

Don't *Duck* the *Conversation*

It's one of the most important talks you'll ever have



A Personal Planning Guide

We can help you get your ducks in a row

Don't Duck the Conversation

A Personal Planning Guide

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Don't Duck the Conversation

Please note, links to websites in this online guide are italicized and underlined. Clicking on the link will take you to the website, where you will find additional information about the topic.

Don't Duck The Conversation is an initiative created by Hospice Northwest in Thunder Bay, Ontario that was created as a tool to help individuals and their families prepare in advance for the inevitable time when their lives will end.

The *Don't Duck the Conversation* guide was designed to be a companion piece to Advance Care Planning tools such as the [**Ontario Speak Up Campaign**](#), hosted by *Hospice Palliative Care Ontario*. **Advance Care Planning** is the process of reflecting on and then communicating your future health and personal care wishes. It is also about understanding who your Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) would be. Your SDM is someone who will speak for you if you are mentally incapable of speaking for yourself.

Our *Don't Duck the Conversation* guide focuses on gathering additional personal information about yourself, the care of your family and friends and your possessions, as well as helping you prepare your own obituary and funeral arrangements.

For more information about Advance Care Planning or about the programs and services we offer, please visit [**Hospice Northwest's website**](#) or call us at **(807) 626-5570**.

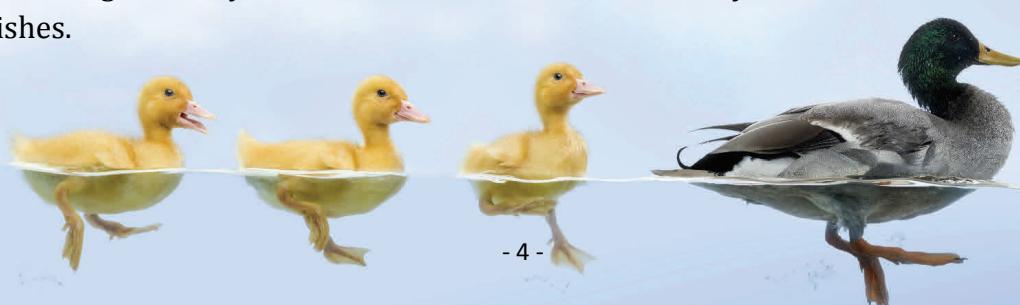
How do I get my ducks in a row?

Ok, so there is a lot to consider. While you may have hopes of one day getting all of your future planning sorted out, the thought of doing it now can seem overwhelming and perhaps you're feeling that now is simply not the right time. With this in mind, we've designed our guide to be completed at your own pace. You can save your answers as you go, and come back to them at any time. We've also organized the document into individual topics so that you can complete the particular sections that meet your needs. This way, you can sort out your important information *one duck at a time*, at a pace that feels comfortable and manageable for you.

What are the benefits of planning in advance?

Even though we all know that our life will end, death and dying can be an uncomfortable topic that most of us find very difficult to discuss. Sometimes it may feel easier to duck the conversation all together. But the truth is that making arrangements and talking about your wishes with those who matter to you can actually ease your discomfort.

Being prepared and having your affairs in order before a crisis happens will make things easier for you and your family. You will feel comforted, knowing that you have clearly expressed the things that are important to you. Your family members and friends will also be relieved, knowing that they now have the information necessary to be able to honour your final wishes.

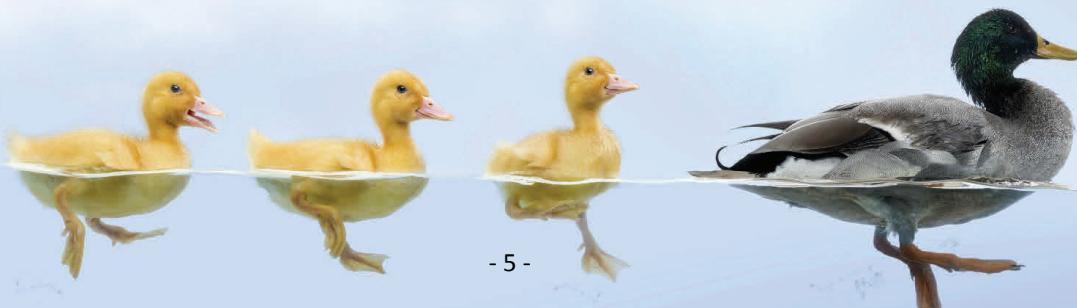


Discussing your wishes regarding your funeral arrangements, your possessions, the care of your dependents, and your future health and personal care may be some of the most important conversations that you will ever have.

Having conversations about your wishes is important throughout your life's journey, especially:

- ◆ If you are 16 years of age or older
- ◆ If you would like to be able to provide input regarding your future health and personal care preferences
- ◆ If you are diagnosed with a life-limiting or chronic illness, or have a family history of illness
- ◆ Before major hospital visits or surgeries
- ◆ Around significant life events or changes such as graduation, marriage, separation, divorce or moving to a new place
- ◆ After the birth of a child or the death of a friend or relative
- ◆ If you have children or are taking care of any dependents, including pets
- ◆ Before going on vacation
- ◆ If you would like to offer comfort and peace of mind to your family & friends
- ◆ If you would like to bring comfort and peace of mind to yourself, knowing that all your affairs are in order (healthcare, legal, financial, etc.)
- ◆ If you have specific or unique preferences regarding how you want to be remembered by your family and friends and community
- ◆ If you would like the opportunity to share your life story with others
- ◆ If you would like to be involved in the writing of your obituary, eulogy, and/or epitaph so as to have some input in what your story says about you
- ◆ If you would like to be involved in making decisions about your funeral and cemetery arrangements
- ◆ If you would like to decide who will be notified of your death and who will be provided with information about your memorial service

It's never too early to begin getting your ducks in a row!



So how do I begin the process?

A good place to begin is by taking some time to learn why having a conversation about your future wishes is important for you and your family and friends. Learn from others and reflect on your own needs, values and beliefs. Imagine yourself at a time when you are unable to speak for yourself, and consider the things that you would and would not like to happen. It may also be helpful to consider a person you know who has died and reflect on his or her experience at end-of-life, as well as the experience of that person's family and friends. Use these recollections to help determine your own preferences.

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you want. Invite your family and friends to be a part of the conversation and with their help, plan and communicate your wishes as clearly as you can.

Perhaps most important is to begin by knowing that engaging in advance care planning is not an activity that can be wrapped up in one sitting. It will take time and contemplation to complete. Allow yourself the space to pause and reflect.

Continue having conversations with those who matter to you about what's important to you. Let the conversations evolve in their own way, little by little. Give yourself permission to accept that even though you might not be able to prepare for everything, taking the time to prepare even a little bit can bring some peace of mind to you and your family and friends and may even create more closeness in your relationships.

Not only are you helping to make sure your wishes are followed at the end of your life, having the conversation with those who matter to you opens the door for others to consider their own wishes and helps to create a culture where we bring death back into the conversation about life.

By looking at Hospice Northwest's *Don't Duck The Conversation: A Personal Planning Guide*, you've already begun the journey. We've provided a list of important resources for you to read which are listed in the section of our guide titled [Resources](#). If you are concerned about your readiness to begin this process, please take a look at our [Getting Started Survey](#), where you will find some questions and answers to help guide you.

Are there any barriers in the way of completing your personal planning?

While most people acknowledge that planning and talking with their family and friends about their future wishes is important, few people have actually done so. One of the reasons for this is because the thought of getting started may feel so overwhelming that you decide to put these discussions on the shelf to revisit at a later time.

If this is happening to you, it's important to figure out what's in the way of getting started. Recognizing the potential barriers that may be stopping you from completing this guide will help you to determine what you need to sort out before you feel ready to begin.

Getting Started Survey

So you've got some things to sort out first...1, 2, 3...

Here are some questions that you might like to consider if you're having difficulty getting started. If you wish, you can quietly contemplate these questions, as well as engage others in dialogue:

- 1.** How important is it to you to get your affairs in order and express your future wishes? On a scale from **1-10**, **1** meaning *not at all important* and **10**, meaning *extremely important*, please check the number that feels right for you.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10**

If it's *not at all important* for you to express your wishes, have you considered the stress that your family and friends may experience if they are required to voice these wishes on your behalf? Research indicates that families and friends cope significantly better and experience less stress when their friend or relative have engaged in the process of Advance Care Planning.

- 2.** On a scale from **1-10**, **1** meaning *no motivation* and **10** meaning *high motivation*, how motivated are you right now to complete your personal planning? Please check the number that feels right for you.

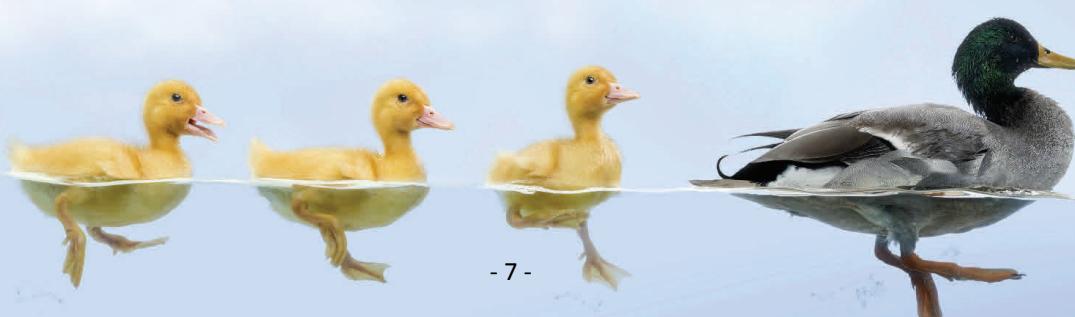
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10**

If you scored between **7** and **10**, please proceed to Section 2 of the Guide, [All About Me, My Personal Information](#) and begin completing the Don't Duck the Conversation Guide.

- 3.** If you knew that you were going to die within three months, would you want to start the conversation about your wishes for future care and preferences today?

Yes No

If yes, please proceed with completing the *Don't Duck The Conversation Guide*.



If no, what is the obstacle? Please choose the statement that feels right for you.

I feel overwhelmed I can't decide on some things Other: _____

If you feel overwhelmed, is there someone you trust that you can ask to help you get started? If **yes**, who will you ask and when will you contact them? Please indicate below.

Name: _____ Date: _____

If you don't have a family or a friend who you trust that you can ask to help you get started, would you like some assistance from a Hospice Northwest volunteer?

Yes No If **yes**, please contact us at **807-626-5570**

If practical decision making is the problem, here are some suggested resources:

- ◆ Connect with a trusted friend, family member or clergy member of your choice
- ◆ Get legal advice
- ◆ Connect with a counsellor in your region
- ◆ Connect with a financial advisor in your region
- ◆ Check 211 for local counselling and legal services

If you need free legal advice, please contact:

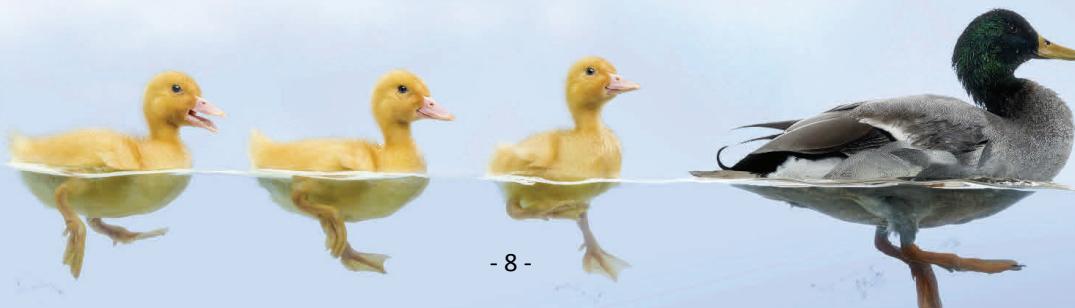
Legal Aid Ontario

You will find instructions on the [**Legal Aid Ontario**](#) webpage about how to apply for legal assistance, and how to find the office nearest you.

Law Society of Upper Canada Referral Services

The Law Society of Upper Canada Referral Service is designed to provide callers with up to 30 minutes of consultation either by phone or in person at no charge. A Legal Information Officer will receive the call and assess the needs of the client and then provide the name of the lawyer or paralegal who best fits the client's stated needs. The service is not designed to provide legal advice or second opinions, and any fees should be discussed with the lawyer or a paralegal.

The service can be reached by calling toll free **1-800-268-8326**. You can also request a referral online through the [**Law Society of Upper Canada website.**](#)



Some online resources you may find useful

*Whichever resources you use, please check to make sure they are Ontario based and comply with the Ontario legal framework for Advance Care Planning and Health Care Consent

- ◆ **[The Ministry of the Attorney General: Powers of Attorney](#)**

This booklet contains forms for Continuing Power of Attorney for Property and Power of Attorney for Personal Care. Published by the Government of Ontario

- ◆ **[Ontario Speak Up Campaign: Advance Care Planning](#)**, hosted by [Hospice Palliative Care Ontario](#). This workbook contains information about having conversations with your family, friends, healthcare providers and especially your Substitute Decision Maker(s) about your future health and personal care wishes at the end of life.

- ◆ **[Will Kit](#)** produced by *Community Legal Clinic Simcoe, Haliburton and Kawartha Lakes*. To receive a free Estate Planner Guide, please contact the *Alzheimer Society of Ontario* at 1-416-847-8913 or visit the [Alzheimer Society of Ontario website](#)

- ◆ **[“Planning For Incapacity – What You Need To Know”](#)** An article explaining the Powers of Attorney for Property and Personal Care documents. Written by Jane Martin, published by the Alzheimer Society of Ontario.

- ◆ **[Power of Attorney for Personal Care information](#)** and **[Continuing Power of Attorney for Property](#)** published by Community Legal Education Ontario

When You Are Ready To Begin...

1. Remember to try to enjoy this process; you are not only considering changes in your health, you are sharing your legacy.

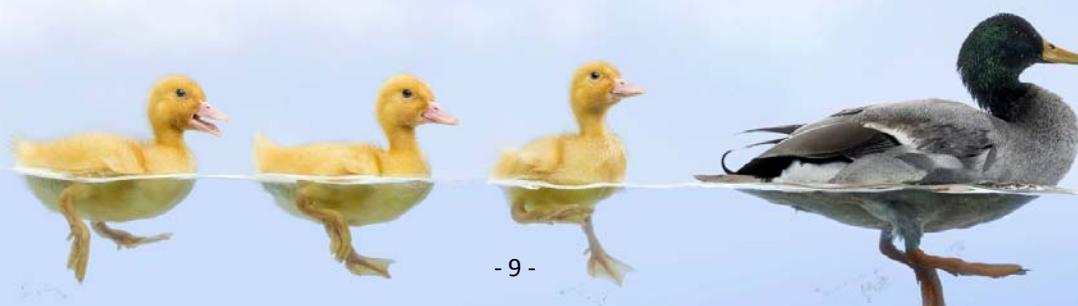
How would you like to be remembered?

2. This guide has been created for you to complete at a pace that feels comfortable and manageable for you. Each time you return to the guide, you can ask yourself:

What is my priority today?

What feels like a realistic goal for me to focus on at this time?

3. Congratulate yourself as you complete each step of this journey. We acknowledge that answering these questions takes courage.



4. Do what's right for you. Parts of the guide may not fit your needs or you may simply not want to answer certain questions. That's okay! The guide has been designed for you to complete as you see fit.

5. As you feel ready to put the guide aside for a while, ask yourself:

If there is one realistic goal that I can focus on between now and the next time I work on this guide that would have significance for me, what would that be?

Your guide will be waiting for you when you are ready to return.

6. When you return, ask yourself:

Have I accomplished the goal that I set out to do?

Does my current situation warrant a new focus?

At the end of this guide, you will find a checklist that you can use to show you've completed all of personal planning tasks. Your to-do list will include:

- ◆ Preparing a will and designating an executor
- ◆ Appointing a Power of Attorney for Personal Care and Power of Attorney for Property
- ◆ Recording all of your important information regarding finances, banking, debts, investments, etc. within this guide
- ◆ Making all of your cemetery, funeral and burial arrangements
- ◆ Arranging for the care of any dependents, including pets
- ◆ Talking with your family about your wishes and letting them know where you've stored your important information

Keeping Your Private Information Secure

Always save your documents on your computer each time you make changes and consider saving your files to another hard drive or printing your documents in case of technical difficulties. Store your private information in a secure place and consider locking your documents in a secure box. It is important to let someone know where your documents are stored, but do be careful to only share this private information with people that you trust.

Hospice Northwest assumes no responsibility for how private information contained in the Planning Guide is stored or shared. It is the user's responsibility to ensure private information is stored securely and shared with people for whom the user has deemed safe and trustworthy.

