

PREPARING FOR YOUR OWN DEATH

We all die, whether expectedly or not. When we prepare for our own death in advance, we are able to relieve the decision-making burden on those whom we love and create the opportunity for a peace-filled end of life. Do not miss this opportunity. Start your checklist today.

Health Care Issues, Opinions and Options

- If you have been told you have a **terminal illness**, have you gotten a **second opinion** about the diagnosis?
- What are your treatment options? Ask your doctor to explain the risks and benefits of each option. What **alternative treatments** are available?
- Ask your healthcare provider to explain the typical course of your illness including **how and when you might die** from this condition. *How much time do you have left?*
- Ask about symptom control and management (example: pain control—**“palliative care”**) in advance. Find out if you have local palliative care services which provide in-home visits and care.
- Ask about options and timing for **hospice and end-of-life care** in advance. What hospice providers are available in your community? Choose one in advance. What are your **“goals of care”**? Ask your doctor to help you select medical therapies which will help you to accomplish the goals you have for your life.
- Think about **where/how you would like to die**; in what surroundings; with what things (music? videos?); with which people present?
- Would you rather die at home? Is it acceptable that you die in a **nursing home, hospital or dedicated hospice unit**? If so, select the provider in advance.
- Prepare your **Advance Directive** form (go to **“Resource Page”** on the OKtoDie.com website).
- Fill out a **Personal Self-Assessment Scale PSAS** (include in your Living Will)—available for free on the **“Resource Page”** of the website). The PSAS will help you answer questions such as: **“Are there situations in which you would ever want artificial nutrition by feeding tube? When would you ever want to be on an artificial respirator? When would you want CPR or to allow natural death to**

occur?" Your family, surrogate medical decision-maker, and physician should all have updated copies of your PSAS.

My Required End-of-Life Paperwork (Medical and Legal)

- Do I have an **advanced directive(s)** included in my living will? Is it legal for my state? (Include a PSAS to help your healthcare provider and proxy/family to know at what stage of illness you choose to forgo certain medical interventions.)
- Have I selected a **Health Care Proxy** and executed a **Health Care Power of Attorney**? Please specify 1 or 2 alternative proxies as well. (Health Care Proxy is a legal term for surrogate medical decision-maker, the person who will make medical decisions for you should you become unable to make them for yourself).
- Have I set up a **POLST (Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment)**, if the POLST program is legal in my state? Or, if the POLST is unavailable, have I asked my physician to sign a state-approved Do Not Resuscitate/Allow Natural Death order, if desired? Go to the Resource Page and click on POLST to learn more.
- Have I executed a legal **DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) Order**? The DNR is a medical order signed by a physician instructing health care workers not to perform CPR on you, but instead to allow you to die naturally and in comfort.
- Have I executed a legal **DNI (Do Not Intubate) Order**? The DNI is a medical order signed by a physician instructing health care workers not to intubate you or place you on an artificial ventilator if your breathing is failing.
- Have I executed a legal **DNH (Do Not Hospitalize) Order**? The DNH is a medical order signed by a physician instructing health care workers not send you to a hospital from your home or nursing home facility unless needed for comfort.
- Does my Health Care Proxy have a copy of my **Living Will** containing my **advance directives** such as POLST, PSAS, DNR, etc.? Make certain to keep handy your copy of these documents. Tell family members where you keep the originals and your handy copy. Family members, surrogate medical decision-makers and your physicians should all have copies of these items as well.
- Do I need to update my **trust**? (Contact an Estate Attorney.)
- Have I set up my **estate plan**? (Contact an Estate Attorney.)
- Is my **will** up to date?

- Have I executed a **Financial Power of Attorney**?

Personal Communications with Your Family and Friends

- Have I **discussed my condition** with my family/friends in complete honesty?
- Have I told my loved ones EXACTLY what **medical interventions** that I want and do not want? Do they know at what stage of illness I would choose to forgo certain therapies or artificial life support ? Share your PSAS and/or POLST, DNR, DNI, DNH papers with them.
- My family needs to know who I have put in charge of my medical decisions when I can no longer make them. My **health care proxy or surrogate medical decision-maker** needs to understand and agree to carry out my wishes and desires regarding my end-of-life care.
- Do I need a **private discussion** with anyone, if it would help them to accept my decision? (If I'm OK to Die, are they?)

Am I OK to Die?

- Say the "6 Things" you need to say to your loved ones, friends and enemies. It is never too early to say these things. (See Chapter 17 in *It's OK to Die.*)

"I'm sorry."
"I forgive you."
"Thank you."
"I love you."
"It's OK to die."
"Goodbye."

- What are my beliefs about death? Do I need to make peace with myself or a Higher Power?
- Do I need psychological, emotional, spiritual care, counseling or support?
- Have I left a legacy? Identify life lessons, advice, hopes and dreams that you would like to pass on to family and friends. Write or record these. Identify a

person who can pass these along to the people to those whom you wish to receive your legacy. See Dignity Therapy on the Resource Page.

- Have I written my personal history? You can write it down, or record on audio or video tape, etc. Who is to get my personal history?

Personal Clean-up

- Do I have anything amiss with my family/friends to fix? Can I fix them now?
- Do I have letters to write? Calls to make? Make a list of all old grudges, enemies, etc., and attempt to settle those affairs. You may use the “6 things” as a guide.
- Have I created my “**bucket list**”? What am I able to accomplish with the time I have left? Use this list to help create your “goals of medical care.”

Insurance Issues

- In order to prepare, I need to buy **life insurance**--at least a **death benefit policy** to pay for funeral/burial if I don't have the money for it.
- If I have life insurance, are my policies all in order? Have I placed original policies with my important papers in a **safe place** where my family and/or executor knows where to find them?
- Do I have/need **long-term care policy, disability policy, life policy**?
- Contact my life insurance company--sometimes they pay out in **advance of death** for a terminal disease, so I can pay for arrangements/details or maybe even a last fling!!!

Financial Issues

- Complete my **financial checklist**. (A complete financial checklist is too long to be included here. You should consult with an accountant or lawyer to create and complete such a checklist.) Check out our Resource Page on the website for a sample.
- Who will pay my bills during the immediate time after my death? Spouse? Accountant? Lawyer? Estate Manager? Executor?

Who will be in charge of discontinuing services no longer needed which are in my name?

Business Arrangements

- Complete a “business survival” plan.
- Do I need “**key man**” insurance? (This insurance covers the loss of a business owner or partner so that the business can continue.)
- Do I need to sell or transfer my business interests?

Personal Effects

- Who do I give my **personal belongings** to? If you are married, most likely all of your belongings will **transfer to your spouse or family**. If you are single, then you must specify what you want done with these items
- Who gets my special items, such as photos, mementos, etc.?
- Have I labeled (ID’d) the people in my photos? Who do my photos (pictures, negatives, discs, etc.) go to?
- If I am single and have kids, have I set up a **guardian for my children** for the immediate time after my death? Short-term money for them?
- Have I set up the paperwork for where my children will go permanently?
- What should I **sell before my death**? House? Car? Furniture? Land?
- Have I made arrangements for the care of my **pets**?
- What **unfinished projects** around the house, at work, or in the community would I like to complete?
- If I have young children, **have I left letters** or **videos** to them?
- Are all my digital photos/videos in one place? What about my computer(s)?

Funeral Planning and Logistics

- Where do I want my body to be taken? Which **funeral home/mortuary**?
- Do I want to be **embalmed? Buried? Cremated**?
- What are my **Burial/Casket** preferences?
- Who do I want notified** of my death?
- Do I want to **write my own obituary**?
- Do I have **burial plot**? If cremated, where should my ashes **be scattered or interned**?
- Do I want/need a **headstone/grave marker**? Have I written out what I want inscribed on it? Design?
- Do I want a **Funeral** service? Program?
- Do I have special needs for my ceremony? Military? Religious?
- Who will deliver the **eulogy**? Ask him or her in advance.
- Should I **pre-pay** funeral expenses?
- Do I want to identify a charity **“in lieu of flowers”**?
- Do I want a **wake or memorial party** instead of a funeral?
- Who needs to be made aware of my death? Make a **contact list** for your funeral or memorial notices.

Planning for your own death—whether that is expected or not—takes a lot of time and energy to complete. It is much better to take the time now, while you have it, to lay out your plans, wishes, directions and desires, so your passing will be peaceful, for both you, your family and friends.

If you have additions or suggestions for this checklist, please contact us via the website OKtoDie.com OR email us at Info@oktodie.com.

*****This checklist contains suggestions. You will need to consult with your own professional financial, legal, medical, etc. advisors.**