

What would you do with only six months to live?

1. First things first, remember you're not dead yet. 2. Recognize that your body is only a part of who you are. You are greater than the sum of your physical parts. So don't be preoccupied with your body or illness. 3. Watch reruns of *The Simpsons*. 4. Lie in bed and feel sorry for yourself. 5. Laugh. 6. However, avoid using humor to put yourself down. 7. Eat as much chocolate as you like. 8. Find joy in the mundane. Sit by the window and pay attention to the song of birds. Even a chore like doing the dishes can be a source of wonder if you allow yourself to marvel at the myriad of colors in soapsuds. 9. Spend a morning at Golden Gate Park, and watch the trees sway in the wind. 10. Read *Tuesdays With Morrie*. 11. Gobble up food samples in grocery stores. 12. Purchase a notebook. 13. Record your anger and frustrations. You can gain distance and perspective by writing down what you are going through. 14. Play your favorite music — loudly. Let it fill the room. 15. Wear purple topped by a neon green hat. 16. Talk openly about your illness. Don't keep what you are going through bottled up inside. Don't shut out other people. Don't isolate yourself. 17. Let someone feed you peeled seedless grapes. 18. Listen to an audio recording of Tolstoy's *War And Peace*. 19. Resist the temptation to think of yourself as useless. 20. Remember: No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. 21. Be useful. Set goals for yourself. Even small ones, such as cutting out newspaper articles you've been meaning to share. 22. Set bigger goals, such as teaching your grandchildren to read, or starting a book you've always wanted to read. 23. Come to terms with the fact that you may not be fully physically fit again. 24. Seek out and attend to what is divine, holy or sacred to you. 25. Learn to meditate. 26. Eat a pound of sausages at one sitting. 27. Settle financial and insurance matters. It's important to ensure your loved ones are well looked after. If you've not prepared a will, have one drawn up. 28. Mourn, grieve and cry for yourself. Ordinarily we think about mourning for loved ones, but not for ourselves. Crying helps you gradually come to accept the end — the irrevocable fact that all living things die. Mourning and grieving will help you achieve some level of composure. 29. Bathe in champagne. 30. Share your grief. Cry in front of others, and cry with them. Witnessing grief gives others permission to grieve. 31. Tell someone the story of your life, sparing no details. 32. Wake them up if they fall asleep. 33. Have an entire tub of ice cream. 34. Love yourself. Be gentle, be patient, and be kind to yourself. Love yourself the way your parents loved you when you were a child. 35. Plant a tree. 36. Ask the people you've wronged to forgive you. 37. Forgive others. 38. Forgive your parents. 39. Forgive yourself. 40. Sit down when you're tired. 41. Be a witness to yourself. Be an observer of your own physical, emotional and spiritual states. Develop the ability to stand outside, and watch what's going on inside. By detaching yourself, you can notice how you habitually think and behave. Through self-analysis comes self-knowledge. 42. Identify behaviors you want to change, and change them. 43. Start small. For instance, if you don't want to be a grouch any more, the first step may be as simple as saying "Good morning," "Please," "You're welcome" and "Thank you" more often. If you want people to talk to you, work on being more attentive and a good listener. If you want people to visit you more, work on making their visits pleasant. 44. Do the cha-cha in the street. 45. Plan your own funeral. 46. Fall asleep under the stars. 47. Decide where you want to die. If, like the majority of us, you'd like to spend your final months at home, By the Bay Health can make that wish possible. More than half our patients are cared for at home. 48. Call us at 415.927.2273 to learn about hospice care or visit www.livingbeforeleaving.org for information. 49. Understand that hospice is a model of end-of-life care that strives to meet the medical, social, spiritual, practical and emotional needs of patients and their families. 50. Make a list of another 50 things to do.

Sharing your end-of-life wishes is one of the greatest gifts you can give your family. For ideas on how to **Start the Conversation** about your advance care plan, visit www.bythebayhealth.org.