

FROM THE SITTING ROOM SERIES
PLANNING AHEAD

5

Things I Want You to Know

*A Journal of Stories,
Wishes, and Words
for Your Family*

Stephen Deason

LARGE PRINT



Things I Want You to Know

This journal belongs to _____

Started on _____

Kept at _____

If you need help right now

Emergency

911

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988, any hour, or chat at 988lifeline.org. For anyone in distress, or worried about someone who is.

Eldercare Locator

1-800-677-1116, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern, or eldercare.acl.gov. A public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging that connects older adults and caregivers with local help anywhere in the country.

From
The Sitting Room Series

BOOK 5 · PLANNING AHEAD

Things I Want You to Know

A Journal of Stories, Wishes, and Words for Your Family

Stephen Deason



Alder
Creek
EDITIONS

Things I Want You to Know

A Journal of Stories, Wishes, and Words for Your Family

Book 5 of The Sitting Room Series

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The author's accounts of his own family are drawn from his experience.

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Preface

This book is personal for multiple reasons. I have spent about forty years working inside health care. I began volunteering in a hospital at fifteen and was working as an orderly by sixteen, helping care for patients in hospitals and nursing homes while I worked my way through college. Later, I spent more than twenty years building and running systems for hospitals, insurers, Medicaid programs, and other health care organizations before returning to direct care through healthcare staffing, home care, and skilled nursing. Today I am an Administrator of a licensed health care facility that delivers care in patients' homes.

That facility is OPA Home Care, which I founded and run. In Georgia it is a licensed Private Home Care Provider, or PHCP. My healthcare staffing company employed nurses and aides across hundreds of health care facilities around the country, including through the COVID years, and our home care operations have recruited, hired, and managed caregiving staff for hundreds of families. I have watched older adults and their families face what this series covers, often in a hurry and usually at a difficult time.

What I kept seeing was this. Families meet the information in pieces, after they already need it, from people who each answer a different piece. The hospital owns the discharge. The insurer owns the benefit. The home care provider owns its services. Each of them may do that job well. The family still has to put the puzzle pieces together.

It happened to my own family. My mother was found wandering the parking lot of a hospital, looking for her car. She had a urinary tract infection that urgent care and the hospital both missed, and she was sent home with severe delirium and a new diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment. It took two weeks, and a nurse practitioner and a doctor we knew who were willing to look again, before anyone found the cause. She stayed with us for two months and then moved into independent living. She has kept improving, and she is driving again. The infection was ordinary. The months that followed were the cost of catching it late.

Much of the information in this series is already available somewhere. Medicare publishes Medicare's rules. The VA explains VA benefits, and each state explains its own programs. Having information spread across so many places is part of the problem. Families do not meet these questions one provider or agency at a time. The questions arrive together. I wrote this series to put many needed pieces in one place, in the order people tend to need them, with a way to record or otherwise act on each answer.

The few facts in this journal come from the sources listed at the back. The questions come from years of doing this work. What a person most wants to keep is often small. For my mother, it has been a child's rocking chair from my childhood and a box of the toys that mattered to me when I was four. The stories behind things like those are easy to lose, and this journal is a place to keep them.

This journal belongs to you. You do the writing, in your own words, and your family does the reading, now or later.

This journal will help you put your stories and wishes in your own words, for the people who will want them. Start with Section 1, or with whichever question you want to answer today.

1. Who This Journal Is For and How to Use It

This journal is for you to write in, and for your family to read. It holds the stories, wishes, and words you want the people you love to have, in your own hand.

How to use it

Start anywhere. Each question has two pages. Answer the ones you want, in any order, and skip the rest. A few lines is enough.

If writing is hard, ask someone to write while you talk, or record yourself on a phone and have someone copy it in later. At the bottom of the page, write “told to” and the name of the person who wrote it.

Date each page. Your family will want to know when you wrote it. You can tape in a photograph, a recipe card, or a letter.

Section 2 is a page about you. Fill it in first if you can, because it is the page your family will turn to most. The six letter pages near the back are for writing to one person at a time.

Who reads it, and when

Decide whether your family may read this journal now, a page at a time, or only later, and write your answer in Section 2. Some people read a page aloud at a family dinner. Others leave the whole journal to be opened later.

What this journal does not do

This journal is for your family to read. It is not a will, an advance directive, or a power of attorney, and it does not take the place of any of them. Wishes about your money, your property, and your medical care belong in those papers. If you write about those wishes here too, say on the page that your will and your other papers are the ones that count.

Book 4 in this series, *Before It's Urgent*, explains those papers and who to talk with about each one. It is free to download at aldercreekeditions.com.

Making your wishes count

Who to call or ask: An elder law attorney or a legal aid office for a will, a power of attorney, and an advance directive. Your doctor for the conversation about your medical care.

How to reach them: Find free civil legal aid at lsc.gov or lawhelp.org. Find an elder law attorney by ZIP code at naela.org.

What you can say: I have written my wishes down for my family. I want the ones about my care and my property to be in papers that count. Can you help me with that?

Hard memories

Some questions may bring back a hard time. Skip any page you like. If writing stirs up more than you expected, call someone you trust. If you are in crisis, call or text 988, any hour.

Keeping it safe

Keep this journal somewhere safe, and tell one person where it is. Write where it is kept on the first page. A photo of each finished page, taken on a phone, keeps a copy if the journal is lost.

2. About Me

My full name

The name I go by

Born on

Born in

My parents

My brothers and sisters

The people I married or shared my life with

My children

My grandchildren and great-grandchildren

When my family may read this journal: now, a page at a time, or later

Who knows where my will and my other papers are kept

Where I Come From

Eight questions about your family, your first home, and the people you grew up with. Answer any of them, in any order.

Where I Was Born

Where were you born, and what do you remember about the place you grew up?

[illegible]

Where I Was Born, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

My Parents

What were your parents like? Write one thing each of them said or did that you still think about.

[illegible]

My Parents, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

The House I Remember

Walk your family through the home you remember best from when you were young, room by room.

[illegible]

The House I Remember, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Who I Grew Up With

Who did you grow up with? Write about your brothers and sisters, your cousins, or the children down the street, and what you got up to together.

Who I Grew Up With, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

The Family Before Me

What do you know about your grandparents, and about the family before them? Where did they come from, and what did they do?

[illegible]

The Family Before Me, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Holidays and Summers

How did your family spend holidays, Sundays, or summers when you were young?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Holidays and Summers, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

School

What was school like for you? Name a teacher you remember, and say why.

[illegible]

School, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

An Old Friend

Who was your closest friend when you were young? What became of them?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

An Old Friend, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

My Life

Twelve questions about the work you did, the people you loved, the places you lived, and what you learned.

My First Job

What was your first job, and what did you do with your first pay?

[illegible]

My First Job, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

The Work I Did

What work did you do over the years? What were you good at, and what are you proud of?

[illegible]

The Work I Did, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

How We Met

How did you meet the person you married, or the person you loved most? Tell it the way you would tell it at the table.

[illegible]

How We Met, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

The Places I Have Lived

List the places you have lived, and write a few lines about each one.

[illegible]

The Places I Have Lived, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

The Years I Lived Through

**Which events in the news do you remember living through?
Where were you, and what did you think at the time?**

[illegible]

The Years I Lived Through, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

A Hard Time

**Write about a hard time in your life and how you got through it.
Who helped you?**

[illegible]

What I Changed My Mind About

What did you once believe that you later changed your mind about? What changed it?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

More room to write. Date the page.

46

What Few People Know

What did you do, or what happened to you, that few people in the family know about?

[illegible]

What Few People Know, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

What I Believe

What do you believe about faith, about people, or about how to live? Where did those beliefs come from?

[illegible]

What I Believe, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Songs, Books, and Pictures

**Which songs, books, films, or programs have mattered to you?
Which ones would you want your family to know?**

[illegible]

Songs, Books, and Pictures, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Things I Made

What have you made, built, grown, sewn, cooked, or fixed that you were proud of?

[illegible]

Things I Made, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Advice I Was Given

What is the best advice anyone ever gave you, and who gave it?

[illegible]

Advice I Was Given, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

For You

Ten questions for the people you love: their stories, the family's stories, and what you want them to have.

When You Came Into My Life

Write about the day each of your children or grandchildren was born, or came into your life.

[illegible]

When You Came Into My Life, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

When You Were Small

What do you remember about your children when they were small? Write the stories they are too young to remember themselves.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

When You Were Small, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Family Stories, Told Right

Which family stories get told wrong? Write the version you know.

[illegible]

Family Stories, Told Right, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Recipes

Write down the recipes your family asks for, the way you make them, with the parts that are not on the card.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Recipes, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Traditions

Which family traditions do you hope will continue? How did each one start?

[illegible]

Traditions, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

What I See in You

What do you see in each of the people you love that they may not see in themselves?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

What I See in You, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

What I Never Said

Is there anything you have wanted to say to someone in the family and never have? Write it here.

[illegible]

What I Never Said, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Making Peace

Is there anything you want to apologize for, or anyone you want to forgive?

[illegible]

Making Peace, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

What I Hope for You

What do you hope for the people who come after you?

[illegible]

What I Hope for You, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

The Things in My House

Which things in your home mean the most to you, and what is the story behind each one? Who receives what belongs in your will. See Section 1.

[illegible]

The Things in My House, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

My Wishes

Ten questions about how you want to live now, how you want to be remembered, and what your family can let go of.

How I Want to Be Remembered

How do you want to be remembered? What would you want people to say about you?

[illegible]

More room to write. Date the page.

80

A Good Day Now

What does a good day look like for you now? What helps, and what gets in the way?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

A Good Day Now, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

About My Care

What matters to you about how you are cared for if you become sick or frail? This page helps your family understand you. Your advance directive is the paper that counts. See Section 1.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

About My Care, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Where I Want to Live

Where do you want to live as you get older, and what would make that possible?

[illegible]

Where I Want to Live, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

My Pets

Who are your pets? What does each one need, and who would you want to care for them?

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. It features ten evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width. The background is plain white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.

My Pets, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

My Service or Gathering

What would you like at your funeral, memorial, or gathering: music, readings, a place, and who speaks? If you have made arrangements, write where the papers are.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

My Service or Gathering, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Who Should Hear From You

When you are gone, who should hear from your family that they might not think to call?

[illegible]

Who Should Hear From You, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

What I Am Grateful For

What are you grateful for? Name the people and the places.

[illegible]

What I Am Grateful For, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

What to Stop Worrying About

What do you want your family to stop worrying about?

[illegible]

More room to write. Date the page.

96

The Last Word

If you could leave your family one sentence, what would it be?

[illegible]

The Last Word, continued

More room to write. Date the page.

[illegible]

Letters

Six letters, each to one person. Write the name at the top. A letter can be a few lines.

A Letter

To _____ Date _____

What I want you to know

[illegible]

A Letter, continued

More room to write

[illegible]

A Letter

To _____ Date _____

What I want you to know

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

A Letter, continued

More room to write

[illegible]

A Letter

To _____ Date _____

What I want you to know

[illegible]

A Letter, continued

More room to write

[illegible]

A Letter

To _____ Date _____

What I want you to know

[illegible]

A Letter, continued

More room to write

[illegible]

A Letter

To _____ Date _____

What I want you to know

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

A Letter, continued

More room to write

[illegible]

A Letter

To _____ Date _____

What I want you to know

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

A Letter, continued

More room to write

[illegible]

3. When You Run Out of Room

Every page in this journal is free to print at aldercreekeditions.com, so you can print more of any question you want to keep writing about. Put the new pages in a folder with this journal, or tape them in.

If you start a second journal, write “Journal 2” on its first page, and keep the two together.

Where the rest of my pages are kept

Sources

Every source used in this book is listed here once, under the organization or author that published it, with the sections that use it. A list that matches each fact to its source is free at aldercreekeditions.com. Websites were checked in October 2026. Pages move and change, so search for the title if a web address no longer works.

U.S. Administration for Community Living and its programs

Eldercare Locator, U.S. Administration for Community Living. “About.” eldercare.acl.gov/Public/About/Index.aspx Used in Where to Get Help.

Eldercare Locator, U.S. Administration for Community Living. “Contact Information.” eldercare.acl.gov/Public/About/Contact_Info/Index.aspx Used in Where to Get Help.

Legal Services Corporation

Legal Services Corporation. “Get Legal Help” and “What Is Civil Legal Aid?” lsc.gov Used in Section 1; Where to Get Help.

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys. “Find a Lawyer.” naela.org/findlawyer Used in Section 1; Where to Get Help.

Pro Bono Net

Pro Bono Net. LawHelp.org. lawhelp.org Used in Section 1;
Where to Get Help.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (988)

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. “Get Help.” 988lifeline.org/
get-help Used in Where to Get Help.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
“Crisis Help.” Updated June 3, 2026. samhsa.gov/find-support/
in-crisis Used in Where to Get Help.

Where to Get Help

In an emergency, call 911. The people who answer the other lines can tell you what is available where you live.

Emergency

911

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988, any hour, or chat at 988lifeline.org. For anyone in distress, or worried about someone who is.

Eldercare Locator

1-800-677-1116, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern, or eldercare.acl.gov. A public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging that connects older adults and caregivers with local help anywhere in the country.

Free legal help

Legal aid offices give free civil legal help to people with low incomes. Find one at lsc.gov. For people with low to moderate incomes, look at lawhelp.org.

Elder law attorneys

The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys lists its members by ZIP code at naela.org.

My Own Numbers

The Sitting Room Series

Guides, workbooks, and journals for older adults and the families around them. More titles are on the way. The current list is at aldercreekeditions.com.

1. *When More Help Is Needed* Available

A Guide for You and Your Family

2. *Who to Contact* Available

Free Help for Older Adults and Families

3. *Emergency Information Sheet* Free printable

One Page by the Phone, and the Details Behind It

4. *Before It's Urgent* Free printable

A Workbook for Papers, Decisions, and Conversations

5. *Things I Want You to Know* This book

A Journal of Stories, Wishes, and Words for Your Family

6. *While You Can Still Decide* Forthcoming

After a Diagnosis of Memory Loss

7. *Arranging Care at Home* Free printable

A Workbook for Arranging Care in the Home

8. *Care Partner's Log* Free printable

A Daily Record for the Person Giving Care

9. *Grieving Someone Who Is Still Here* Forthcoming

When Someone You Love Has Progressive Memory Loss

10. *Visit Journal* Free printable

A Shared Record for Everyone Who Visits

11. *Choosing a Place to Live* Free printable

A Workbook for Comparing Senior Living and Care

12. *The Move and the First Months* Forthcoming

For Families and the Person Moving

13. *Before the Last Weeks* Forthcoming

When Treatment Stops Working, for You and Your Family

14. *After a Death* Forthcoming

The First Year, for You and the People Around You

15. *First-Year Grief Journal* Free printable

Undated Pages for the Year After a Death

Also by Stephen Deason

The Operational Reliability Series

The Weakest Link

A Story About the Systems We Never See

By Stephen Deason

A family health care crisis unfolds through a chain of reasonable decisions and unowned handoffs. The story is followed by an interpretation and practical resource guide for recognizing where information gets compressed, what families can ask, and how care can slip through the gaps.

The Invisible Architecture

A Story About Senior Care as a System

By Stephen Deason

A quieter story about the work families carry after an acute crisis has passed. The book examines changing care needs, family coordination, and the practical details that must move between providers, insurers, and home.

The Family Integrator's Handbook

By Stephen Deason

A practical workbook for the person who has become the place where a family's appointments, documents, medications, and next handoff collect. It includes care-team questions, transition checklists, planning pages, and a section for the person receiving care.

The Mile Marker Library

Recovery books from Alder Creek Editions, free to download at aldercreekeditions.com.

Don't Panic: The First Hours After You Stop

What to Do When You Stop Drinking or Using

By Stephen Deason

A practical guide to urgent safety questions after stopping alcohol or other drugs, including withdrawal danger signs, overdose risk, naloxone, and places to find help.

One Day at a Time, Written Down

A 90-Day Gratitude Journal for Adults in Recovery

By Stephen Deason with Melissa Deason

A guided daily journal with morning and evening pages, weekly reviews, a return-to-use plan, and support-group directories.

One Day at a Time, Written Down: Christian Edition

A 90-Day Gratitude Journal for Christians in Recovery

By Stephen Deason with Melissa Deason

A Christian edition of the guided daily journal, using the King James Version.

Free Help Directory

Meetings, Helplines, and Low-Cost Care

By Stephen Deason

A practical directory of recovery meetings, helplines, low-cost treatment and health care, naloxone, food, housing, legal help, and work support.

Tools You Can Use on Your Own

A Guide to Self-Directed Recovery

By Stephen Deason with Melissa Deason

A practical guide to craving skills, daily basics, trigger mapping, written planning, and recognizing when professional care is needed.

Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook

A Companion to Tools You Can Use on Your Own

By Stephen Deason and Melissa Deason

A workbook with fill-in exercises, a daily urge log, and a written plan for difficult times and places.

Medications for Addiction, Explained

What They Are, How to Ask, and How to Pay

By Stephen Deason and Melissa Deason

A practical peer guide to medications for opioid and alcohol use disorders, how to ask for care, and ways to find support without insurance.

Money in Early Recovery

Budgets, Debts, Benefits, and Credit

By Stephen Deason

A practical guide to tracking money, building a weekly budget, addressing debt and credit, understanding benefits, and keeping useful records.

More at aldercreekeditions.com.

About the Author

Stephen Deason has worked in health care for roughly four decades. He began volunteering in a hospital at fifteen and took his first paid hospital job as an orderly at sixteen, working in hospitals and nursing homes while putting himself through college. He later spent more than twenty years building and running systems for hospitals, insurers, and state Medicaid programs before returning to direct care through healthcare staffing, home care, and skilled nursing.

Today, he runs OPA Home Care and Skilled Nursing, which he founded, and serves as an Administrator of a licensed Private Home Care Provider in Georgia, a health care facility that delivers care in patients' homes. His home care operations have recruited, hired, and managed caregiving staff for hundreds of families. He writes The Sitting Room Series from that work and from a lifetime spent around the care of older and vulnerable people.

Deason has spent 31 years running health care and technology organizations. He also founded OPA People, The OPA RASA Group, and The OPA RASA Foundation. The Foundation has helped place hundreds of people from disadvantaged backgrounds into careers.

He earned a mathematics degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, an MBA and an MSc in Accounting from Emory University, and completed doctoral coursework in business at Emory, where he was a Sheth Fellow. He also studied for the ScM

in health care administration at Johns Hopkins. His research on accounting and Ponzi schemes was published in Accounting Horizons and covered by Forbes. He writes at StephenDeason.com.