Here's my first draft of a COVID 19 directive. I am looking for your comments, criticisms, elaborations, and edits! What do you think? Would this serve you?
In case of COVID-19

Dear Medical Advocate:

If you’re reading this because I am gravely ill with COVID 19 and can no longer make my own medical decisions, please understand that I want to avoid a prolonged death in Intensive Care. I love my life and dearly want to live. But what was once distant, sure and abstract – my eventual death -- is now near, uncertain, and concrete. The virus could sweep me into a hospital within five days, and take my life within three weeks.

I know the statistics. Only a third, at most, of people with COVID 19 who go onto a ventilator in an ICU are emerging alive, with lungs undamaged enough to resume a normal life. The odds grow worse for older people and for people with insulin-dependent diabetes, lung or heart trouble, a terminal cancer, or damage to another vital organ. I’m 71 --- a healthy 71, but 71 nevertheless. ICU stays are torturous. I don’t want to die alone with a tube down my throat and my body paralyzed with drugs, listening to a cacaphony of bleeps and bloops.

I am currently in good health. If I develop breathing difficulties with COVID 19, please take me to the hospital.  If I need entry into an ICU, please permit it only under the following circumstances:

• My doctors think I have at least a 50-50 chance of surviving and returning to a functional life.

• I have not developed a new condition that worsens my chance of survival.

• I am not depriving a healthy younger person with children, and a better chance of survival, of an ICU bed.

If I must go into the ICU:

• Ask my doctor to sign a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) order. Attempting to resuscitate a COVID 19 patient whose heart stops in ICU is brutal, ineffective, and poses grave risks to medical personnel.  I do not wish any attempt at resuscitation.

\* Please ask that my ventilator be removed if my lungs become permanently damaged with COVID while I am in ICU. I wish to remove all barriers to a peaceful and timely death.

If my health has deteriorated since I wrote this directive, and I am now living in a nursing home or have developed dementia, lung failure, liver failure, heart failure, or kidney failure, please do not permit my entry into an ICU for any reason, including COVID 19. In such a case, please let my wishes, as expressed below, guide you:

· Please ask my medical team to provide Comfort Care Only.

· Try to qualify me for hospice, and ask again later if refused.

· Ask my medical team to allow natural death. Do not authorize any medical procedure that might prolong or delay my death.

· Do not transport me to a hospital. I prefer to die in the place that has become my home.

· Do not intubate me or give me intravenous fluids. I do not want treatments that may prolong or increase my suffering.

· Do not treat my infections with antibiotics—give me painkillers instead.

· Ask my doctor to deactivate all medical devices, such as defibrillators, that may delay death and cause pain.

· Ask my doctor to deactivate any medical device that might delay death, even those, such as pacemakers, that may improve my comfort.

· If I’m eating, let me eat what I want, and don’t put me on “thickened liquids,” even if this increases my risk of pneumonia.

· Do not force or coax me to eat, or wave a spoon in front of me.

· Ask to stop, and do not give permission to start, dialysis.

· Do not agree to any tests whose results would be meaningless, given my desire to avoid treatments that might be burdensome, agitating, painful, or prolonging of my life or death.

· Do not give me a vaccine that might delay my death, unless required to protect others.

· Do keep me out of physical pain, including treatment with opioids, anti-anxiety drugs, and cannabis, if helpful.

· Ask my doctor to fill out the medical orders known as POLST (Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment) or MOLST (Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment) to confirm the wishes I’ve expressed here.

· If I must be institutionalized, please do your best to find a place with an art workshop and access to nature, if I can still enjoy them.

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Dated:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *The Art of Dying Well: A Practical Guide to a Good End of Life*, by Katy Butler © 2019. Reprinted with permission of Scribner. All rights reserved. If you reproduce, please include this credit. Cross out and initial any line you do not want. You may have this witnessed or notarized if you wish.

Katy Butler

Author, The Art of Dying Well