

In today's society, death is viewed as a failure of the medical profession. It is the enemy, to be fought at all costs. Death is perceived as abnormal and unnatural, so we close our eyes to the eventuality of it. We deny its existence. We even believe that if we talk about dying and death or plan our funeral, we will somehow hasten our death.

When a physician says it will be difficult to heal you or you can't be healed, when a disease is diagnosed as life-threatening or incurable, as sad and scary as that is, a gift has been given—a gift of time! How we choose to use that time is the key. Do we want the next months or year of our lives consumed with disease, or can we find a balance between living and dying?

Dying can be our finest hour or our most terrifying. Regardless, it is our own personal experience and our ultimate challenge. How we deal with this experience is entirely in our hands... not in the hands of the doctors, our family or our friends. This is our experience and we must take control of it.

There are people who live in the past. “Remember the good old days? Life just isn’t what it used to be.” There are people who live in the future. “Tomorrow will be better if I can just get through today.” But few of us live in the present. Having a life-threatening illness takes away our future and glorifies our past. It gives us the opportunity to live in the present—if we will take it.

Living: What does that word really mean? Everyone has a different answer. Start with the idea that you are alive right now. If you are reading this booklet and have a life-threatening illness then you will be alive next week and probably next month. So, what do you want to do or say? What is keeping you from doing or saying it? How can those obstacles be overcome?

Here are some ways to make the best of this gift of time you have been given.

### **Do and say what you want to do and say each day.**

We often think, “When I feel better” or “Maybe tomorrow I will have more energy.” Remember, today may be as good as it gets! Do what you want to do, even if you don’t feel as strong as you would like to feel.