

# Quick reference conversation phrases for COVID-19

(full resource available from VitalTalk)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uSh0FeYdkGgHsZqem552iC0KmXlgaGKohl7SoeY2UXQ/edit#heading=h.nve11z50qg9w>

## What they say

## What you could say

### For patients requiring admission:

Is my grandfather going to make it?	<b>I imagine you are scared.</b> Here's what I can say: because he is 90, and is already dealing with other illnesses, <b>it is quite possible that he will not make it out of the hospital.</b>
How can you not let me in for a visit?	The risk of spreading the virus is so high that I am sorry to say we cannot allow visitors. I know it's not the same, but we can help you be in contact electronically. <b>I wish I could let you visit, because I know it's important. Sadly, it is not possible now. We are doing this to keep everyone safe</b>

### Counselling:

I'm scared.	This is such a tough situation. <b>I think anyone would be scared.</b> Tell me what you are scared of?
You people are incompetent!	I can see why you are not happy with things. <b>I am willing to do what is in my power to improve things for you.</b> What can I do that would help?
I want to talk to your manager	I can see you are frustrated. <b>I will ask my manager to come by as soon as they can. Please realize that during COVID they are juggling many things right now.</b>
Do I need to say my goodbyes?	I'm hoping that's not the case. And I worry time could indeed be short. What is most pressing on your mind?

### Addressing code status or intubation decisions:

I want everything possible. I want to live.	We are doing everything we can. This is a tough situation. Could we step back for a moment so I can learn more about you? <b>What do I need to know about you to do a better job taking care of you?</b>
I don't think my spouse would have wanted...	Well, let's pause and talk about what they would have wanted. Can you tell me what they considered most important in their life? <b>What meant the most to them, gave their life meaning?</b>
I am not sure what my spouse wanted—we never spoke about it.	You know, many people find themselves in the same boat. This is a hard situation. To be honest, given their overall condition now, if we need to put them on a breathing machine or do CPR, they will not make it. The odds are just against us. <b>My recommendation is that we accept that he will not live much longer and allow him to pass on peacefully.</b> I suspect that may be hard to hear. What do you think?

### When resources are scarce and we are faced with rationing decisions:

Why can't my 90 yr old grandmother go to the ICU	<b>This is an extraordinary time. We are trying to use resources in a way that is fair for everyone.</b> Your grandmother's case does not meet the criteria for the ICU today. I wish things were different.
My grandmother needs the ICU! Or she is going to die!	I know this is a scary situation, and I am worried for your grandmother myself. <b>This virus is so deadly that even if we could transfer her to the ICU, I am not sure she would make it.</b> So we need to be prepared that she could die. We will do everything we can for her so she doesn't suffer.
Are you just discriminating against her because she is old?	I can see how it might seem like that. No, we are not discriminating. <b>We are using guidelines that were developed by people in this community to prepare for an event like this.</b> The guidelines have been developed over the years, involving health care professionals, ethicists, and lay people to consider all the pros and cons. I can see that you really care about her.
It sounds like you are rationing.	What we are doing is trying to spread out our resources in the best way possible. <b>This is a time where I wish we had more for every single person in this hospital.</b>
You're playing God. You can't do that.	I am sorry. I did not mean to give you that feeling. <b>Across the city, every hospital is working together to try to use resources in a way that is fair for everyone. I realize that we don't have enough.</b> I wish we had more. Please understand that we are all working as hard as possible.
Can't you get more ventilators?	Right now the hospital is operating over capacity. It is not possible for us to increase our capacity like that overnight. And <b>I realize that must be disappointing to hear.</b>
How can you just take them off a ventilator when their life depends on it?	I'm so sorry her condition has gotten worse, even though we are doing everything. Because it's an extraordinary time, we are following special guidelines that apply to everyone here. We cannot continue to provide critical care to patients who are not getting better. This means that we need to accept that she will die, and we need to take her off the ventilator. I wish things were different.