

# Vermont Advance Directive Week 2025 (April 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>)

## Media Discussion Guide



### Films, Interviews and Videos to Start Conversations about Medical Decisions & End of Life:

- [Sister Úna Lived a Good Death \(PBS: Independent Lens\)](#)
  - Following a cancer diagnosis, Sister Úna—a mischievous, rule-breaking Catholic nun dedicated to social justice—chooses to live as she’s dying. In this touching end-of-life documentary, the self-proclaimed “leader of the misfits” plans her funeral in her last nine months to live.
- [Late Life: A Conversation with Atul Gawande \(Watch on Youtube\)](#)
  - Dr. Atul Gawande, author of “Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End” discusses end-of-life care with host Cathy Wurzter and shares his perspective on how we can change the conversation around end-of-life care.
- [The Descendants \(on Amazon Prime\)](#)
  - The film follows Matt King (George Clooney) as he attempts to reconnect with his two teenage daughters after his wife is severely injured in a boating accident. Her advance directive states that she does not want ‘extra-ordinary measures’ taken to keep her alive, and Matt must act as her healthcare decision-maker and navigate his own familial relationships.
- [Short Videos from the Conversation Project](#)
  - A variety of news clips, interviews and humorous PSA videos about starting conversations and normalizing discussions about medical decision-making. These are excellent ice-breakers to start large group conversations or to share with friend and loved ones in person or on social media.
  - Some of our favorites:
    - [You Guys Know PSA](#)
    - [Practice Makes Perfect](#)
    - [Normalizing End-of-Life Conversations: The Role of Communities](#)

Hosting any kind of discussion about serious illness conversations and medical decision-making can bring up a lot of difficult emotions. Read more about how to guide these conversations with tips from the Conversation Project.

[Getting Started Guide for Communities](#)

[Serious Illness Messaging Toolkit](#)

[Roadmap For Hosting an Event](#)

**Questions you can ask to promote discussion:**

1. What did you like best about the movie? Why?
2. What did you like least about the film? Why?
3. Did anything that happened in this movie remind you of something that has occurred in your own life or that you have seen occur to others?
4. What were you thinking as you finished watching the film?
5. What part of the story told by the movie was the most powerful? Why?
6. If you had a chance to ask a character in this movie a question, what would it be?
7. What feelings did you share with any of the characters in the movie?
8. Did your opinions change about any of the characters throughout the movie? If so, why?

**VEN's Advice for Guiding Difficult Conversations:**

1. Remember that everyone is coming from their unique personal perspective. How can you hold space for different opinions and meet people where they are at?
2. Before you start a film, remind everyone that they can step away/step out if they need to, and are welcome to come back at any time.
3. These films/documentaries are meant to help you think about what is important to you. Sometimes we will agree with what we are seeing, and sometimes we will disagree. Even if we don't agree, that is important information to help you understand what matters to you, and help you make a healthcare plan that reflects your personal values.
4. Conversations with those close to us are the most important thing when it comes to having our wishes honored. Most people imagine that their friends and loved ones will know what to do, but if you asked those closest to you, what would they say matters most to you?
5. Watching these kinds of films/interviews can be the perfect springboard for starting a difficult conversation about your healthcare values with your friends and loved ones. You can start by saying something like:
  - a. "I watched the Descendents at the library the other day, and it was so interesting because it made me think about what would happen if I suddenly

became ill. I realized that I have an idea of what I would want, but I haven't told anyone to that they can be prepared."

- b. "I watched Sister Una had a Good Death and I was surprised how much it inspired me! It made me think about how I would want you to celebrate my life and care for me when I am dying."
6. Remember that conversations about medical decisions don't have to be only about end-of-life. Your healthcare decision-maker should know what to do if it's unlikely that you will get better, and what to do if it's possible that you will recover. You can ask yourself questions like:
- a. What would I be willing to try to see if I could recover?
  - b. What matters most to me in my life? If my life circumstances were to change, what are some things that would be important for me to be able to continue doing?
  - c. Who do I trust to make decisions for me if I could not speak for myself?