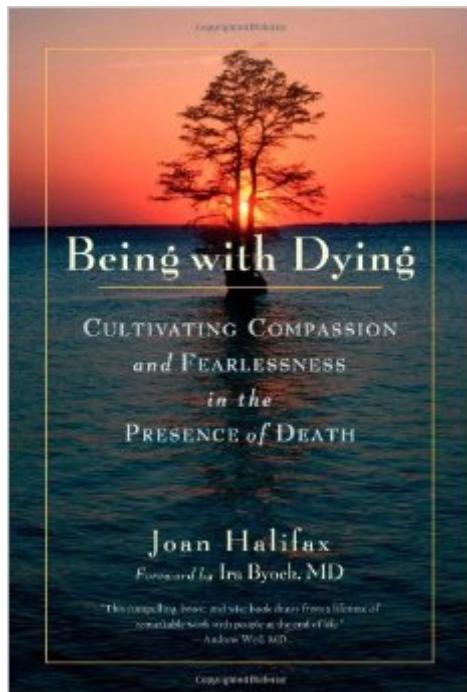


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Being With Dying: Cultivating Compassion And Fearlessness In The Presence Of Death



Synopsis

The Buddhist approach to death can be of great benefit to people of all backgroundsâ "as has been demonstrated time and again in Joan Halifaxâ ™s decades of work with the dying and their caregivers. Inspired by traditional Buddhist teachings, her work is a source of wisdom for all those who are charged with a dying personâ ™s care, facing their own death, or wishing to explore and contemplate the transformative power of the dying process. Her teachings affirm that we can open and contact our inner strength, and that we can help others who are suffering to do the same.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Shambhala; 1 Reprint edition (November 17, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1590307186

ISBN-13: 978-1590307182

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (67 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I have scanned the market of books about caretakers and the dying process, and to me this is the finest book available on the subject. It is cut-to-the-bone view of dying with many personal case stories. The book is in my view not so well-structured. It is divided in sections, but these overlap, and it seems more like a long association about dying, care-taking and the death process. Sometimes the subject in focus is elaborated and sometimes there is a lot of condensed knowledge in a few sentences. But it doesn't matter. You are taken on a journey by this book. It contains so much knowledge (years of experience in the field), so much good advice for living more fully, and so many obvious ways to handle the dying process. The book describes subjects only rarely found in other similar books - how to take care of the body after death (which can be tremendous healing for grievers I must say from personal experience) and the shadow side of caregiving. I especially like the description of the dissolution of the elements just before death - indeed what it feels like

physically to die - experienced from the inside! It contains many touching stories, and simple, yet profound sentences of great wisdom - summations of experience from Joan's many hours and years on the bedside of dying fellow human beings. I only read about 20-30 pages a day to have time to think about and absorb the knowledge in the book. It is stressed again and again that there are no single good way to die. What the dying person experiences can be so very different from what family, friends, and caretakers experience from the outside.

BEING WITH DYING is specifically aimed at professional caregivers, but non-professional caregivers, such as family members and friends who provide caregiving for a dying person, will find excellent support to guide them along their spiritual path. With unflinching honesty and deep compassion for the dying person, Halifax explores all the aspects of dying and death that, in being with a dying person, a caregiver may experience. She deals with the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional processes that dying activates and how this affects both the dying person and those around him. There was some bias against family members and friends acting as caregivers to the dying. All her empathy lies with the dying person, which is as it should be, but Halifax is, at times, quite unsympathetic to the emotional pain, suffering and struggle from the family caregivers' side. Her negative view of caretaker archetypes reveals a subtle disdain for the role of family caregivers. Unfortunately, this slightly detracts from the inherent wisdom of her advice and Buddhist philosophy. Not all of us have the temperament or self-mastery to become a detached caregiver. All non-professional caregivers do is try to give their loved ones the best that they can out of love. Yes, with hindsight, the mistakes they make may have made dying more difficult for the departing soul, but the resulting guilt also makes the loss harder to bear even when the non-professional caregiver knows the loved one's soul is finally at peace. Halifax's compassion was all for the dying and there was very little left over for the family members living for years in that strange limbo between deep love, anticipatory grief, impending loss and physical exhaustion.

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