

[Track 3: Managing Hope and Expectations]

[Narrator]

At this point, it seems important to say a few things about hope at the end of life. No matter what the stage of illness, hope is important. Many people wonder how it is possible for someone to remain hopeful when they are dying. Sometimes we overlook the fact that persons who are dying are also still living, and they may need emotional help to live as fully as possible until they die.

Hope is a complex concept, and defining it is not easy. Part of the problem is that there are many kinds of hope, and people define hope differently. Most people, especially those in health care, are familiar with the idea of “therapeutic hope” – hope that is related to therapy and to curing or controlling your disease. But hope is much broader than that.

Hope changes as circumstances change. If you find your disease can no longer be controlled, that you are going to die, you may find new hopes for whatever time you have left. You may hope for something general like living as fully as possible until you die. Or your hopes may be more specific, like living to see a grandchild born, or visiting a favorite spot once more. Or you may hope to be able to spend one more day with a dear friend, or to hold a loved one again. As your condition worsens, you can hope for a pain-free or peaceful death, or, depending on your faith or belief, a life after death or once again seeing loved ones who have died before you. There is always something to hope for, and you have the right to remain hopeful until death.