

Peer to Peer: Creating a Life Plan

Peer Mentoring and Life Planning

Patient peer mentoring is a wonderful way to share your goals and dreams and receive support in achieving them. Being told you have End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) and will need dialysis is a life changing event. People in this situation can find peer-to-peer support may find it helpful with living their daily lives. Peers also help keep our goals and dreams active in our new way of life. This peer resource can be a guide for making a life plan.

What is a Life Plan?

A life plan is a map to help you get the things from life that that mean the most to you. A life plan is built around personal goals and dreams. The goals can be things such as going back to school or work or traveling to a place you always wanted to visit or spending time with family. Here are other examples of personal goals:

- Health and well-being
 - Make healthier meals
 - Join a yoga or dance class
- Community
 - Volunteer at a local non-profit organization
 - Attend church and join activities



Is My Life Plan the Same as My Dialysis Care Plan?

Your dialysis care plan is about your kidney care and health. The goals focus on things like your dialysis routine and your treatment choice. For example, the plan could have goals about moving from in-center to home dialysis or getting a transplant. The plan could also include your medicines, kidney diet, treatments for other health conditions, daily exercise, and social connections.

Your life plan is about personal goals, like travel or losing weight. Many times, your dialysis care plan can help you achieve your life plan. For example, you may want to travel around the country and visit all the national parks, but you do not want to stop in a different city three times a week for dialysis. You can talk with your healthcare team about the possibility of moving to a home dialysis option like peritoneal dialysis to give yourself flexibility.

How do I get Started with Creating a Life Plan?

Once you have identified your goals, the next step is to start making your goals happen. Moving from planning to action can be hard. It is likely that you that have more than one goal and that's okay! First, you will need to decide which goal you want to begin working on.

Writing down your goals can help you focus on what is important to you. Describe your goal in detail. The more detail you can include, the better. Include a time frame and select dates you can achieve your activities.

Break down your goals into smaller pieces. Think about the smaller pieces as part of your bigger goal. Begin working on one of the smaller pieces. As you complete each piece you will be moving

closer to achieving your goal. Be sure to place your life plan somewhere you can easily find it and work on it every day.

These are simple steps to get started:

- Select your most important goal.
- Ask yourself, what do I need to do to achieve this goal?
- Know what resources you will need to make your goal happen. Resources can be things like:
 - Transportation to attend a class or card game,
 - Financial assistance to go back to school (visit the Patient Grant Library on the ESRD NCC website),
 - Friends and family to support your goal, and
 - Think about who you can count on for support.
 - Determine when you can start working on your goal.
 - Know how much time you can dedicate to working on your goal.
- Decide if your goal will need financial resources and know how much to save each week to make your goal happen.
- Set a date to achieve your goal. Make sure it is realistic.
- Celebrate your accomplishments each step of the way!

Goals can be big or small. They can be simple or hard. There is no right or wrong goal. Goals can change, and that is okay. What goals you set today may not be the same goals in two months. Your goals are personal and matter to you. For example, you may want to walk more. Begin by walking when you receive a phone call. You can begin doing this every time you answer the phone. Unless you need support to walk, you can achieve this goal without a companion. A simple goal with big rewards!

Sharing your life plan goals with your care team is also important. Your care plan should always support your life plan goals. For example, if your life plan goal is to continue working, ask your care team about your home dialysis and transplant options. Ask yourself what resources you need to make your plans stick. Check with your care team about available resources and use those resources in your life plan.

Tips for Creating and Achieving a Life Plan

- Write your goals down.
- Keep up your written goals in a safe place that you frequently go to.
- Keep your goal real. Example, if your goal is to travel, then select the first place you want to visit. It does not need to be far or expensive. It could be a park in a nearby town that you have never visited.
- Tell family and friends about your goals and ask them to support you.
- Expect setbacks and don't give up.
- Seek support such as peer support group to meet with and share your goals.

Additional Resources

- [How To Make A Life Plan That Really Works](#)
- [How to Create a Life Plan](#)
- [How to Plan Your Life When the Future Is Foggy at Best](#)
- [7 Steps for Making a Life Plan](#)