

BOOK REVIEWS

Now You Illuminate the Path to Departure: Learning to Die Is Learning to Live by Julia Kalenberg

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Now You Illuminate the Path to Departure: Learning to die is learning to live by Julia Kalenberg

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(Published in German under the original title *Und jetzt ziegst zu uns, wie Sterben geht.*)

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What excites me about this book is the way Julia skillfully weaves together stories, personal reflections, and thought-provoking questions to create a compelling narrative that not only acknowledges the inevitability of death but also celebrates life in the face of it. At a time when there is growing awareness of the importance of end-of-life conversations and the need for a more compassionate approach to death, Julia's book is a timely and important contribution.

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The three parts of the book

The book is divided into three distinct parts, each offering a treasure trove of stories, reflections, and poignant questions. The first part comprises stories of individuals grappling with loss. These narratives not only capture the essence of the human experience but also encourage readers to reflect on their own takeaways.

In the second part, Julia opens her diary to provide an intimate account of her emotional journey during her father's final months. Her honesty and vulnerability offer readers a deeply personal perspective on coping with loss, making the book relatable and emotionally resonant.

The third part of the book presents stories from conversations with individuals who have faced death of close people, shedding light on their experiences and what held meaning for them. Julia skillfully incorporates thought-provoking questions within these stories, inviting readers to contemplate their own dialogues with loved ones.

Embracing Solution-Focused living

Julia employs solution-focused principles throughout her writing without explicitly mentioning them. Her ability to weave these principles into her storytelling is impressive, making this book accessible and valuable to a wide audience.

Through her stories and the stories of others, she illustrates how individuals can honor the voices of those nearing the end of their lives and create spaces for meaningful goodbyes. Her solution-focused approach is evident in her interviews, story curation, and her embodiment of solution-focused principles in her daily life, as seen in her diary entries and her family's collaborative efforts to create meaningful last months together.

Julia, for instance, invited her family to reflect on co-creating the best last months together with her father, inspired by a story she described in the first part of her book (pp. 38ff). She and her family asked themselves questions like, "Suppose it's the end of the year ... Dad is no longer with us. We look back on the last few months and are satisfied with how we have shaped our time. What did we do? Who contributed what to make it an acceptable time? What are we particularly satisfied with?" (pp. 62ff) This reflective process exemplifies her commitment to shaping meaningful moments during a challenging time.

Another touching example is how she informs relatives and friends of her father about his diagnosis and invites them to send him goodbye messages promptly, ensuring he can read them while still able (pp. 68ff). Her proactive approach underscores the importance of embracing solution-focused thinking, even in the face of difficult circumstances.

Julia Kalenberg's stories: A window into diverse experiences

Conversations about death are often challenging yet undeniably essential. Julia's book provides valuable insights into fostering a favorable environment for conversations about death and yet respectfully acknowledges the individuality of each person and situation. Consequently, rather than

presenting formulas, she empowers readers to draw wisdom from others' experiences and encourages introspection regarding their personal hopes, resources, and strengthening experiences.

One of the things that make this book so powerful is her willingness to share her own story. She does so with honesty and vulnerability, and her perspectives are both insightful and moving.

Julia's book is also notable for its focus on hope. She challenges the notion that dying is always a sad and difficult experience. Instead, she shows how dying can also be a time of growth, learning, and connection.

How the book inspired my reflections

I found Julia's book to be both deeply moving and thought-provoking. Her stories prompted a closer examination of my own experiences with death, which made me realize the treasure trove I already built throughout my life. I not only found invaluable insights in her stories, but also realized the significance of all the insights I had during my own encounters with dying.

For a thoughtful exploration of life's inevitable transition

This book could prove invaluable in various fields such as healthcare, psychology, family counseling, and end-of-life care discussions. However, its applicability may be limited in areas unrelated to personal growth, self-reflection, or end-of-life conversations.

Conversations about death are often difficult to have, but they are essential. Julia's book inspires to actively invite these conversations instead of avoiding them. It offers readers a way to learn from the experiences of others and to reflect on their own perspectives on death and dying.

Julia's book is an important contribution for anyone who has been touched by death, either personally or through a loved one. It is a book that will stay with you long after you finish reading it.

[Get full details and order the book through the publisher's website.](#)

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