

# **DYING: Finding Comfort and Guidance in a Story of a Peaceful Passing**

**Foreword by Bernie Siegel, M.D.**

My father, literally, died laughing. With his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren at his bedside, his last moments arrived just as he'd planned. He wanted his loved ones close, he wanted to end his time in his physical body in joy, and he didn't take his last breath until all of us arrived.

In those final hours, my father celebrated, he laughed as heartily as he was able, he looked great – not like a man who would soon be dead. And in those final hours he provided all of us with some of the most important lessons any of us would ever learn: Death can be approached consciously, without fear and, even, with a sense of wonderment.

The way he chose to "graduate" from his life on earth to his next adventure was far different from the way most people make their transition. I am grateful that he provided me the opportunity to witness this important event.

When I received my copy of this book, I was thrilled to see author Judy Underwood taking a fresh approach to the subject of dying. The story of one woman's conscious journey toward her own death during the last year of her life is a story all of us need to read.

As a medical doctor I do not find the death of patients to be troubling. But many of my colleagues view death as some type of failure – even though 100 percent of humans die!

Judy uses the word "Dying" in her title. That took courage! Why? Because even in hospitals the medical personnel do their best to avoid using the word. They use words like: failing, passed away, ended, lost, terminated. That language shows clearly that doctors believe that a death is a failure, that somehow it can be avoided, that they can prevent it – even if the patient experiences nothing of quality from continuing to be alive.

If only they could have been at my father's bedside and learned the positive side of death. If only they would read Judy's book!

What we need to accept is that life is about beginnings. I see the death of a loved one as the chance to begin again. In all other aspects of life we view new beginnings positively. We say, "She got married!" We don't say, "She ended her life as a single woman." We say, "He had a son!" We don't say, "His life without children is over."

I see life as an eternal circle with endless beginnings. Death is not the worst outcome. While we don't know what happens to our consciousness after it is released from our physical body, what evidence do we have to doubt that the next journey is any less fantastic?

Reading Judy's story in Chapter 8 reminded me of this story from my life:

After my mother died I received a phone call from Monica, a friend of mine, who holds extraordinary mystical powers. When she called she no longer lived near me and didn't know of my mother's death. But she received a message, and yes, I was quite surprised. When Monica called, she explained: "Your folks are together and very proud of you. They are being shown around by someone who likes cigarettes and chocolate. Do you know who that is?" I told her I didn't, and then she said, "Oh, it's Elisabeth Kubler-Ross." Elisabeth and I became close friends many years ago and she was one of my teachers. She showed me the importance of talking to anesthetized patients and departed spirits. Her teaching changed my life experience.

I accept the reality of and feel the grief that one experiences when a loved one dies. But I have learned to accept death as one of my greatest teachers. It makes me aware of my limited time here and how important it is for me to live in my heart and do what feels right for me rather than lose my life to the desires of others.

This is a poem I wrote:

#### THE GREAT TEACHER

Death what a great teacher you are  
About life  
Yet few of us elect to take your class  
And learn about life  
That is the essence of death's teaching  
Death is not an elective  
We must all take the class  
The wise students audit the class in their early years  
And find enlightenment  
They are prepared for their commencement  
When graduation day arrives

Judy can write this book because she has learned from the great teacher and is not afraid to face her mortality. She writes about the many similarities between birth and death. With the right midwives the process is much easier and free of pain.

When faced with death we need to empower ourselves and use our energy to heal our lives. This includes asking for the help we need and not denying our needs and feelings by saying, “fine” in order to please others. Dying doesn’t mean you are a loser. Not experiencing life would make you a loser. Dying is inevitable and so we must choose life while we have it and live our authentic lives.

The people we love live on in our hearts and minds. I try to live the life that they would want for me and not spend it endlessly grieving. Our tears are meant to soften the dying experience but not to put out our loved one’s candle. We can abandon our painful past and use it as a source of energy to move us forward in our life.

What is immortal is not success but love. Love is the bridge between the land of the living and the land of the dying.

In this book you will find, as Judy writes on the cover, “comfort and guidance in a story of a peaceful passing.”

So read on and learn how to find your personal peace, help to create world peace and live in the time of your life.

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