

Values Directive Worksheet

A values directive is a document that outlines your own personal beliefs, values and wishes regarding your health and personal care. A values directive can act as a guide for your agent(s) to help them make decisions that align with your wishes. Unlike an "instructional directive" (which mandates specific, binding actions like "no CPR"), a values directive provides *context* for your agent(s) and healthcare providers; it can help them make decisions in situations that you didn't explicitly foresee.

Below are a couple exercises to help you think about your wishes, values and beliefs. Then, take a few moments to read through some sample values directives on the following pages.

What does (or does not) resonate with you? **What would you put in your values directive?**

What gives your life meaning and brings you happiness?*

Circle or star the items below that are most important to you. Add anything else that is not on the list.

- Being able to live independently
- Being able to recognize others
- Being able to communicate with others
- Work
- Travel
- Having my privacy
- Being able to do my hobbies
- Being with my family
- Being with my friends
- Being with my pet(s)
- Reading
- Music
- Art
- Being able to practice my faith
- Being physically active
- Being outside/in nature
- Knowing about my health
- Food/eating what I want
- Helping other people
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Worries and fears

Are there things that you worry about and would want to avoid if you became very sick?

- Losing all or most of my ability
- Having to rely on others for most or all of my care
- Being unable to communicate with others
- Being a burden to family members
- Losing my privacy
- Being alone
- Losing control of my bodily functions
- Being in pain
- Struggling to breathe
- Being unconscious most of the time
- Losing my dignity
- Being kept alive by machines with no chance of survival
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

* Adapted from: Legal Info Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Personal Directives Reflection Guide. 2023.

My Wishes and Preferences[†]

These are my favourite activities:

I enjoy spending time with: _____

I like to start my day by: _____

I like to end my day by: _____

When things get hard I turn to: _____

These are the beliefs and traditions that are important to me:

I want to know (nothing/some/everything) about how sick I am and what will happen.

If I am unlikely to get better, I would want to know:

Being in pain is _____ to me.

My privacy is _____ to me.

Being able to move around how I want is _____ to me.

These things would make it more enjoyable if I could not move around how I want:

Not being able to express myself, hear or share my thoughts would be _____ to me.

If I could not express myself with words, I would want to:

Asking for help is _____ to me.

I would want support with:

I would want my care to include:

[†] Adapted from: Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association. My Advance Care Planning Activity Bundle. 2024.

Sample values directives:

"If I'm faced with an incurable progressive disease, my main goals as my health deteriorates would be to be able to speak and think as clearly as possible and be with my family.

I want to be able to listen to music and watch movies.

I fear loss of cognitive capacity.

I'm not afraid of loss of independence, but value my intellect, highly critical functions to preserve, if possible, would be my hearing and cognitive functioning.

I am an introvert and enjoy time alone and time with my partner and immediate family, and close friends.

I love music and the arts. I love a great movie.

I love to think about big ideas and come up with innovative solutions for the world's ills, especially for healthcare and medical education.

If, due to illness or injury, I am left with profound cognitive deficits and am no longer able to engage in complex thinking and debate, or I'm permanently not able to make medical decisions anymore, I would not want life-prolonging treatments in that condition. I would prefer palliative care and allowing the natural progression of disease and dying."

"The most important people in my life are my family- my husband, my kids, my parents, and my dog. Spending time with them brings me joy and gives my life meaning.

I'm a homebody. I enjoy being home and doing projects around the house. I don't need or enjoy a full schedule of activities, I'm an introvert who needs my alone time as much as time with my family and friends.

I'm not a person who needs to be outside/in nature, so if my physical functioning or circumstances would limit this, I think I would be okay. But I need to use my brain. I love a good brain game, board games, puzzles, books, and thought-provoking movies. Being able to continue to play games and do puzzles, and read or listen to books or podcasts, would be important for adding pleasure to my life.

I love art and to create- please help me find a way to keep crafting and creating if/when my physical or cognitive functioning declines.

I love a good cup of coffee. And I also have a huge sweet tooth. Eating chocolate every day brings me joy.

If I were to get very sick, I would want as much information as possible about my illness, including prognosis and how much time I might have left. It's important to me to know what to expect, so I can prioritize how to spend the time I have left.

At this point in my life, if I were to get very sick, what's most important to me is being there for my kids- being able to meaningfully communicate with them, listen, provide advice and support is paramount. I would prioritize length of life over quality of life if it meant I could still continue to support my kids."

"My greatest joy is spending time with my spouse, my kids and their families. Being with them often, at our homes and at our cabin, for celebrations, to visit, share food, play games, and laugh gives my life meaning. It would be very hard for me if my health condition or treatment permanently kept me from living with my spouse or seeing my family."

"I'm a driven person. It's very important to me to be intellectually and physically well.

It's a point of pride that I've been the chair of the board of the company that I founded for 50 years into my 90s.

I am a voracious reader of anything related to business, including politics and world affairs. As well, I push myself to eat nutritiously and exercise appropriately so that I can remain vital and continue to play tennis and golf weekly.

It would be unacceptable to me to be kept alive by machines, to lose the ability to move around and be outdoors, and to be unable to communicate.

My granddaughter is very like-minded, and I've had many conversations with her about my values and wishes for health care. If I am unable to make health care decisions, I trust her to make decisions relating to my care and interpret my values and wishes to the specific situation and decide what is best for me. I do not want any others to provide direction or question her decisions."

"My Christian spirituality and membership in my community church is one of the most important values in my life. I supremely enjoy worshipping, fellowship, serving in various volunteer roles (like our food insecurity project) and receiving Pastoral Care from my Minister.

Although I believe life is sacred and a gift from God, I would not undergo all treatments to preserve life. Rather, I am content knowing that God will take me when it's my time.

I do not want to suffer, so I've discussed my goals of care with my doctor and feel a "comfort" designation most aligns with my goals."

Now it's your turn... What would you put in your values directive?