

Answers to Common Questions

Hi, I'm Amy Dunphy. I'm a health educator and Life Care Planning facilitator.

I'd like to talk to you about the brain injury scenario you just read.

This is very important to think about when you're healthy and you can decide for yourself what you want and it's most important to then share your wishes with your agent who will be asked to speak on your behalf.

When I facilitate Life Care Planning conversations people typically have some questions about this scenario.

The first question is how do the doctors know that my brain damage is permanent?

Although uncomfortable to think about this situation could happen to any of us. You've experienced a severe brain injury from a stroke or accident. You're in the hospital being kept alive by machines.

Picture yourself as a patient in the intensive care unit also called an ICU. Your agent and loved ones are at your bedside and they've been consulting with your doctors.

The doctors have run numerous tests. Sadly right now everyone, including your agent, is confident and convinced that you do indeed have a permanent brain injury.

You will likely never recover the ability to know who you are or recognize your loved ones and you will require round-the-clock nursing care for the rest of your life.

In this situation the physician would ask your agent to speak for you. How do you want your agent to answer the question of whether you would want to continue life-sustaining treatment?

Under these circumstances, would you want to stop life-sustaining treatment or would you want to remain on life support?

Regardless of which option you choose, your medical team would keep you as comfortable as possible.

While this would be a very difficult situation for your agent and loved ones, it can be made easier if they know what you want.

Whatever you decide it's important to write down your wishes in your advanced directive and it's even more important to talk with your agent about your decisions so your wishes can be honored.