

WHAT MATTERS

Rabbi Marc Margolius will Speak Shabbat morning, January 7, at 11:40 am on "What Matters: Caring Conversations About End of Life," a program in which WES is participating to promote facilitated, Jewish values-based conversations about wishes for the end of life.

"What Matters" (whatmattersny.org) is based at the JCC, funded by Plaza Memorial Chapel, and has engaged with several synagogues and communal organizations in New York City over the past 18 months. It is based on an evidence-based Advance Care Planning program that was developed at Gundersen Health Center in LaCrosse, Wisconsin in order to fill the gap between the legal documentation of advance directives, such as power of attorney for health care, and the emotional and spiritual reality of what it means to make decisions for a loved one.

The program involves facilitated conversations about an individual's desires, goals and wishes for their care if they are ill or have sudden event, such as a car accident, and are unable to speak for themselves. The conversation also gives the individual the opportunity to document and communicate those personal goals and wishes to his or her health care agent.

The program is not about preparing for death. It's about creating a structure where each of us can reflect on and articulate our goals and wishes and then communicate them to those who will represent us when we are unable to speak for ourselves. It regards advance care planning as an ongoing process which affects all adults and which should be revisited on a regular basis.

The What Matters working group from West End is led by Janet Rosenberg and comprised of Connie Goldfarb, Elaine Berg, Dorothea Ellern, Robin Gilman-Capon, Satu Ferentz, and Muriel Bermar. Several team members have had intensive training from the consultants from Gundersen Health Center and are now certified facilitators.

The program will launch at West End during January and February, with a Shabbat discussion led by the rabbi, a guest speaker, a workshop, and written communications. My talk will be the first in a series of WES programs including film discussion group, panel discussion, a book group discussion, and a panel featuring a physician, an attorney, rabbi, and an ethicist. The program is entirely voluntary and is intended for anyone over the age of 18.

West End members will be able to schedule a facilitated conversation in complete confidence and at no cost. We plan to set up a dedicated phone extension and email box at the synagogue where members can request information or an appointment with a trained facilitator.