When your parent may be facing death…

My concern: I think my mom is getting worse. I found stronger pills in the bathroom and no one is telling us kids anything. I don't know what to say or do.

Response: Kids and parents are usually very aware of each other's feelings. This may make it hard to talk about sensitive things because you think it will hurt too much or maybe make things worse. If that's what's happening in your family but you really want some answers, the best thing to do is to ask the questions.

My concern: I want to ask my dad some questions and tell him how I feel but I don't know how to start.

Response: Even though it's hard, it is very important to get started. It's usually that first sentence that is the hardest to say. Once you get started, it seems like the rest will follow. Try to be calm and respectful in the way you say things. You could try saying, "I know you're trying not to worry me, Dad, but it seems like things are changing. If I don't have the right information, my imagination lets me think of things that are probably worse." Or maybe, "I have some questions that I really need answers for. Maybe if I know what's happening, I won't feel so scared."

My concern: My mom still wants to keep doing things for us even though she's suffering. She's in pain and trying to hide it. It makes me so frustrated and mad. I just have to leave the house or I'll explode.

Response: It's hard for parents to give up taking care of their children. After all, that's what they've always done with you. And caring for those we love helps to give meaning to our lives. Your mom may have this deep need to be a mom. When you see her doing something, pitch in and help and ask her to teach you how to do the job so that she can rest. This not only eases her work, but gives you a chance to talk about things too.

My concern: Won't it seem like I've given up hope if I start talking about death?

Response: That seems to be the biggest reason why people are afraid to talk things over before the person does die. The truth is that everyone knows that it will happen, you just don't know when. It would be okay to let your parent know that you haven't given up hope but you want to be prepared, just in case. Maybe you could say, "I'll never give up hope that you are going to get better but I have some questions and some worries that I'd like to talk over. Is that okay with you?"

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