



MY DECISION PROTOCOL™

How I make significant decisions, including the information, time, prayer, counsel and discernment I may need before choosing.

I will participate in the decisions that affect my body and my life.

A diagnosis can bring decisions quickly.

- Tests.
- Physicians.
- Treatment options.
- Surgery.
- Medications.
- Procedures.
- Appointments.
- Opinions.
- Recommendations.

Sometimes I may feel as though everyone around me knows what should happen next except me.

I may feel pressure to decide before I have even had time to understand what I am deciding.

But this is my life.

These decisions matter.

I will participate in making them.

I do not have to know everything.

I do not have to make every decision alone.

I do not have to become a medical expert.

But I do want to understand enough to make choices I can thoughtfully and prayerfully call my own.

I Will First Ask: How Urgent Is This Decision?

Some medical decisions require immediate action. Others do not.

I want to know the difference.

When a treatment, procedure or test is recommended, I may ask:

How soon does this decision medically need to be made?

What happens if I wait a day? A week? Longer?

Is there a medical reason this needs to happen immediately?

What risk would waiting create?

Do I reasonably have time to learn more or seek another opinion?

I do not want to confuse the emotional urgency I feel with medical urgency.

And when something truly is urgent, I want my medical team to tell me clearly.

I Will First Ask: How Urgent Is This Decision?

Before making a significant decision, I want to understand the decision itself.

I may ask:

What exactly are you recommending?

Why are you recommending it for me?

What is the goal?

What benefit might it provide?

What are the significant risks?

What are the likely short-term and long-term effects?

What reasonable alternatives exist?

What happens if I choose another option?

What happens if I choose no treatment at this time?

What do we know?

What remains uncertain?

I may need some of these questions answered more than once.

That is okay.

Understanding is not an inconvenience. It is part of my decision.

I Will Ask What Matters Specifically for Me

A treatment may be routinely recommended.

That does not mean I cannot ask why it is being recommended specifically for me.

I may ask:

What about my particular diagnosis makes this recommendation appropriate?

What factors about my health or medical history matter?

How much benefit would you expect this treatment to provide in my individual situation?

Are there circumstances in which you would recommend something different?

What would you recommend if my priorities were different?

I want to understand not only what is commonly done.

I want to understand **why it is being recommended for me.**

I Will Consider More Than the Disease

A medical decision can affect more than a disease.

It can affect my body.

My energy.

My mobility.

My cognition.

My sexuality.

My fertility.

My appearance.

My work.

My finances.

My relationships.

My emotional well-being.

My spiritual well-being.

My independence.

My quality of life.

And sometimes my future options.

I give myself permission to ask:

What matters most to me?

What am I willing to experience for the potential benefit of this treatment?

What am I not willing to sacrifice without understanding why?

What effect could this decision have on the life I want to continue living?

Quality of life is not a side issue.

It is part of my life.

I Will Know What Matters Most to Me

Two people can receive the same information and make different reasonable choices because they value different things.

Before making a significant decision, I can ask myself:

What matters most to me right now?

Longevity?

Quality of life?

Function?

Comfort?

Independence?

Preserving certain abilities?

Reducing particular risks?

Remaining available for people I love?

Having additional treatment options later?

Minimizing disruption to my life?

Following a particular spiritual conviction?

There may not always be one perfect choice.

Sometimes there are choices with different benefits, risks and consequences.

Knowing what matters to me helps me decide which choice I can live with.

I Will Make Room for Prayer

For me, discernment includes prayer.

When circumstances reasonably allow, I may choose not to make a significant decision in the same moment I receive the information.

I may become quiet.

I may pray.

I may read Scripture.

I may ask others to pray with me.

I may sit in stillness before God.

I may ask:

Lord, what do I need to see clearly?

What questions have I not asked?

Is fear driving this decision?

Is pressure driving this decision?

Is peace present?

Who should I speak with?

What is mine to do next?

Prayer does not mean I disregard medical information.

It means I bring that information into the presence of God as I discern my next step.

I Will Seek Counsel Without Giving Away My Decision

I may want advice from people I trust.

My spouse.

My family.

My physician.

Another physician.

My nurse navigator.

A trusted friend.

My pastor.

A chaplain.

A counselor.

Someone who has walked a similar road.

Their perspectives may help me see something I have missed.

But I will remember:

Advice is not ownership.

Other people may help me make my decision.

They do not have to become the decision-makers for my life.

I May Seek Another Medical Opinion

When time and circumstances permit, I may seek another medical opinion before making a significant decision.

A second opinion does not necessarily mean that I distrust my medical team.

It may confirm the recommendation I have already received.

It may reveal another option.

It may provide additional expertise.

It may help me ask better questions.

Or it may simply give me greater confidence about moving forward.

I give myself permission to seek the information I need.

I Will Notice When Fear Is Making the Decision

Fear is understandable.

A frightening diagnosis can make almost any decision feel overwhelming.

I will not shame myself for being afraid.

But when possible, I will notice whether fear is beginning to choose for me.

I can ask:

If I were not making this decision from panic, what would I want to know?

Am I saying yes because I understand and choose this, or because I am afraid to say anything else?

Am I saying no because it reflects my values, or because I am frightened?

What information would help me move from fear toward clarity?

I do not have to wait until I feel completely fearless.

I simply want fear to have a **voice, not the deciding vote.**

I Will Notice Pressure

Pressure can come from many places.

A medical professional.

Family.

Friends.

Stories I have heard.

Statistics.

The internet.

My own expectations.

Someone else's experience.

I can listen without immediately agreeing.

I can say:

"I hear what you are recommending."

"I need to understand this better."

"I would like some time to think and pray about this, if medically reasonable."

"I would like another opinion."

"What is the medical consequence if I do not decide today?"

Taking appropriate time is not avoidance.

It can be part of thoughtful decision-making.

I Will Recognize That Choosing Includes Responsibility

Agency does not mean that every choice will produce the outcome I want.

Medicine contains uncertainty.

Life contains uncertainty.

I can make a thoughtful, informed, prayerful decision and still encounter an outcome I did not expect.

My goal is not to guarantee the future.

My goal is to be able to say:

I participated.

I understood what I reasonably could.

I asked my questions.

I considered what mattered to me.

I prayed.

I sought wisdom.

And I made the best decision I could with what I knew at the time.

I will not use hindsight to punish the woman who had to make the decision without knowing what came next.

I Can Change My Mind

Some decisions cannot be reversed.

Others can.

When circumstances allow, new information may cause me to reconsider a previous choice.

My priorities may change.

My body may respond differently than expected.

New options may become available.

I may understand something differently.

Changing my mind after receiving new information does not mean I failed.

It means I am continuing to participate.

I can ask:

“Is this decision still serving the goals we established?”

What I Ask From My Medical Team

Please help me understand the decisions before me.

Tell me when something is medically urgent and when I reasonably have time to consider my choices.

Explain the purpose, expected benefits, significant risks and reasonable alternatives associated with your recommendation.

Help me understand what is known and what remains uncertain.

Tell me how the information applies specifically to me.

Please respect that my values, quality of life and spiritual beliefs may influence my decisions.

When medically reasonable, allow me time to ask questions, seek counsel, pray and discern.

I respect your responsibility to recommend the care you believe is medically appropriate.

I ask you to respect my responsibility to participate in choosing the care I receive.

Before I Decide

When I am facing a significant decision, I will ask myself:

Do I understand what I am deciding?

Do I understand why it is being recommended?

Do I understand the potential benefits?

Do I understand the significant risks?

Do I know what reasonable alternatives exist?

Do I know how urgent this decision actually is?

Have I asked the questions I need answered?

Would another medical opinion help me?

Have I considered what matters most to me?

Have I sought the counsel I need?

Have I made room for prayer and discernment?

Am I choosing from understanding rather than simply reacting from fear or pressure?

And finally:

Can I call this decision mine?

My Personal Decision Protocol

When I face a significant decision, the first thing I want to do is:

The people whose counsel I trust are:

The medical questions I want to remember to ask are:

The personal values I want to consider are:

Before deciding, I want time for:

The Scripture, prayer or spiritual practice that helps me discern is:

When I feel pressured, I want to remember:

When I feel afraid, I want to remember:

My Commitment

I will not surrender my decisions simply because I am frightened.

I will learn what I reasonably can.

I will ask.

I will listen.

I will consider.

I will pray.

I will seek wisdom.

I will discern.

And when it is time to choose,

I will participate in the choosing.

Name: _____

Date: _____

My Decision Protocol™ is a personal reflection, communication and self-advocacy tool. It does not provide medical advice or replace informed consent, emergency care, medical evaluation or consultation with qualified healthcare professionals.