

Facilitating meaningful final conversations in family: practice insights from research

When the terminally ill have the opportunity and the openness to freely talk about what is on their minds and hearts, the result is often relief of stress, more peaceful interactions, and greater readiness for the impending death for participants. Communication at the end-of-life (EOL) is valuable because clear communication allows peoples' true wishes to be heard, understood, and followed, resulting in more satisfying care and increased sense of well-being at the EOL for the Dying. Specifically, this training will focus on "Final Conversations" which includes all the verbal and nonverbal communication between family members/close others and their dying loved one from the moment of a terminal diagnosis until their death. First, I will identify and describe the 6 Final Conversation (FCs) Themes (Love, Identity, Spirituality, Everyday Talk, Instrumental Death Talk, and Difficult Relationship Talk). Second, I will discuss the outcomes of participating in FCs for family members, which include closure, personal growth, and their improved ability to cope following the death of loved one. Third, I will highlight the challenges of FCs, (e.g., cultural and/or family norms of avoidance, time limitations, physical and mental hindrances). Fourth, I will share 10 recommendations regarding good communication practices at the EOL.