

# What To Do If Family Members Disagree

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To ensure your wishes are followed, be certain that the person you appoint to be your healthcare agent understands your wishes and will abide by them. Your agent has the legal right to make decisions for you even if close family members disagree. However, should close family members express strong disagreement, your healthcare agent and healthcare provider may find it extremely difficult to carry out the decisions you would want.

If you foresee that your healthcare agent may encounter resistance from your family members, the following steps can help:

- Communicate with family members you anticipate may object to your decisions.
- Tell them in writing whom you have appointed to be your healthcare agent and explain why you have done so.
- Let them know that you do not wish them to be involved with decisions about your medical care and give a copy of these communications to your healthcare agent as well.

Give your primary physician copies of written communications you have made. Prepare a more specific, written living will. Make it clear in your documents that you want your agent to resolve any uncertainties that could arise when interpreting your living will. A way to say this is: “My agent should make any decisions about how to interpret or when to apply my living will”.

An important part of communicating your end-of-life wishes is discussing with your loved ones what you may need from them if you are faced with a life-limiting illness. Some questions that you may want to ask are:

- Will you seek out information about my illness, advance directives, your roles as caregivers, and what to expect as I near the end of life?
- Will you respect my wants and needs, even if they are different from what they used to be and if you don't agree with my choices?
- If I cannot communicate for myself, will you advocate for me to make sure that what I want is done, even if you would not make the same choices yourself?