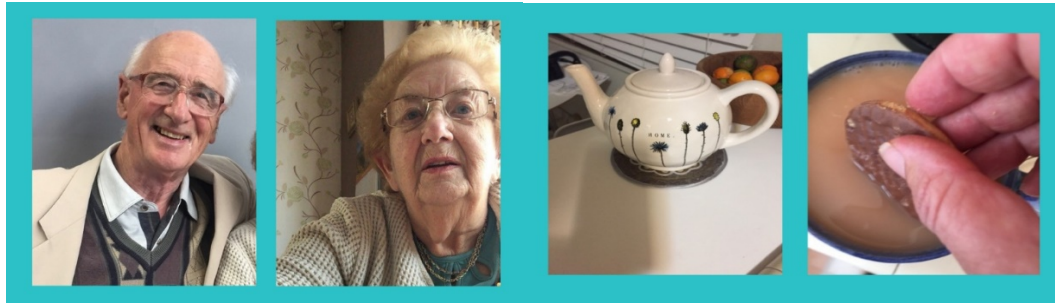


A Modern End of Life Conversation

Modern technology, me, my parents, tea and biscuits



The hesitation to talk

This is my Mum and Dad; we Facetime every few days. Before each call, they get their tea and biscuits ready using cups I bought them to match mine that they loved so much. I arrive at the screen with my coffee. It's "our time", chatting over a nice pot of tea and chocolate biscuits.

Today was going to be different because I wanted to share some of what I wanted around my end of life care. I sent them a copy of everything I wrote up in advance. When they appeared on-screen, you can imagine - they had a bigger pile of biscuits than usual!

I explained I had used the Conversation Game in training, and that it had inspired me to start looking at what I wanted for my life care if anything should happen to me. I'd had the information in a file for a while and finally assembled it into a format that would be useful to those around me. I have several long-term conditions and wanted to tell my Mum and Dad about what I had been doing and why. I know as a family we all have different religious and spiritual beliefs, and I couldn't think of anything worse than the arguments about my care if I was incapacitated.

"You know what I want!"

My Mum listened and leaned in but wasn't up for a conversation about her own wishes. She said my Dad knew what she wanted as far as a funeral was concerned. I raised an eyebrow. "But what about your care before you die? What if you get ill, fall, or have a heart attack?"

As usual, she pulled a face. I talked to my Dad, who, in his 80s and an ex-accountant, is like many of my family members, not much into talking about anything he wants when it comes to end of life plans. They all just think it's about setting up funeral arrangements and the service. What use is that to them when they're dead?

A surprising response

To my surprise, my Dad was interested in some of what I told him and understood why I wanted him to know what I'd want if anything should happen. Both my parents thought I would know what they wanted if it were the reverse - I had no idea.

My mum didn't want to look through the cards; she repeated that Dad would know what she wanted. I gave him a card pack and explained the basics of how they worked. He didn't want to discuss it in person (which was mostly the point of the game for me). So, I asked him to find three to five cards that resonated most with him and three cards that he knew he didn't want, just to get us started.

Being thorough and an accounts man, what he sent me following our Facetime chat, was an Excel spreadsheet listing all 36 cards, with a second column stating what each means to him. It was amazing!

His accompanying letter read:

I sat down today and for two hours went through the cards you sent me. Next to each, I have put my immediate reactions to the cards. Hopefully, they will inform a more considered document.

Looking forward to discussing it with you.

*Love,
Dad x*

A powerful outcome

I learned things I never knew. I had ideas and thoughts validated. Dad gave lists of who he'd like to do what. He talked about his funeral, his family, his friends, his care...all from his immediate reactions. He decided to turn it into a plan and sent my siblings and me each a copy. Some things still need more in-depth conversations in terms of what precisely that meant...but...wow! That was an outcome, and totally in his own style.

Life planning - The Conversation game.	My immediate responses....	Comments from family
		To discuss
1. To be free from pain	Obviously yes, I suppose I need to talk to you about this as I don't know a great deal...	Ok more specifically, and Why or why not is that important to you?
2. To be free from anxiety	I may not be in control of how anxious I might become but would like to know..... about any diagnosis or prognosis. You know me I would want to hear all the evidence - to come to a logical conclusion or decision - obviously anxious can also....	
3. Not being short of breath	anything to reduce this impact would be good - but would like to discuss the option....	
4. To be kept clean	Like most people I want to be presentable, not a top priority but would not like to smell or be dirty. I would prefer a Male helper. It would be nice to have a shave....	
5. Have my family prepared for my death	Absolutely. That is why I am doing this and will send out accompanying notes so we can all be on the same page	
6. To have my financial affairs in order	I want to be involved in all my financial decisions as long as possible. It has always....	
7. To Die at home	I know its not always medically possible to do this but if push came to shove home would.....	
8. To know how my body will change	Well I suppose only so much as I may have to adapt to my new circumstances and under....	
9. To feel my life is complete	I suppose what does it mean to feel complete? Theres still hings I like to do, but really I	
10. To remember personal accomplishmer	I Don't see any reason to do this in the context of my setting and care, I know what I have....	