Conversations for Life & The Conversation Game

To prevent arguments by making sure my family knows what I want
The History and Development of the Conversation Game

• It Began with Coda Alliance
  – A non-profit organization established in 2001
  – The primary goal: to help individuals prepare for and “live well” at the end of life, to understand choices and document their wishes, values and preferences

• The Development of the Conversation Game
  – Began in 2004 with an Archstone Foundation grant, primarily overseen by Dr. Elizabeth Menkin
  – Research with Assisted Living residents identified reoccurring EOL themes, values, concerns and preferences
Primary objectives of using the Conversation Game cards

• To facilitate the End-Of-Life “conversation”
  – The cards promote and guide the “conversation”, introducing new concepts that help individuals anticipate future challenges and choices

• To identify EOL wishes, values and preferences
  – The “conversation” replaces guessing and questions with confidence and knowledge to help patients/families identify what matters most

• To use EOL preferences to communicate & document choices and guide care
  – The ultimate goal is to ensure EOL wishes, values and preferences are understood and honored to provide quality of life at the end of life
What is the Conversation Game?

• A deck of 36 cards similar to traditional playing cards in size and feel, available in English and Spanish.

• Informative phrases identified as important at the end of life are on each card.

• A “Wild” card encourages customized wishes, personal preferences and more “conversation”.

• Basic instructions are included with free training materials, tips, scenarios and testimonials online.

• Card decks are available in four different colors to prevent decks from mixing when used in groups.
Who Uses GoWish Cards?

• Families, friends, surrogates and healthcare agents
  – Anyone supporting loved ones nearing EOL, those faced with complex family dynamics and healthcare agents responsible for representing others

• Estate planners, elder law attorneys and educators
  – Professionals teaching and guiding advanced planning at any life stage

• Religious and spiritual leaders
  – Priests, Chaplains, Rabbis, Pastors, Imams, etc.

• Medical professional
  – Doctors, nurses, social workers and care staff

• Patients and residents
  – Ventilator and trauma patients, the terminally and critically ill and residents of assisted living, long term care or other such facilities
Where Are GoWish Cards Used?

• Private homes and care facilities
• Community centers and places of worship
• Educational institutions and training centers
• Law offices and places of business
• Hospitals and clinics
• Hospices and Palliative Care centers
• Online and anywhere desired
When Are GoWish Cards Used?
(See notes below for details)

- Before the need arises, any time
- At family meetings and gatherings with friends
- In End-Of-Life trainings and seminars
- Prior to filling out an Advance Directive or POLST form
- Upon diagnosis of life threatening illnesses
- After serious accidents
Why the Conversation Game Cards Work

• Educational
  – Introduce new concepts, talking points and thought-provoking ideas for visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners

• Flexible
  – Used in many places in many ways depending on personal preferences, abilities and circumstances

• Simple and non-threatening
  – Easy to read, basic language, short phrases, concise concepts, require no skills, technology or electricity and they are not a legal document

• Wild card and open ended phrases
  – The Wild Card encourages personal wishes to be explored and expressed, phrases allow for broad interpretation and introspection

• Familiar and comforting format
  – Cards are familiar and tangible, keeping hands and eyes busy if emotions are high, can also encourage eye contact and conversation
GoWish Sorting Options
(See notes below for details)

• Sorting cards into 3 piles
  – Least, somewhat and most important cards
    • Rank top 10 in the most important pile, discuss top 3 or more

• Most important theme
  – Pick the most important of 6 themes, rank and discuss
    • Pick the next most important theme, rank, discuss and repeat

• Most important card “Quick Pick”
  – In large groups or when time is limited
    • Pick the most important card, have participants share and discuss
GoWish Sorting Options
 “The Guessing Game”
 (See notes below for details)

• Sorting for someone who can sort for themselves
  – Never assume you know what they want

• Sorting for them correctly
  – Getting it right can be so validating

• Sorting for them incorrectly
  – Getting it wrong can be so valuable
Facilitating the Conversation
(See notes below for details)

• Active listening
  – Validate feelings, re-state or paraphrase their comments and feed back their concerns as questions

• Gentle probing
  – Ask questions to confirm understanding, encourage them to expand on their comments and clarify their meaning

• Modeling the conversation
  – Show how to sort the cards, talk about why certain cards are important to you, verbalize feelings and think out loud
Additional Tools to Capture & Document EOL Wishes and Preferences

• PPC

• Advance Directive

• PPC

• DNAR/Others

(See notes below for details)
GoWish Online

• GoWish cards are available for purchase at:
  www.codaalliance.org
  – This PowerPoint presentation and other GoWish training materials are available free of charge on this site, discounts are given for quantity card purchases

• The electronic version of GoWish can be played for free online at:
  www.gowish.org
  – Use the online version to project on large walls for virtual use in groups and seminars

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