



# Conversations over a cuppa

Vol 3.

When Someone You  
Love is Seriously Ill



Irish  
Hospice  
Foundation

## Maybe it's time to start?

Conversations over a Cuppa is something we would like to encourage in every household in Ireland. Especially at the moment when death and illness feel closer to us and we may find ourselves thinking about it more often.

We hope it won't happen to us, or those we love. Yet, the experiences of illness, death and dying are all around us. At any time, any one of us, our families or friends could be affected. It's not a choice; it's something that happens.

Conversations over a Cuppa is a series of four helpful and practical guides to support and encourage you to plan ahead, talk with others and offer practical support to those serious illness and facing end of life.

## A problem shared is often a problem halved.

It can be very hard for us to see someone we love and care for become seriously ill. Life changes often very suddenly. Things we may have taken for granted become very precious as we struggle to hold onto them.

Spending time together, doing ordinary everyday things, thinking and planning for the future, can be overtaken by the struggles of just coping with doctors appointments, visiting hospitals and being a carer.

Sharing concerns, worries and fears can help find ways of coping and make things more manageable.

### Conversations over a Cuppa series:

- Vol 1. Dying to talk - how to have a general conversation
- Vol 2. When someone you know is seriously ill ... what to say when you don't know what to say
- Vol 3. When someone you love is seriously ill
- Vol 4. When you are seriously ill

## Will talking together help?

Every situation is different, as is every family and individual family member. Some families don't talk or express their feelings openly; others do.

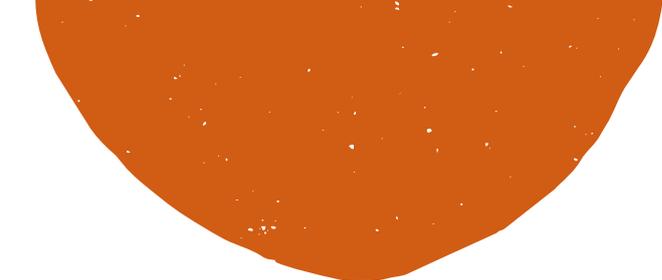
Each person and family has to find the way of coping that's best for them. Here are some helpful things to bear in mind:

- When a person is ill, they have the right to know as much as they wish about their illness, their treatments and what may happen in the future. Doctors, nurses and other carers have a duty to give as much information as the person wants to hear.
- Evidence tells us that many people prefer to be fully informed about their illness. Knowing the facts tends to lead to less anxiety than secrecy or conflicting information.
- Having as much information enables them people to plan for future: to make decisions about their place of care, put their affairs in order, seek and give forgiveness, and say goodbyes.
- Hiding the truth is rarely possible. Relatives, friends, and others find it hard not to give non verbal clues about what is happening.

## Accept that this is hard

It's hard to talk about these things- our fears of what the future might hold; the person we love and care for may not get better, that their condition may worsen and that they might die. It seems easier to keep these thoughts to ourselves





## Talking together

There's no easy way of facing the difficulties of serious illness, or the prospect of the death of someone we care about.

- Not talking doesn't make it go away.
- We can't protect each other from the realities of illness, loss and dying.
- We can, however, support one another in making a difficult journey together.

There's no single set of words that are the 'right thing to say', but it's important to find ways of talking. The person who is ill may say something about how they are feeling, or about their worries.

Simply acknowledging this by the following;

**'I can see you're concerned/wondering about ...would you like to talk a little about it?'**

Simply saying this may start a conversation where there are no wrong or right answers. Sharing concerns, worries and fears can help find ways of coping and make things more manageable.





## Don't let your distress stop you

Try not to let your own feelings of distress stop you taking part in an unhelpful conversation with the person who is ill by saying things like 'You shouldn't worry about that' or 'you'll be better in no time'.

We can't promise one another that everything will be fine. Through listening and sharing what's happening, we can give reassurance that we'll offer the best care and support that we can.

**Talking about things we find difficult doesn't make them happen, nor will it take them away. But, talking can help find ways of coping together.**

We may think there's no point in worrying other family members, they have enough to be getting on with. We may believe that it wouldn't be fair to talk to the person who is ill. Or, it's better if they don't know how serious things are, as they wouldn't be able to cope. So we just 'get-on' as best we can.

Yet it is likely that if we're worried and thinking about these things, so are the other family members, including the person who is ill.

**Thinking and talking about death and dying can be hard. It may make us feel frightened or sad; we might think that it's morbid and unpleasant and better left to some other time - but dying and death is something that we all face; they are part of all our lives. Talking about it can help.**

# Useful Resources

## Think Ahead

[www.thinkahead.ie](http://www.thinkahead.ie)

## Irish Hospice Foundation's Care and Inform Hub

<https://hospicefoundation.ie/covid19careandinform/>

## Irish Hospice Foundation Bereavement Support Line

Freephone 1800 80 70 77. Available Monday-Friday 10am-1pm

<https://hospicefoundation.ie/bereavement-2-2/bereavement-support-line/>

## Bereaved.ie

<https://hospicefoundation.ie/bereavement-2-2/covid19-care-and-inform/>

## Your Mental Health

<https://bit.ly/39FhOZ8>

## Children and Grief

[www.childhoodbereavement.ie](http://www.childhoodbereavement.ie)

## Citizens information

<https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/>

## HSE

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

This resource is brought to you by Irish Hospice Foundation

If you would like to support us you can donate at [www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)