Serious Illness Conversation Communication Boards

Contents

Instructions

1. Prior to engaging in a serious illness conversation, review these publicly available materials
   a. https://www.ariadnelabs.org/areas-of-work/serious-illness-care/
   b. https://www.ariadnelabs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/05/SI-CG-2017-04-21_FINAL.pdf
   c. https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/MGH/pdf/news/coronavirus/covid-19-basic-guide-serious-illness-conversation.pdf
   d. https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/MGH/pdf/news/coronavirus/covid-19-talking-about-CPR.PDF

2. **Print and bind** resources together as a booklet (e.g. hole punch and place into binder or staple together)
   a. As able, print in color, double sided to ensure partner-assisted scanning instructions are on opposite side of each board

3. **Consider delirium**
   a. Complete delirium assessment to gauge appropriateness of patient participation

4. **Orient** all communication partners to topic/communication board
   a. Page turn icon indicates an expanded board for this topic. If selected, turn to listed page
   b. Bottom row of choices will be consistent across all boards

5. **Identify access**/method of communication (e.g. is the patient able to point? Does the patient rely on partner-assisted scanning?)

6. **Read selected messages aloud** to ensure selection accuracy

7. **Ask follow up questions**

8. **Explore emotion**

9. **Allow extra time** for communication/expression and processing

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Suggested Provider Questions/Comments

- "I'm hoping we can talk about where things are with your illness and where they might be going. Is this okay?"

- "I'm hoping we can talk about _board title_ so we can learn more about what's important to you. Is this okay?"

- "What would you like to discuss/tell me/like me to know?"

- "On this page we highlight _____. Do you have anything you'd like to ask or say about _____ ?"

- "Do you have a request?"

- "What is your preference?"

- "Have you thought about whether you would want _____ ?"

- "Do you have a question about _____?"

- "How do you feel about _____?"

- "What makes you feel that way?"

USSAAC
THE VOICE OF AAC

Communication

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MEDICAL DECISION MAKING p. 3	**MEDICAL STATUS QUESTIONS** p. 15
EMOTIONS p. 17	**RELIGION / SPIRITUALITY** p. 19

YES	I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND	LATER	LETTER BOARD/ OTHER	NO

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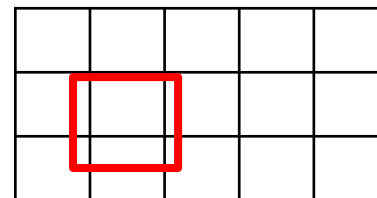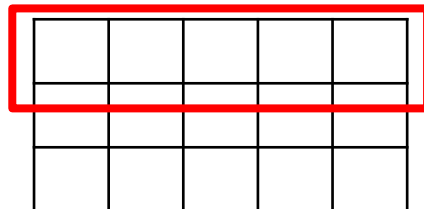# This is how:

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Establish patient's "yes" (i.e. nodding, blinking, thumbs up, etc.)

1. **Proceed row by row. Point to each row and ask if the desired message is in that row**
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5. **Confirm the selection & repeat.**

Additional Considerations:

- Hold this tool ~12 inches (~30 cm) from the patient's face.
- Ensure good lighting, head positioning, and vision.
- Speak **loudly** and **clearly** using **simple language.**
- Wearing masks and other PPE may make it difficult to understand speech. Consider using communication tools when speaking to the patient as well.
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MY DECISIONS	BREATHING TUBES & MACHINES	CPR / RESUSCITATION	DIALYSIS	FEEDING TUBES
p. 5	p. 7	p. 9	p. 11	p. 13
HEALTH CARE PROXY	COMFORT CARE	ALLOW NATURAL DEATH	FUNERAL PLANS	ORGAN DONATION
YES	I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND	LATER	LETTER BOARD/ OTHER	NO

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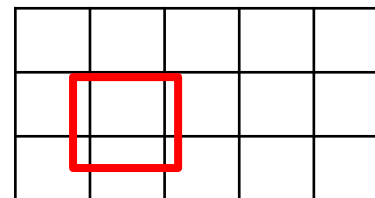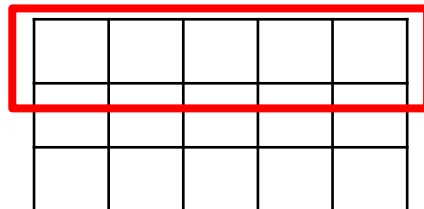
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WHEN DO I HAVE TO DECIDE?	**CAN I CHANGE MY MIND?**	**I WANT TO TALK TO MY FAMILY / PROXY**
WHAT HAPPENS IF I CAN'T DECIDE?	**I DON'T WANT TO MAKE THIS DECISION**	**I WANT MY PROXY TO DECIDE**

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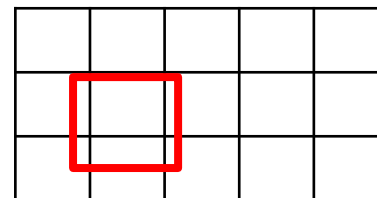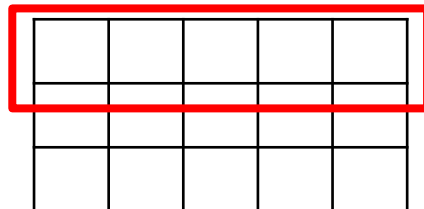
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WHAT IS A VENTILATOR?	**WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?**	**COULD I GO HOME WITH IT?**	**WILL I BE ABLE TO SPEAK?**
WHAT IS A BREATHING TUBE?	**OK WITH A <u>CHRONIC</u> BREATHING TUBE**	**OK WITH A <u>TEMPORARY</u> BREATHING TUBE**	**I DON'T WANT A BREATHING TUBE AT ALL**

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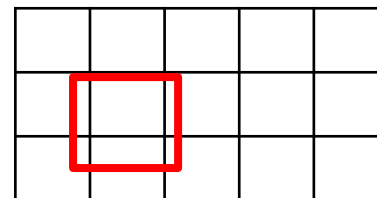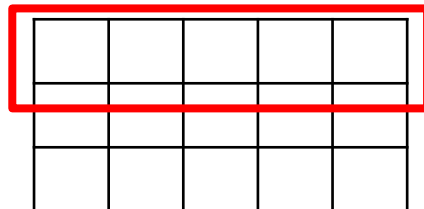## This is how:

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WHAT IS CPR?	**WOULD YOU HAVE TO SHOCK ME?**	**DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO REVIVE ME**	**I WANT CPR**
WILL IT HURT?	**WILL CPR SAVE MY LIFE?**	**I WANT A NATURAL DEATH**	**I DON'T WANT CPR**

YES	**I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND**	**LATER**	**LETTER BOARD/ OTHER**	**NO**

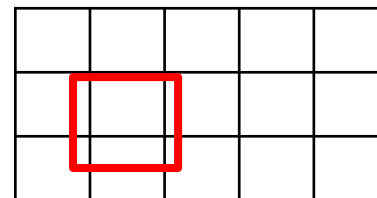# If it's hard for patient to point, please use "partner-assisted scanning" This is how:
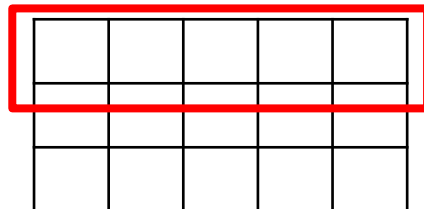
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WHAT IS DIALYSIS?	**WHY AM I ON DIALYSIS?**	**HOW OFTEN DO I NEED DIALYSIS?**	**WHERE DO I HAVE TO GO FOR DIALYSIS?**
WILL IT CURE MY KIDNEYS?	**I DO NOT WANT DIALYSIS**	**CAN I COME OFF DIALYSIS SAFELY?**	**CAN I GO HOME?**

YES	**I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND**	**LATER**	**LETTER BOARD/ OTHER**	**NO**

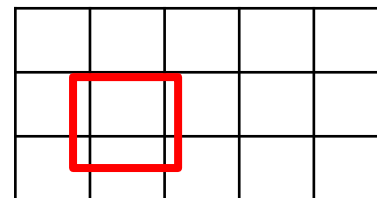# If it's hard for patient to point, please use "partner-assisted scanning" This is how:
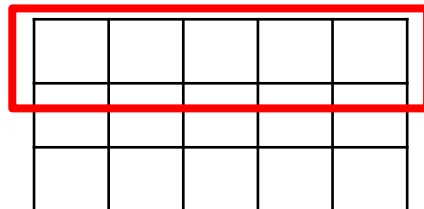
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WHY DO I NEED A FEEDING TUBE?	WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?	HOW IS IT PLACED?	HOW LONG DO I NEED IT?
I DON'T WANT A FEEDING TUBE	I WANT THE FEEDING TUBE	CAN I STILL EAT WITH A FEEDING TUBE?	CAN I LEAVE WITH A FEEDING TUBE?

YES	I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND	LATER	LETTER BOARD/ OTHER	NO

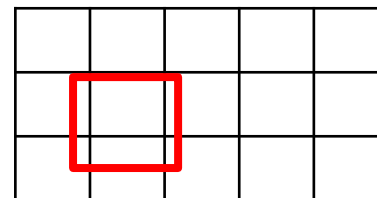# If it's hard for patient to point, please use "partner-assisted scanning" This is how:
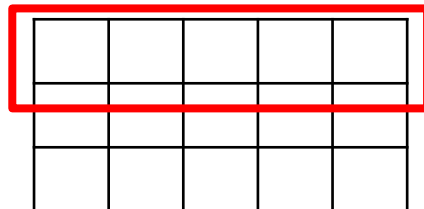
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Communication

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?	**WILL I GET BETTER?**	**AM I GOING TO DIE?**	**HAVE WE DONE ALL WE CAN?**
WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?	**WILL I BE AWAKE?**	**WILL IT HURT?**	**I WANT TO TALK WITH MY FAMILY**

YES	**I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND**	**LATER**	**LETTER BOARD/ OTHER**	**NO**

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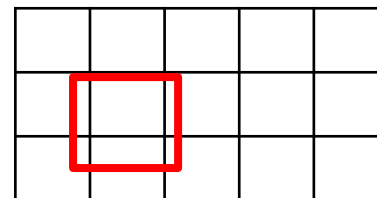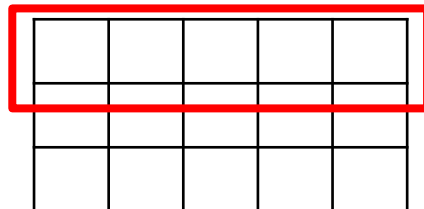## This is how:

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Communication

ANGRY	SAD	SCARED	ANXIOUS	ALONE
TIRED	SUFFERING	AT PEACE	PLEASE LEAVE	HOW DO YOU FEEL?

NONE ⟶ EXTREMELY

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

YES	I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND	LATER	LETTER BOARD/ OTHER	NO

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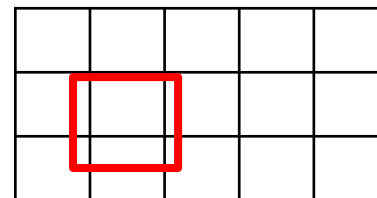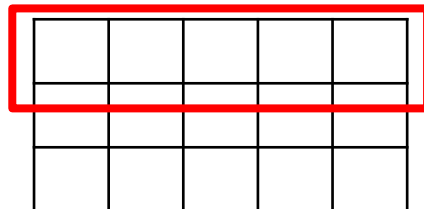# This is how:

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PLEASE PRAY WITH ME	**I WANT TO SEE A CHAPLAIN**	**I WANT TO READ TEXT / SCRIPTURE**	**THESE ARE PERSONAL MATTERS**
I WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RITUAL	**SIT WITH ME**	**I WOULD LIKE TO BE ALONE**	**I AM NOT RELIGIOUS / SPIRITUAL**

YES	**I DON'T KNOW/ UNDERSTAND**	**LATER**	**LETTER BOARD/ OTHER**	**NO**

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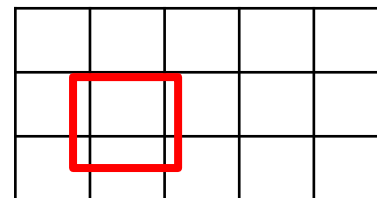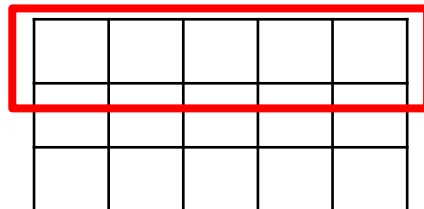## This is how:

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A	B	C	D	SPACE	END OF MESSAGE
E	F	G	H	START OVER	I DON'T KNOW
I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Qu	R	S	T
U	V	W	X	Y	Z

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 0̸ | YES | NO |

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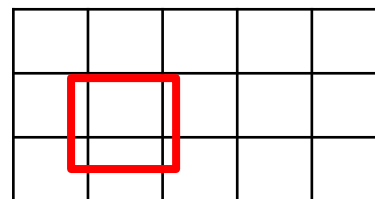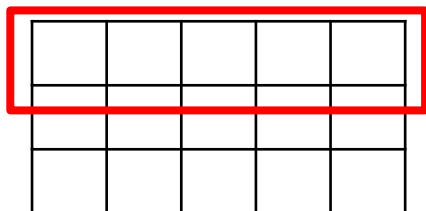## This is how:

Ask patient to think of a message to spell (simple, single word messages are often best).
Establish the patient's "yes" (i.e. nodding, blinking, thumbs up, etc.).

1. **Cue the patient to focus on the 1st letter of the word.**
2. **Proceed row by row. Point to each row and ask if the letter is in that row.**
   (e.g. point to 1st row and ask, "Is it in this row?" followed by 2nd row, and so on)
3. **Patient will select a row using the established YES response. Verify the choice out loud.**
4. **Point to each letter within the selected row ("Is it A, B, C, D?").**
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0

Q W E R T Y U I O P

A S D F G H J K L

Z X C V B N M . ?

START AGAIN

SPACE

BACK

YES

MAYBE / I DON'T KNOW

NO

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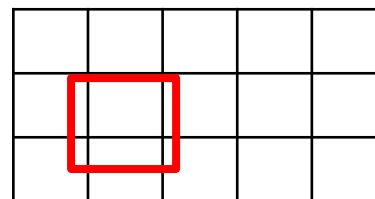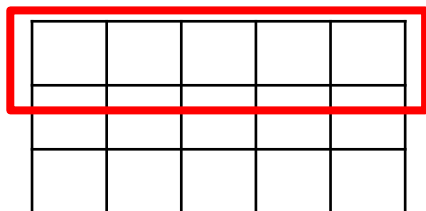# This is how:

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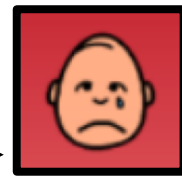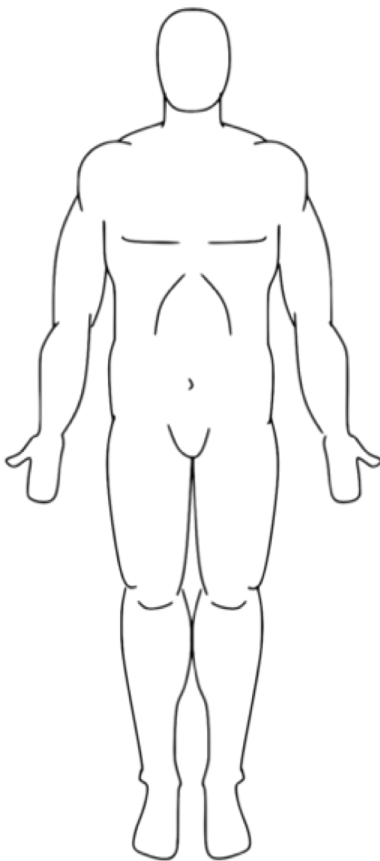Establish the patient's "yes" (i.e. nodding, blinking, thumbs up, etc.).

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- Wearing masks and other PPE may make it difficult to understand speech. Consider using communication tools when speaking to the patient as well.
- If the patient can't use this tool effectively now, that does not mean the patient won't be able to use it later today, tomorrow, or this week. Continue to provide opportunities to support communication.

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I AM IN PAIN

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

If it's hard for patient to point, please use "partner-assisted scanning" This is how:
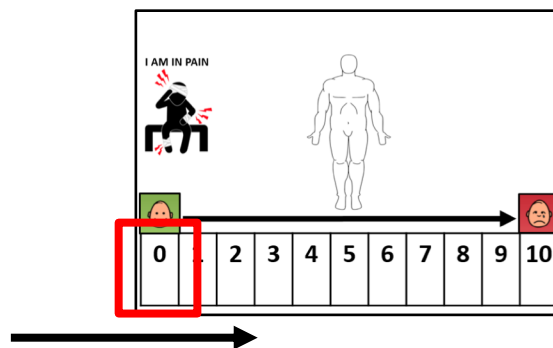
Ask patient to focus on the communication board
Establish patient's "yes" (i.e. nodding, blinking, thumbs up, etc.)

1. **Proceed cell by cell across the pain scale . Point to each item and ask if that is the patient's pain level.**
2. **Patient will signal that you are pointing to the desired pain scale value using established YES response**
3. **Confirm the selection & repeat if necessary**

Additional Considerations:

- Hold this tool ~12 inches (~30 cm) from the patient's face
- Ensure good lighting, head positioning, and vision
- Speak **loudly** and **clearly** using **simple language**
- Wearing masks and other PPE may make it difficult to understand your speech. Consider using communication tools when speaking to me as well.
- If the patient can't use this tool effectively now, that does not mean the patient won't be able to use it later today, tomorrow, or this week. Continue to provide opportunities to support communication.

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YES ✔

NO X

I DON'T KNOW

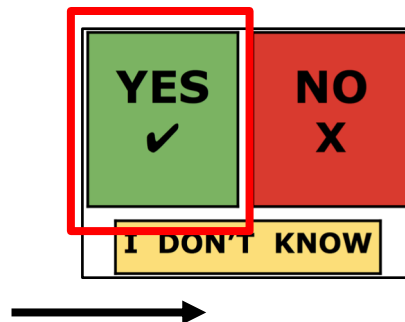# If it's hard for patient to point, please use "partner-assisted scanning"

Ask patient to focus on the communication board
Establish patient's "yes" (i.e. nodding, blinking, thumbs up, etc.)

1. **Proceed cell by cell across the yes/no board. Point to each item and ask if that is the patient's response.**
2. **Patient will signal that you are pointing to the desired response using established YES response**
3. **Confirm the selection & repeat if necessary**

<u>**Additional Considerations:**</u>

- Hold this tool ~12 inches (~30 cm) from the patient's face.
- Ensure good lighting, head positioning, and vision.
- Speak **loudly** and **clearly** using **simple language.**
- Wearing masks and other PPE may make it difficult to understand speech. Consider using communication tools when speaking to the patient as well.
- If the patient can't use this tool effectively now, that does not mean the patient won't be able to use it later today, tomorrow, or this week. Continue to provide opportunities to support communication.

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