SCARSTORIES · A LITTLE COMPANY ON THE WAY

Getting your affairs in order without catastrophising

Sorting paperwork is not planning to die — it's removing friction so you can focus on getting better. Adults do this routinely. Here's how to do it in one afternoon, without the fear taking over.

Preparing and waiting

> Educational content.

Getting your affairs in order means making sure the practical side of your life — documents, accounts, wishes, passwords — would run smoothly if you couldn't manage it yourself for a while. It sounds like a dark task. It isn't. It's the same thing adults do when they travel abroad, or buy a house, or have a baby: reducing friction for the people they love.

Reframe it first

The word "will" makes it feel like death prep. Think of it as leaving the instructions manual for your own life in one place. It doesn't protect anyone from loss — nothing does that. It protects them from bureaucracy: from hunting for papers in a drawer while their hearts are already full. Most people who do this while waiting say the same thing afterwards: it felt like clearing a weight, not inviting one.

The one-afternoon list

1. One folder, physical or digital, and tell one trusted person where it is. The folder matters more than its contents.
2. Documents in one place: ID, passport, insurance papers, house or car papers. Just knowing they're together is enough.
3. A simple list of accounts and passwords, in the folder, on paper. It's not a security risk; it's a rescue tool.
4. Your medication list, your conditions, and your team's names — written simply, for anyone who might need to speak for you.

5. Insurance: what it covers, who to call. One page, no fine print required.
6. Who to notify: at work, in your circle, in your mosque or community — names and numbers, that's all.
7. If you have children: the practical answers — guardianship wishes, who picks them up. A short paragraph, not a legal document.

Time-box it

Do it once, in one sitting, with a clock. Then close the folder and put it away. The trap isn't doing the admin — it's letting it become the wallpaper of your waiting mind, so that every quiet moment turns into a mental audit of your own mortality. Once it's done, it's done. That's the whole point.

If it feels unbearable

For some people this task is freeing; for others it is genuinely overwhelming. Both are normal. If it overwhelms you, don't force it — do the absolute minimum (one folder, one trusted person, one page of passwords) and ask someone you trust to sit with you while you do it. You don't have to finish everything in the waiting room of your own mind.

> **Take it to your team**
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> Ask: if I'm in hospital, who should the team notify, and who can they speak to about my care? Is there a form or process at your hospital for naming someone to make decisions with you, if you wanted that? They can tell you what exists — without any commitment.

> **Call for help if**
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> If doing this drags you into dark thoughts that won't lift — hopelessness that lasts for days, or thoughts of not wanting to be here — that's not a paperwork problem and it's not weakness. Tell your team or someone close, today. It's common, it's treatable, and you deserve help with it.

> My wife found the folder two years later, when we moved house. She laughed: "You even dated it." I'd forgotten I'd made it. That's when I realised — the wait was the thing that scared me, not the folder.

A last word

This task is one afternoon of your life, and then it's finished. It doesn't change what the results say, and it doesn't invite what you fear. It simply makes sure that whatever comes next, the people you love won't have to climb a mountain of paperwork to reach you. And the medical decisions themselves — those stay with your own team, made with you.

Questions to take to my team

- [ ] Who can record my emergency contact and wishes if I cannot speak for myself?

- [ ] Which practical documents should I prepare before admission?

For discussion and personal reference. Your care team’s individual instructions take priority. For an emergency, contact your local emergency service; do not wait for a community reply.