



When you may be facing death...

My concern: My doctor has told me that I have limited time left. Should I tell my children that I'm dying?

Response: Usually kids can sense if something different is happening in the family. They tune in to hushed voices or odd telephone calls or sharp mood changes. They may become worried or frightened when they don't have accurate information. Even though it will be very hard, it is important to let your children know what is happening and that they will be cared for, no matter what.

My concern: How will I ever find the right words to tell them?

Response: It's usually that first sentence that is the hardest to say. Once you start, it seems like the rest follows naturally. Begin with, "I have something very important to tell you about my health." or "What I thought was a minor ailment has turned into something much more serious." and "There will always be someone to care for you."

My concern: If I tell my child I'm dying, won't he think that I have given up hope?

Response: This seems to be mainly why people don't want to talk things over with their family while they still have time to work it through. It is possible to give him the information but also let him know that you have not stopped trying to get better. Maybe, "I know it sounds bad, but I have been doing some reading and there are other things we haven't tried yet." or "I'm not giving up hope. Even the doctor can't be absolutely sure what will happen next. With everyone's help, let's aim for getting through each day."

My concern: I don't have as much energy as I used to so I may not be able to keep doing things I normally do. I also don't want my children to feel like they have too much to do.

Response: Talking things over as a family can help you find ways to share the responsibility. If you agree to talk regularly and agree that everyone's frustrations or issues will be heard, there is less of a chance that any one person will be resentful

My concern: I need to make plans about the type of care I want and about my funeral arrangements but I think it may be too hard for my family to talk about these things.

Response: It may be that your family will not be ready to talk about such things the first time you speak about it. As time passes and everyone becomes more comfortable with what is going on, you could introduce the topics one at a time. Say, "Just in case things don't go like we want them too, I'd like to tell you what my choices are." or "There are some things that I do want and some things I would not want to happen. I'd like to make sure that everyone understands what's important to me and I'd like to hear what is important to all of you too." You may also find it helpful to write these things down.

