



Talking Together, Empowering Each Other

A Conversation with Ted Aransky, M.Ed., LSW, CMC
and Certified Health Care Planning Facilitator

Ted Aransky leads open discussion meetings for adults at Overlook CARE, where adults come together to talk about health care planning topics and planning tools, and share information to connect to the care they want right now, and in the future.

1. What happens in a group discussion meeting?

The group discussion meetings are a great way for people to explore health care planning in a comfortable environment. I have found it very easy to get the discussion going, as the group members welcome having an open forum to discuss a variety of topics and share their life experiences. As a facilitator, I present information using Honoring Choices materials, help guide the discussion, and answer questions. The three step planning process seems to simplify things for the group and allows them to share their beliefs, fears and concerns, and helps them to clarify what they want for care right now to improve their quality of life, and care they want and don't want in the future. They support each other and learn a lot from talking together and listening to one another.

2. Is there a common misperception that comes up in the group discussions?

I work with older adults, most of whom have completed a Health Care Proxy, and some a Personal Directive (Living Will). A common misperception seems to be they are "all done" or "all set" with planning, having completed 1-2 documents, some many years ago. When we explore further, participants often discover gaps in their information and planning, such as whether their Health Care Proxy is valid, whether their Agent knows the kind of care they want, or whether they have talked with their doctors about the use of life-sustaining treatments and put their plan in their medical record. The group is surprised and eager to learn more. I believe that just by having the right information, participants often feel quite empowered.

3. How does the group discussion inspire individuals to make or update their plan?

We help adults explore information and guide them through the planning documents, where they can write down their preferences in a new document or revise and update a document. The group experience can also be a pathway for adults to have a more personal one-on-one conversation and get practical help in completing documents. For instance, a gentleman in the group realized from listening to others how important it was to give his Health Care Agent specific information about the kind of care he wants and does not want. He asked to set up an individual session with me, where he shared that he had tried to use



the 5 Wishes form but found it overwhelming. We explored his experiences, values and beliefs, and talked about the kind of care he wants, in order to create his own Personal Directive and give instructions to his Agent.

4. What are the positive outcomes you are seeing from the group discussions?

One of the positive outcomes of the group experience is that adults are beginning to understand health care planning in a very different way. That planning is not a ‘one time event’ where you fill out a Health Care Proxy and put it in the drawer, but an active process where you work in partnership with your care providers to get the care you want right now, and plan for care in the future. My hope is that they leave the group discussion feeling informed and motivated to speak with their family members and care providers. In some ways, our seniors can become our best teachers to educate and inspire their family and friends to take control of their own health care.

5. How did the Health Care Planning Certified Facilitator course enhance your professional skills to lead group discussions and individual planning sessions?

The Facilitator course provides interview skills and comprehensive information to engage adults in health care planning conversations at any stage of health. It helped me refine my skill set in speaking with adults about sensitive issues and guiding them through the process of care planning. After the course, I have a much more detailed understanding of Massachusetts planning documents and how they work together in making a plan over a person’s lifetime. I feel well prepared to facilitate health care planning discussions across a wide diversity of topics either in individual sessions or in group meetings.

Biography

Ted Aransky M.Ed., LSW, CMC is a Geriatric Care Manager at Overlook CARE, a member of Masonic Health System. Ted is also a Certified Health Care Planning Facilitator, having completed the required course with Honoring Choices Massachusetts. As a Certified Facilitator, Ted leads monthly group discussion meetings to help adults explore and discuss health care planning topics. He also facilitates health care planning sessions with individuals to create a personal health care plan, and to revise and add to their plan as their health care needs change. Read more about Overlook CARE, Masonic Health System at www.care-elderspecialist.com