



Without Regrets

A Nurse's Advice about Aging and Dying

1. In chapter two, I describe what happens when I ask students to describe what they think a "good death" would be for them. Is it a good idea to talk openly about death? What is your idea of a "good death"?
2. The stories collected in this book strongly suggest that the values we hold dear not only influence our lives, but also our deaths. How did Mable's or Isabel's, or Big John's values contribute to their ability to experience death on their own terms?
3. Describe three to five things you treasure most in living. How will these values contribute to the decisions you and your family will face during times of serious, perhaps terminal, illness?
4. In the chapter describing family systems, I talk about the various roles that family members assume over time. What patterns of family dynamics do you see in your immediate family? What role do you play in your family of origin? Why is it important to acknowledge these family patterns and expectations?
5. Are you the healthcare proxy for anyone? If so, have you talked with them about what matters most to them in living? In dying? Did they begin the conversation, or did you? How can we begin such delicate and caring conversations?
6. Have you chosen a healthcare proxy for yourself? If so, is that person aware of your choice? What strengths or personal characteristics did you consider in making your choice? Have you talked with your proxy about your values and expectations?
7. Why is it important to document your choice of decision maker and communicated that choice to others?
8. What would be your utmost request if you were seriously ill? How would your values influence your goals of care and your choice of healthcare treatments?
9. Have you been involved in caring for someone who is seriously ill? If so, were you able to use their values and goals of care in deciding how to guide their healthcare decisions? Have you any regrets about the decisions that you made for someone who was seriously ill?
10. What are some of the lessons in this book that can help us – as caregivers and healthcare proxies – look back on our experience "without regrets"?