



Life Lessons: Two Experts on Death and Dying Teach Us About the Mysteries of Life and Living

By Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, David Kessler

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A Message From Elisabeth

We all have lessons to learn during this time called life; this is especially apparent when working with the dying. The dying learn a great deal at the end of life, usually when it is too late to apply. After moving to the Arizona desert in 1995, I had a stroke on Mother's Day that left me paralyzed. I spent the next few years at death's door. Sometimes I thought death would come within a few weeks. Many times, I was disappointed that it did not come, for I was ready. But I have not died because I am still learning the lessons of life, my final lessons. These lessons are the ultimate truths about our lives; they are the secrets to life itself. I wanted to write one more book, not on death and dying but on life and living.

Is this really how I want to live my life?

Each one of us at some point asks this question. The tragedy is not that life is short but that we often see only in hindsight what really matters.

In Life Lessons, her first book on life and living, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross joins with David Kessler to guide readers through the practical and spiritual lessons we need to learn so that we can live life to its fullest in every moment. Many years of working with the dying have shown the authors that certain lessons come up over and over again. Some of these lessons can be difficult to master, but even the attempts to understand them are deeply rewarding. Here, in fourteen accessible chapters, from the Lesson of Love to the Lesson of Happiness, the authors reveal the truth about our fears, our hopes, our relationships, and, above all, the grandness of who we really are.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

After experiencing a paralyzing stroke in 1995 and facing her own mortality, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (author of the renowned *On Death and Dying*) realized she had some unfinished business to take care of. "I wanted to write one more book, not on death and dying, but on life and living," she explains. So she joined forces with coauthor David Kessler, a leader in the field of hospice care, and together they wrote about the lessons we can learn about living from those who are dying. As Kessler explains in his introduction, "The dying have always been teachers of great lessons, for it's when we are pushed to the edge of life that we see most clearly."

In days gone by, the community would have gathering places where children and adults listened to elders tell their stories of life's challenges and the meaning they found in life. In lieu of that kind of extended community, the authors offer this book, filled with stories from the edge. Then, like fireside elders, they weave these personal stories into themes, such as living authentically, the importance of play, finding one's power, loving relationships, and self-compassion. One cannot say enough about the lasting value of this beautifully written and carefully rendered book. This is your chance to see life from the 20/20 vision of hindsight. In the end what will we value most? Here are some hints: the days we surrendered and became calm, the times we healed that which was broken, and of course all the moments we opened ourselves to love. --Gail Hudson

From Publishers Weekly

Blending the words of two authors is a precarious undertaking, particularly when the two voices are as strong and well-known as those of Kübler-Ross and hospice-care leader Kessler (*The Rights of the Dying*). Given the similarity in their viewpoints as experts on death and dying, this collaboration seems logical, but unfortunately the alternating entries result in repetitive, rambling prose that lacks punch. The "lessons from the edge of life" culled from the authors' patients include letting go of anger, guilt and fear; learning patience; mourning and accepting loss; playing, laughing and enjoying life; and surrendering to what can't be changed. Although some of the brief personal stories are poignant, the underlying precepts are not new. Kessler and Kübler-Ross offer only familiar aphorisms: "live every day to its fullest," "each of us has the power of the universe within us," happiness is a state of mind we can choose, suffering is an opportunity for growth, "life is a school, complete with individualized tests and challenges." Such lessons may be true and useful, but here they come off as trite. Kübler-Ross has been ill for many years, suffering two strokes that left her partially incapacitated and may have made writing difficult, but the brief glimpses into her personal journey through illness and near death cry out for elaboration. Mentions of coping with a home health-care worker who stole from her, a nurse who labeled her "combative" and friends who must help this previously vigorous woman navigate the world in a wheelchair indicate a much fuller, richer story than the expanded platitudes offered here, which are unlikely to widen either author's readership. (Nov.)

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From [Booklist](#)

The psychiatrist whose *On Death and Dying* (1970) put issues about life's end on the contemporary cultural agenda teams with a leader in the hospice movement in her first book on living. Its 14 thoughtful chapters lead readers from the "Lesson of Authenticity" to the "Lesson of Happiness" by means of illustrative anecdotes from the lives of both authors' patients. Rather than writing in a unitary voice, Kübler-Ross and Kessler speak separately, and each writer's portions of the text are signed with her or his initials. The

observations of the two sometimes complement very powerfully, especially those that come from the time in 1995 when Kubler-Ross suffered a stroke that brought her perilously close to death. She recovered to write that life lessons are opportunities to rid ourselves of negativity and find the best in ourselves and others. As the collaborators write about the lessons of fear, guilt, anger, surrender, forgiveness, and the rest, they teach that true healing extends beyond physical repair to the mending of spirits and souls. *Whitney Scott*

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Users Review

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James Stewart:

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