

Rallying to Encourage and Empower Us All to Make Our Healthcare Decisions Now for the Unknown Later...

College education. Career path. Relationships. Starting a family. Buying or selling a house. Vacations. Retirement. From the age that we're old enough to understand, most of us are taught and accept that these are the markers in life that we plan for. However, there's one key marker that's all-too-often missing from this list: healthcare decision-making. Like planning for these other life events, planning for the time (or times) that we are unable to express our healthcare wishes is of the utmost importance. It is something that should be well thought out, documented and revisited at different points in life to reflect any change in our desires or family situation or the person we wish to advocate for us. Unfortunately, it is a planning point that that majority of us have missed. As a consequence patients' families suffer the added burden of having to guess when a health crisis happens. That's why [Nathan Kottkamp](#) founded [National Healthcare Decisions Day](#) (NHDD) back in 2008 and why this nationwide [advance care planning](#) awareness initiative is as important as ever. So this year, I've joined my fellow bloggers throughout the country to spread the word about the importance of advance care planning with this special NHDD edition blog.

NHDD, which happens every April 16, is a collaborative effort of national, state and community organizations as well as dedicated individual advocates committed to ensuring that adult Americans – like you and me —have the information and opportunity to communicate and document their healthcare decisions.

April 16 is rapidly approaching, so it's time to kick the engagement effort into high gear. Here are some things you can do for yourself and your loved ones to prepare for NHDD 2011:

- **Lead by example.** Schedule time with your loved ones (on or before April 16) to “Have the Talk” and complete your own [advance directive](#). There are many tools, including free forms, you can use to walk you through the process and make your wishes known; access them through the [NHDD Public Resources page](#).
- Encourage your loved ones and friends to learn more about advance directives and to complete their advance directives. You can forward this link: <http://www.nhdd.org/p/resources.html> to them. Or, encourage them to [find a nearby participant and attend a local NHDD event](#).
- Share your advance directive with your healthcare providers and make sure it is on file in the event it is needed.

Already had the conversation with your loved ones, but want to do more? Here a few suggestions to rally support for NHDD and encourage even more action:

- Like the [NHDD Facebook fan page](#) and share it with your Facebook friends
- On Twitter? Follow [@NHDD](#) and share the information with your followers, i.e. ‘Just 5 days to #NHDD, when will you #havethetalk? @NHDD can help: <http://bit.ly/glff1V>’
- Send an email to your friends, staff, colleagues, lodge/social club members, and/or house of worship, telling them that you are participating in NHDD and encouraging them to do the same. Share the information above with them and/or use this template email:
 - April 16 is National Healthcare Decisions Day, and I hope that you will join me in taking this time to discuss and document your healthcare wishes. We all need to be prepared in the event of a health crisis, and having the talk is easier than most people think, but many of us need a little inspiration or a reminder to do it. I hope that this message and National Healthcare Decisions Day are all you need for

inspiration. Please mark your calendar for April 16 to have the talk with your loved ones. There are all sorts of free resources, including free advance directive forms for each of the 50 states, on the NHDD website: www.nhdd.org. Additionally, please help me spread the word with [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Advance care planning is something we ALL should do and encourage others to do, regardless of age or current health. Discussing your wishes can be one of the most important gifts you ever give your loved ones.

- Take the “pledge” to complete or update your advance directive on the [NHDD website](#).

Please use and share the resources available through the [NHDD website](#) and encourage and empower us all to make our healthcare decisions now for the unknown later.