



Think about the person who is closest to you, the one to whom you feel most connected, the person most likely to care for you when you face declining health. Complete the following sentences with the thoughts that first come to mind with regards to what you feel or would wish to communicate to that person. This is just a “**beginning**” **exercise**. There is not enough time to write extensively, so simply take a few moments to complete each of these statements with *at least one sentence as a start* to considering your legacy and what you would like to “leave behind.”

When I think of you (my loved one, caregiver, spouse, child, friend), what I love and appreciate the most about you is:

You have given me:

I hope I have given you:

My wish is that we will be together until:

At some point, my body and mind will begin to give out. When that happens, I want you to know that...

Caregiving is hard and expensive. If, at all possible, my preference would be that: _____ cares for me at _____ (location).

In reference to that care, the following things are **most important** to me:

If that wish cannot happen or if it becomes too difficult financially, physically, or psychologically, I want you to know that:

Always remember:



The **most common things** with which survivors struggle after the death of a loved one:

Guilt:

- Caregiver frustration and loss of patience
- Caregiver fatigue and having needed "a break"
- Medical decisions they had to make alone
- Having had to ask for assistance
- Not having been present at the time of death
- Not having expressed enough love to the deceased or had the opportunity for last conversations

Absence of comfort:

- Needing people around after the death who understand
- The invisibility of important dates connected to their loved one
- Lack of supportive people or resources to which they can reach out after a loved one's death
- Lack of people who KNEW them and their loved one and are willing to accept their grief and their connection to their loved one as REAL

Not knowing who they are any more:

- Questioning whether they were REALLY loved and being challenged to remember their assets
- Forgetting who they were to the person who died, what about them was valued, steady-state, appreciated, important, ever-lasting...

Forgetting the strengths and purpose they had in their life beyond their relationship with their loved one: *"You are good at _____ and I imagine you..."*

Whether to have a Ceremony or Not:

Questioning whether a ceremony is necessary

Understanding that doing something in honor of the person one loves provides tremendous and important healing power

Realizing that rituals provide the opportunity for others to bear witness to that which is important in our life and for them to provide us with comfort and care

Actively engaging in continued rituals with the acknowledgement that they have ongoing importance in honoring, valuing, and healing the love (and grief) we continue to hold

On my birthday each year...

On our wedding anniversary for as long as you feel comforted by doing so...

On your birthday...

How to get rid of possessions belonging to the deceased

To whom?

To what agency would it feel meaningful for them to be given?

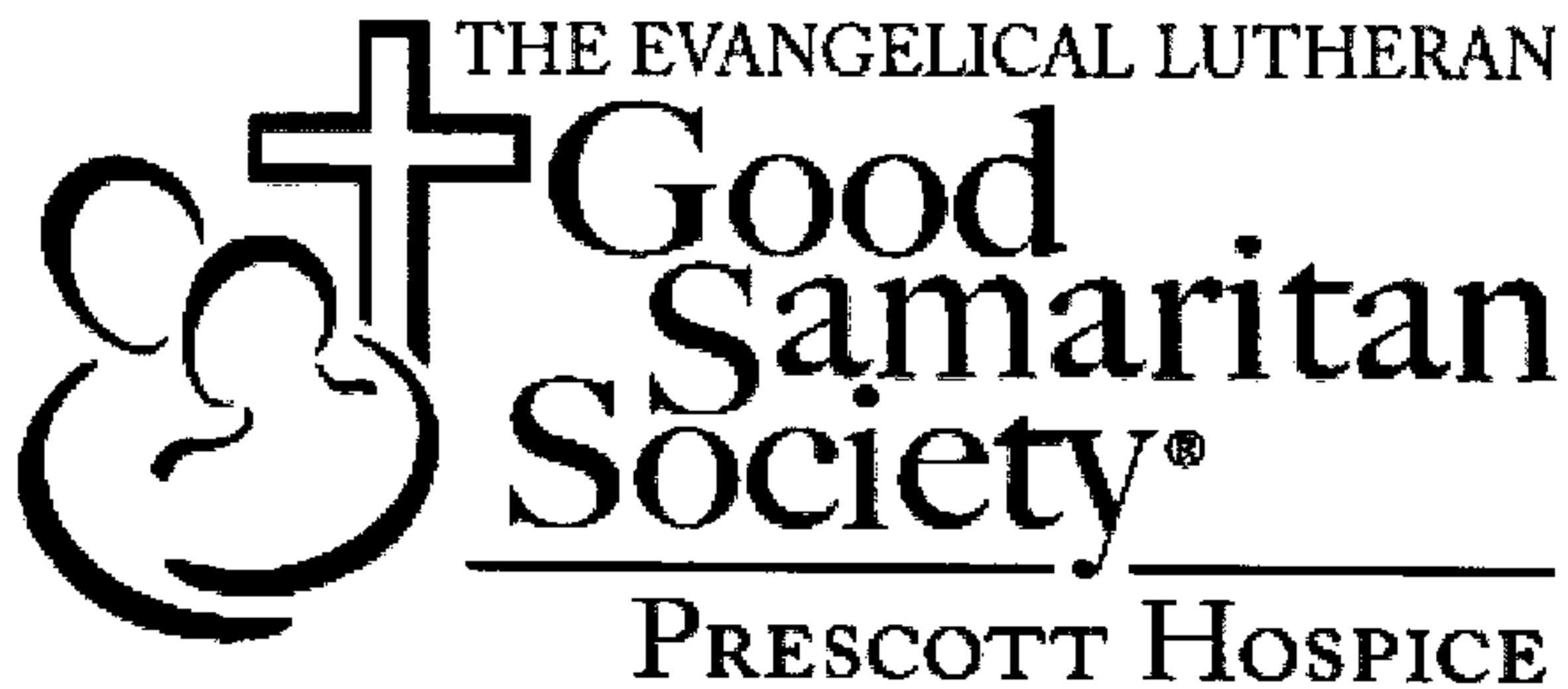
How to give away items of importance

The need to share the stories connected to those items

Who will properly honor those possessions?

What would be meaningful to the deceased?

Could they be sold and the proceeds go to an agency of meaning?



A Legacy of Love:

**An instruction book
for the people I love
after I am gone**

**1065 Ruth Street, Prescott, AZ 86301
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www.good-sam.com**

Leaving a Legacy of Love

All marriages end in either divorce or death

*When we **DON'T TALK** about things they tend to grow **BIGGER**.*

We are more alone in the darkness of night than in the light of day.

- Surviving family members who have discussed the future with their loved ones before death, fare far better after that family member dies than those who have not talked or communicated about the future.
- Conversations can become an instruction book for the future.
- Having instructions to follow after a death can be extremely helpful and even healing for surviving family members.
- When you attempt to do something you have never done before, having a guide provides security and comfort.
- Fear of talking (you or your loved one) – not everyone is a talker
- Alternative: write out words that will make a difference. Conceptualize it as your legacy of love. You can give your surviving family member(s) a way to honor you after you die. You can empower them with “things to do” (having “something to do” makes a difference - like the ancient tradition of sending the husband to “boil water” when the mother was in labor).

Where to begin:

- Start your writing with the assumption that your living body might still be present, but you may be physically unable to offer your normal assurances or inputs to decisions. Consider addressing the following subjects:
 - Demands of caregiving:
 - The tendency of caregivers to feel guilty after the death of a loved one (due to “not having done enough,” feeling incredibly tired, becoming emotionally drained, having a lack of patience, etc.). How can you address that NOW, before it occurs?

- Acknowledge changes that might lead to your need for facility care with a statement such as: *“The kinds of changes for which I would expect you to seriously consider placing me in a facility to receive care include:”*

- Write your own paragraph describing who you are. This is to give your loved one something they can post on your door if you do go into a facility: *“This is a paragraph describing who I am/have been. Please post it on my door if I go into a hospital, rehabilitation center, or care facility. It will empower others to recognize and treat me with the same kindness and respect you give me. Add to the paragraph if you would like.”*

- Encourage your loved one not to do too much: *Don't do too much; I know you and...* (What are the things your loved one worries about, focuses on, tries to perfect or manage that you might be able to release them from?)

- Remind your loved one that they can't do everything: *You have given me so much. I know there may come a time when it is impossible to do everything for me:*
 - *The things I consider most important at the end of my life are:*

- *The things I encourage you to relieve yourself of doing are:*

- Confess that in this booklet you have tried to consider all the possibilities, but you couldn't know everything.

Encourage them to seek help from particular friends and family: *If/when I start to decline, make sure you call on (list friends and family #s):*

When it gets more difficult, reach out to: (List more #s here. Identify people who, although they might be more geographically distant, might have an increased sense of duty or investment in assisting when caregiving becomes most difficult):

Draft an example of a rotating schedule: Voice that you want your loved one to have good support and the opportunity to take breaks from caregiving (write an example):

Finally know that: (Here you might write something like: *I love you and sometimes hard decisions have to be made. We always made decisions with regards to how they affected BOTH of us. You have to continue to keep yourself in the equation, especially if I am not here to speak for you. The focus shouldn't always be me. I would be mad if it was! You might have to give my care over to others or place me in a facility, because YOU, too, are important. You might need respite from caregiving, because even nurses and doctors only work shifts. You might need to remember that we signed onto this together and that means YOU TOO, with regards to having time, love, sleep, comfort, and care.*)

Write out some of the things you want with regards to a living will and/or other legal documents. Local elder care and estate attorneys can help with these, but you can also visit these sites and use the documents they have available. Most of the documents are free to download.

- Advanced Directives: Arizona Attorney General website:
<https://www.azag.gov/seniors/life-care-planning>
- Arizona Secretary of State – Digital storage of Advance Directives:
<https://azsos.gov/services/advance-directives>
- Five Wishes – easy to use advance directive, accepted in 42 states, including AZ
<https://agingwithdignity.org/>; <https://fivewishes.org/>; Five Wishes is \$5 (paper or online version).

Make a resource folder: *Below are further things I have collected together in a folder for you, because they are the important things you will need when I die.*

The folder is located: _____ *and is titled* _____

It should contain the following:

- Birth certificates
- Social security numbers/cards
- Living will/trust
- Powers of Attorney – Medical/ Legal/Financial
- Marriage certificate
- Tax returns (for the past 3-5 years)
- Legal papers connected to properties we own (mortgages, purchase agreements, titles, etc.)
- Car titles
- Divorce papers (if one party has gone through a divorce earlier in life)
- Investment statements
- Pensions, 401K, IRA, benefits/beneficiaries
- Life insurance policies
- Discharge papers (if in the military)
- Adoption papers (if a family member was adopted)
- Bank accounts
- Saving account (possibly have on in your spouse's name only)
- Credit Card information
- Passwords connected to important accounts

As I am declining, continue to talk to me about meaningful memories like:

If I am very ill, these are the people I want close by:

These are the people I would prefer not know about my status:

Things that might comfort me at the end of my life are:

What to Do When I'm Gone

You will have many things to do and to manage upon my death. It is important to me that you take care of YOU. I want you to:

Have a service if YOU would like. It is/is not important for me. It may be incredibly important for you (research shows that memorial services assist surviving family members in better processing the grief connected to the death of a loved one). I am gone. YOU are still here. Do what feels healing/important to you.

- A potluck at another person's house or at a community room . That way all you have to do is take a dish I would have liked (but you will be in the company of people who care)
- A memorial somewhere of importance to you. Take 3X5 cards on which people who attend can write memories of me to give to you.
- A dinner on my birthday
- A gathering a year after my death
- All of the above
- Other ideas:

The greater the number of intentional acts of honoring that surviving family members have after the death of a loved one, the more they assist their own grief process.

If you have a service:

- Play this music:
- Remind people that I always said (classic sayings):
- Make sure you serve:
- Don't forget the story about:
- (If you can't tell the story, write it down and get _____ to read it)

Treat my physical remains as follows:

- Bury me:
- Scatter my ashes:
- Other
- Donate these things to these organizations:

Objects of importance I would like you to pass on to others (include specifics with regards to how your family member can pass on these objects in an easily manageable way and/or permission to “abandoned ship” if your plan turns out to be unmanageable):

Five things I love about you are:

I will always keep and carry with me:

I hope you will keep and carry with you:

I hope you will always remember:

I will always remember:

Be kind to yourself

- *Especially if you cared for me. I imagine it wasn't easy. I remember one time when I was sick and... (funny/serious memory of a challenging event in the past that you both overcame)*
- *If I have died first, in some ways, I have gotten the sweet end of the deal. I departed/died and left you here, having to walk on alone. I can't imagine how tired you feel. I wish I could:*
- *Make sure you do the following things for yourself:*

Other information you might need after I am gone, especially if the information fell into the category of “my job” previously:

- Tax person
- Accountant
- Bank account information
- Passwords (bank accounts, retirement accounts, credit card accounts, etc.)
- House title
- Car title
- Car mechanic
- Utility departments: water, electric, phone, etc. (paid on-line or by mail?)
- Safe deposit box key
- Important names and numbers

- Funeral arrangements
- Veteran Affairs
- National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona (602-379-4615)
- Electrician
- Location of fuse box
- Location of furnace filter/maintenance
- Location of air conditioner filter/maintenance
- Plumber
- Irrigation controls
- Alarm maintenance/controls
- House cleaning services
- My closest friends
- Password to my phone , my social media accounts, my email:

- Pet Information
 - Diet
 - Veterinarian
 - Pet guardianship program, Yavapai Humane Society(928-445-2666)
- Where I buy
- How to make
- Favorite recipe

Words of wisdom and/or sayings not to forget! (include humor wherever possible)

*Speak to me when you can. Speaking to **deceased loved ones** is something that most people find themselves doing after the death of a spouse. It is important and healing (and NOT crazy...as some people who don't know grief imagine). *Talk to me and imagine my reply. Know that I will always be with you.**

- *Visit these places when you are able and/or if you need to feel close to me:*
- *Know that my spirit is there when* (list vulnerable times you know your loved one has, i.e.: your back pain flares up, at 3:00 am when you can't sleep, the kids call with complaints, etc.):

SHARING MEMORIES

You are important to me because...

My best memories are:

One of the happiest times I remember is...

The saddest memory I have is...

The most challenging moment between us was...

An embarrassing moment between us happened when...

I get angry when...

I am comforted by...

Something important you taught me was...

Something I hope I have given to you is...

If only...

I worry about...

Never forget...

(Keep in mind that even if your loved one is no longer responsive, hearing is believed to be the last sense that a person loses. You can still share memories with him/her by talking quietly, reading journal pages, speaking of your love, etc. Family members often find it therapeutic to do this as a group around the bedside.)

RESOURCE PAGES

Caregiver support groups

- Willow Hills Baptist Church (928-445-5520)
- Nazarene Church (928-445-4562) Marcia Findlay
- Desert Southwest Alzheimer's Association (928-771-9257)
- Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Cancer and Stroke support groups

Caregiver support options:

Below are three options in which healthcare providers come to the patient, instead of the patient going to the care provider.

- Home Health – After surgery, illness or new diagnosis. MD prescribed. Physical therapists may help you gain ability while occupational therapists may teach you to take care of your daily needs and maneuver throughout your home. Nurses may help you manage wounds, medications and create achievable goals for healing and getting better. (More info: <https://www.good-sam.com/resources/what-is-home-care>)
- Palliative Care - Focuses on managing the symptoms and stress of a serious and chronic illness, such as cancer, heart failure, COPD, kidney disease, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. The goal is to improve quality of life for the patient and the family. The palliative care team is made up of doctors, nurses, social workers and other support services who work together with a patient's regular doctors to offer an extra layer of support. It can be provided along with curative treatment. (More info: <https://www.capc.org/about/palliative-care/>)
- Hospice – Also a form of palliative care, but reserved for when a person can no longer benefit from curative treatments and has a limited life expectancy, as diagnosed by a physician (typically 6 months or less, if the disease were to run its normal course.) Offers comfort care based on the belief that every day has meaning and provides freedom of pain, fear and uncertainty in order to enhance the quality of life for

those nearing death. The hospice team includes a doctor, nurse, social worker, chaplain, bereavement coordinator, certified nursing assistant and volunteers. After the patient dies, hospice continues to offer bereavement support to the family for a year.

While many hospice patients do die within the 6 month time period, some patients are on hospice longer than 6 months, or even “graduate” off hospice because they are doing better and no longer require hospice care. They may come back on service later if they need it again. .
(More info: <https://www.good-sam.com/resources/what-is-hospice>)

Other resources for patients and caregivers:

- NACOG – Area Agency on Aging
<https://nacog.org/departments/AAA.html> 1-877-521-3500
- People Who Care
<http://peoplewhocareaz.com> 928-445-2480
- Senior Peer Support
<https://seniorpeerprogram.org> 928-445-5211
- Adult Care Services
<https://adultcareservices.org> 928-771-2335
- Adult Center of Prescott
<http://www.adultcenter.org> 928-778-3000
- Meals on Wheels
<http://prescottmealsonwheels.com> 928-445-7630
- Senior Connection
<http://www.seniorconnection.us> 928-778-3747
- Margaret T Morris Center
Adultcareservices.org 928-445-6633
- I-Care Center
icareadultdaycenter.com 928-515-1011
- Local Senior Centers and Area Churches also can be great places for socialization, support and comfort