



Discussing Illness Trajectories

Step-by-step GUIDE to explain functional changes and uncertainty as illness progresses



Graph

Show or draw the relevant illness trajectory graph from the options below

"A picture may help to explain what to expect, as time goes on, while living with this illness."



Understand

Help them understand how the graph represents their illness path...

"Time flows from left to right. Your function — how independent you are — is on the side."



Impact

...and the impact that time has on their function and symptom burden

"While you are likely to have ups and downs, the big picture is that over time you will feel less able to do things on your own." *"What thoughts come up as you hear me say this?"*



Death

Recognize death as part of illness

"Some people unfortunately die from (or with) this illness. We can talk about that at any time."

"I imagine this is difficult to hear." <Pause> "Would it be okay to continue?"



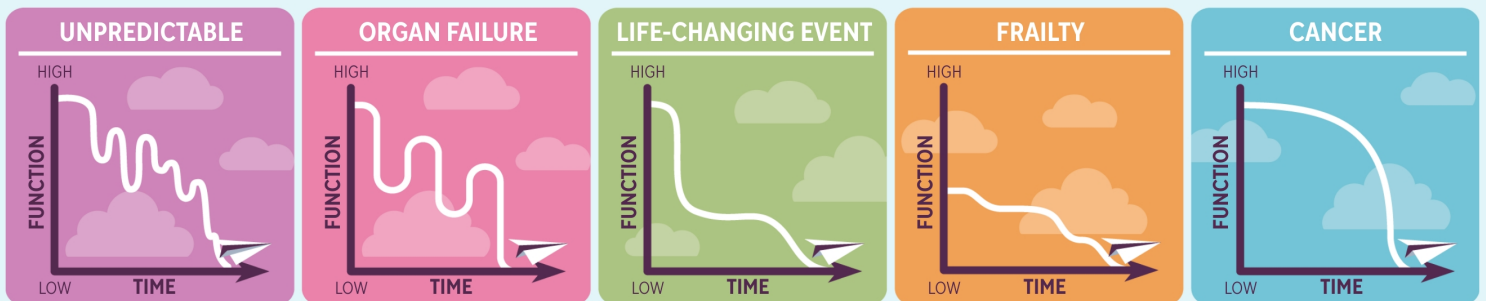
Explore

Explore their information needs before moving onto exploring hopes / worries in the context of living with expected change

"As you look at this picture, what questions might you have about what to expect as your illness advances?"

"Where do you think you are on this path?" "What makes you say that?" "Can I tell you where I think you are?"

Illness Trajectories - Final year of life



Graphs modified from Lunney, JR et al. (2003). Patterns for functional decline at EOL. JAMA, 289(18); 2387-92 and Ballentine, JM. (2018). The five trajectories: Supporting patients during serious illness. CSU Shiley Institute for Palliative Care. 14p.

