

## Tips for Broaching the Topic

### Decide why you want assistance from the palliative care team

- Symptom assessment/management
- Assistance in making difficult decisions
- Planning for the most appropriate care setting
- Providing psychological support

### Contact the palliative care team

- Describe your goals and the family's/patient's goals

### Engage the patient/family in a discussion

- "To best meet the goals we've been discussing..."
- The palliative care team are experts in treating the symptoms you are experiencing
- They are good at helping your family deal with changes
- They can answer your questions
- Do not say, "there is nothing more I can do"

### Emphasize your continued involvement

- "You and I will talk about the recommendations of the palliative care experts"
- Ask about their concerns
- Discuss that palliative care is compatible with aggressively treating the underlying disease
- Emphasize the positive aspects of palliative care: achieving the best possible quality of life

Source: *Broaching the Topic of a Palliative Care Consultation With Patients and Families*, Robert Arnold, MD and David E. Weissman, MD, [www.mypcnow.org](http://www.mypcnow.org).

## Gilchrist Palliative Care



## A Resource for Providers

  
INFORMED CHOICES. BETTER CARE.

443.849.6255 • [gilchristcares.org](http://gilchristcares.org)

443.849.6255 • [gilchristcares.org](http://gilchristcares.org)

# 10 Steps for What to Say and Do

## Step 1: Research and Preparation

- This will be an important conversation
- Be prepared with disease, prognosis and treatment options
- 70% of human communication is non-verbal

## Step 2: Ready the Space

- Prepare a quiet room with a door
- Provide water and tissues
- Arrange chairs facing each other

## Step 3: Introductions and Ground Rules

- Who's in the room?
- All participants will have a chance to speak and be heard
- No interruptions

## Step 4: Listen to What They Know

- What have the doctors told you?
- Lots of misunderstandings uncovered here

## Step 5: Ask. Tell. Ask.

### Part 1: ASK - How do you like to receive information?

- Allows the patient/family to give permission
- Have and maintain control

## Step 6: Ask. Tell. Ask.

### Part II: TELL – “I’m sorry to have to tell you this...”

- Stop talking
- Listen

## Step 7: Ask. Tell. Ask.

### Part III: ASK - Tell me what you heard.

- Was I clear?
- Explain back to me

## Step 8: Answering Difficult Questions

- “Am I going to die from this disease?”
- Answer, “Barring any unforeseen events, YES, you will die from this disease.”
- Allows validation of their fears
- Not a surprise to most

## Step 9: Explain Options

- Pros vs. cons
- How you will help to manage next steps

## Step 10: Write Down What Was Said

- Include when you will next see them, your name and contact information
- Serves as a reminder that you are there for them
- Allows them to feel human and be a part of the solution