



## Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death

*Joan Halifax, Ira Byock (Foreword)*

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**Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death** Joan Halifax , Ira Byock (Foreword)

In this long-awaited book of inspiring and practical teachings, Buddhist teacher Joan Halifax offers the fruits of her many years of work with dying people. Inspired by traditional Buddhist teachings, her work is a source of wisdom for all those who are charged with a dying person's care, who are facing their own death, or who are wishing to explore and contemplate the transformative power of the dying process.

Halifax offers lessons from dying people and caregivers, as well as guided meditations to help readers contemplate death without fear, develop a commitment to helping others, and transform suffering and resistance into courage. She says, "Why wait until we are actually dying to explore what it may mean to die with awareness?"

A world-renowned pioneer in care of the dying, Joan Halifax founded the Project on Being with Dying, which helps dying people to face death with courage and trains professional and family caregivers in compassionate and ethical end-of-life care.

## **Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death Details**

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## **From Reader Review Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death for online ebook**

### **Dniecebear says**

This is an important time to review this book considering the suffering and loss of life in Haiti due to a powerful earthquake. I am borrowing this book from Chenoa who is borrowing is from one of her friends. I especially appreciate the meditations suggested after each chapter. The central one "Strong Back, Soft Front" teaches me to let all the dualities of my body teach, lead and inform my hopefully compassionate presence in the world. Practicing many of the phrases in the book helps me locate my "bowels of compassion" as the King James Bible says or, in other words, a tender, open heart.

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### **Joanne Mcleod says**

This book is excellent in blending the practices of mindfulness with being in the presence of death and impermanence. One of the concluding paragraphs best sums up the theme of this book as a 'practice' for our own death: "For practicing dying is also practicing living, if we can only realize it. The more truly we can see this, the better we can serve those who are actively dying and offer them our love without condition."

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### **Ann Augustine says**

Very enlightening, thought provoking. Lessons to be learned at any stage of living.

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### **Mae says**

I read this book in preparation for a course I was to take with Roshi Joan Halifax at Upaya Zen Center. It is a very important book for everyone to read at least once in their lifetime. Why? Because we all deal with death sooner or later, and we all die eventually. This helps prepare you for when that someone you love is dying. But more importantly, it helps you remember that valuable lesson - it is only through understanding death that we can truly live our own life. Beautiful, Roshi. Thank you for your wisdom.

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### **Kelley says**

I'm very eager to read this one, as it seems most aligned with how I want to approach my mother's death.

This book was so helpful in how we cared for my mother in her last days. It gave me the confidence I needed to let her go and make sure she knew we'd be ok. Of course, I'm not entirely convinced I will be ok at least, not anytime soon.

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## **Bg says**

Beautiful, accessible, simple and very useful.  
Essential reading for any of us mortal beings!!

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## **Monty says**

This book presents a Buddhist perspective on death and dying along with tie ins to how our US culture is so fearful of death. I must say that there is something about the way it is written that the prose didn't grab me, and I had to force myself to keep reading. It got easier to follow along towards the second half of the book. In spite of that, the information presented and the meditations suggested (there are meditations at the end of each chapter) are well worth the time. Anita and I will be taking a Being with Dying workshop at Upaya in New Mexico this coming May and look forward to being immersed in the topic for five days. Upaya was founded by and is run by the author of this book.

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## **Chanita.Shannon says**

Buddhist teacher Joan Halifax's work is a source of wisdom for those who wish to explore and contemplate the transformative power of the dying process, as well as those who are charged with a dying person's care or facing their own death. ... She notes that all of us will ultimately have to deal with the loss of parents and loved ones and that most of us are largely unprepared emotionally for their deaths. ... The book offers lessons from dying people and caregivers, as well as guided meditations to help readers contemplate death without fear, develop a commitment to helping others, and transform suffering and resistance into courage.

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### **Jane B. says**

This book was so inspiring, both as it helped me look at the Buddhist approach to being with someone who is dying and looking at my own mortality. The most significant learning for me was the author's three most significant tenets of being with the dying: not knowing, bearing witness, and compassionate action. I try to take a minute and focus on these before I visit a Hospice patient...and these tenets help me be in the best possible place for these visits.

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### **Mark says**

Simple and straightforward as well as rich and deep. Wonderful.

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### **Stephanie says**

10 stars!

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### **Judy Croome says**

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.

Despite this, the wise reflections, the meditations and the practical advice presented in BEING WITH DYING helped me through the very trying time of my beloved Father's active dying. Coincidentally, I

started reading this book the night he had his third and final stroke, and I finished it 11 days later, the day after his funeral.

I regret that I only found this book three years after my role as caregiver to my Father began, because I can see the mistakes I made, despite having help from a professional caregiver for the last 18 months. But I do gain some small comfort from the fact that, in the 6 days it took my beloved Father to actively die, I feel this book truly helped me ease his path slightly (by just sitting quietly with him and following his lead.) I also found the breathing meditations helped me calm my mind and relax my body during this intensely emotional time.

Ultimately, BEING WITH DYING was a worthwhile and comforting read for me.

I highly recommend BEING WITH DYING, no matter what stage of the caregiver's role you are currently in.

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### **Shaina says**

Very profound. Definitely a must read.

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### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

This is an excellent text for anyone facing death (in a more specific way than the way everyone is headed towards death) or who will be handling the emotions and stress involved in someone else who is dying, especially someone close to you. The underlying philosophy is Buddhist but the practical mindfulness techniques included in each chapter would be helpful to people in any belief system (or lack thereof.) How to let go. How to take care of yourself. How to be present with another person's experience without forcing your own expectations. How not to play the hero or the martyr. It almost made me want to switch careers to be a hospice worker, just thinking about how many people die without this space and respect.

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### **Collette says**

This is a great spiritual book. I think I am more Buddhist than any other religion, and I love this book's focus on meditation and being in the present...a great read on the side while I am finishing up the very long and intense fiction book I'm reading!

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