessened, and trust enhanced.

Without direction from you about your wishes, loved ones are often left feeling confused, ineffective and guilty when a crisis arises. Completing your Advance Directives is a responsible and loving gift you can give your family on National Health Care Decisions Day. Putting your thoughts down on paper in an Advance Directive not only clarifies your wishes, it also shows true kindness to those you love.

April 16 Is Health Care Decisions Day

Prayer: Creator God, help me prepare for each day whether in the fullness of life or at life’s end. Grant me wisdom in preparing for the time when I must let go of the life that you have given me. Amen.

FAQs about Advance Directives

Q: What is involved in an Advance Directive?
A: There are two major types of documents, neither of which is used unless you are unable to speak for yourself.

A Healthcare Power of Attorney documents the person you select to be the voice for your health care decisions if you are unable. A Living Will specifies your wishes about medical treatment at the end of life – especially the refusal of life-prolonging treatment – only when death is imminent. Again, both of these documents become effective only if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Q: What’s the difference between Power of Attorney and Health Care Power of Attorney?
A: Power of Attorney appoints someone to handle your financial affairs while you’re unavailable or unable to do so. Power of Attorney for Health Care appoints someone to make health care decisions for you if you cannot.

Q: Do I need a lawyer to complete an Advance Directive?
A: No, these documents are readily available as pre-printed forms. If you would be more comfortable consulting a lawyer or if you have special needs, by all means talk to one.

Q: If I sign this and later change my mind, what do I do?
A: You may revoke an Advance Directive at any time. You can do this in any of three ways: by destroying the document, by dating and signing a statement of revocation or by verbally expressing your intent to cancel.

– advocatehealth.com
– Nhdd.org – National Health Care Decisions Day
– abanet.org/aging/toolkit – free tool kit by the ABA Commission on Law and Aging
– jlaw.com/Forms – the Halachic Living Will, a directive that comports with orthodox Jewish law and custom
– aarp.org
– caringinfo.org – free, downloadable state-specific forms