



Why "I Don't Want to Talk About It" Is Still a Conversation

By Stokes, Prock & Mundt Funeral Chapel

When a loved one says, "I don't want to talk about it," it can feel like the conversation has ended. For adult children, spouses, or close family members, those words can be frustrating, especially when important decisions need to be made. You may be worried about your parent's health, future care, finances, funeral wishes, or what would happen in an emergency. But for the person being asked to plan ahead, the topic may feel overwhelming, frightening, or simply too painful to face.

In many families, resistance to end-of-life planning is not really about stubbornness. It is often about fear.

Talking about aging, illness, assisted living, funeral arrangements, or final wishes can make the future feel suddenly real. A person who has spent a lifetime being independent may feel as though these conversations take away their control. Others may worry that talking about death will upset their children or make them appear weak. Some may believe that avoiding the topic protects everyone from discomfort.

Denial can also be a form of coping. When someone says they do not want to talk about it, they may be saying, "I am scared," "I am not ready," or "I do not know where to begin." They may need time to process the reality of aging before they are ready to make decisions. Understanding this can help families approach the subject with more patience and compassion.

It is important to remember that planning does not have to happen all at once. Families often imagine one big, serious conversation around the kitchen table, where every decision is made in a single afternoon. In reality, planning can begin with small, gentle questions over time. Instead of asking, "What kind of funeral do you want?" you might begin with, "Have you ever thought about what would make things easier for us someday?" Rather than pushing for immediate answers, you can simply open the door.

Sometimes the best first step is to talk about practical matters instead of emotional ones. A loved one may not be ready to discuss final wishes, but they may be willing to show you where important documents are kept. They may be comfortable sharing the name of their attorney, insurance agent, doctor, or preferred funeral home. These small pieces of information can make an enormous difference later.

It can also help to frame the conversation as an act of care, not a loss of control. Planning ahead allows a person's wishes to be known and respected. It can prevent

family members from having to guess during a stressful time. It can reduce disagreements and give loved ones the comfort of knowing they are honoring what the person truly wanted.

For families, the key is to listen more than you speak. If your loved one becomes uncomfortable, pause. If they change the subject, let the conversation rest for a while. You can return to it later. A gentle comment such as, "I know this is hard to talk about, but I want to make sure we do things the

way you would want," may be enough for now.

Even silence tells us something. It tells us the topic matters. It tells us there may be fear, uncertainty, or grief beneath the surface. And it reminds us that these conversations require trust.

"I don't want to talk about it" does not have to be the end. It can be the beginning of a slower, more compassionate process. With patience, honesty, and respect, families can move toward planning in a way that feels less like pressure and more like love.

