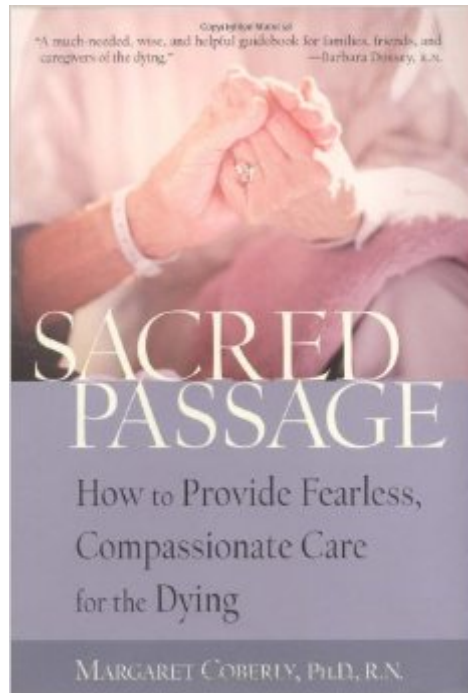


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# Sacred Passage: How To Provide Fearless, Compassionate Care For The Dying



## Synopsis

Working as an emergency room nurse, Margaret Coberly came in contact with death on a daily basis. However, it wasn't until her own brother was diagnosed with terminal cancer that she realized she understood very little about the emotional and spiritual aspects of caring for the terminally ill. To fill this gap she turned to the unique wisdom on death and dying found in Tibetan Buddhism. In this book Coberly offers sound, practical advice on meeting the essential needs of the dying, integrating stories from her long career in nursing with useful insights from the Tibetan Buddhist teachings. In the West, death is viewed as a tragic and horrible event. Coberly shows us how this view generates fear and denial, which harm the dying by adding unnecessary loneliness, confusion, and mental anguish to the dying process. Tibetan Buddhism focuses on the nature of death and how to face it with honesty, openness, and courage. In this view, death is not a failure, but a natural part of life that, if properly understood and appreciated, can offer the dying and their loved ones an opportunity to gain valuable insight and wisdom. Coberly argues that the Tibetan Buddhist outlook can be a useful antidote to the culture of fear and denial that surrounds death in the West and can help caregivers become more fully present, fearless, honest, and compassionate. *Sacred Passage* highlights two very practical teachings on death and dying from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and presents them in clear, nontechnical language. Readers learn about the "eight stages of dissolution leading to death," a detailed roadmap of the dying process that describes the sequence of physical, psychological, and spiritual changes that occur as we die. Coberly also presents the "death meditation," a contemplative exercise for developing a new relationship to death and life. The book also includes a lengthy, annotated list of recommended readings for added guidance and inspiration. Topics include: How the terminally ill can experience emotional and spiritual healing even when they can't be cured Why Western medicine's relentless focus on curing disease has led to inadequate care for the dying What to expect during the dying process How our fear and denial of death harm the dying Techniques to help caregivers promote a peaceful environment for the dying and their loved ones How to meet the changing physical and emotional needs of the dying Helpful advice on what to say and how to behave around the terminally ill

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Finally! The book has been written. During my 15 years as a hospice nurse, countless caregivers, students and volunteers have asked me "Which book should I read?" This is The Book, both succinctly written and easy to read. With great compassion, Dr. Coberly covers nearly all our secret fears and inadequacies by talking about her own beginnings using wonderful heart warming stories. Many of us have tried and failed to understand the Tibetan Books of the Dead. She makes the Tibetan Buddhist view on death and dying understandable to a Westerner. And she finishes this brilliant piece by giving us the tools we need to face death with great love. The annotated list of recommended readings alone is worth the price of the book. Nurses can log onto a website listed on the inside back cover and take a test for CEU's.

My six brothers and sisters and I are sharing the care for our parents who are both in their early 90s. We know they do not have a whole lot longer to live and we have been discussing our feelings and lack of experience about death and dying. My brother brought home Sacred Passage and read it and then we took turns reading it. The author explains in such a simple way that it is natural to be afraid of death because we never talk about it with each other. But then she also offers so many suggestions about how to get stronger about facing death and about seeing that during dying there is a pattern that we might be able to observe. The Tibetan Buddhist part of the book really makes sense even though we are Christians. I like the way the author uses that Buddhist psychology to give us ways to be more help to our parents. All of us liked this book, and I think it would be good for anyone in a similar situation. The book makes a person feel that they will be able to face death after all.

Sacred Passage is a remarkable and timely book - a consummate marriage of the art of living and the art of dying. It elevates care of the dying from a fearful, sometimes paralyzing, undertaking to a

compassionate, fulfilling, engagement with living. Time and again the book illustrates how in learning to fully be there for a dying person we come to know and understand ourselves more deeply as well. The author is adept at illustrating how much we can learn from the process of dying when we are unafraid of seeing clearly what is there - a sacred passage. As the author says: "... the treasure is always there, its discovery imminent. It is not dying that reveals it, but awakening." The inspired revelations of this engaging volume did not come easily. The author - a longtime nurse, educator, and hospice administrator - skillfully weaves together poignant and emotionally gripping stories about her own beginning professional doubts and about the transformation she underwent to a broader view of life and death informed by the wisdom of the Tibetan Buddhist perspective. The outcome is an invaluable, practical guide for anyone responsible for taking care of a loved one or a patient who is dying. All of us face the mystery of life's coming to an end - most of us with fear and denial. This book demonstrates convincingly how facing up to the mystery can not only promote a more caring, compassionate, and insightful end to life, but illuminate and enrich the art of living. As a psychologist and university professor teaching courses on death and dying, I look forward to using this book in my classes. And I recommend it to anyone seeking an inspiring, practical guidebook for the one trip we are all destined to make.

Sacred Passage takes a disarmingly honest look at the subject of death. It is filled with real life stories that demonstrate new and innovative ways to interact with a person who is dying. The author, a former emergency room and hospice nurse, gives sage advice and practical suggestions on how to deal with many of the troubling situations that come up when a friend or loved one is given a terminal diagnosis. The book offers the Buddhist perspective on death and dying in terms that are clear and easy to relate to. I rate this book 5+ and recommend it as both a provocative narrative as well as an extremely helpful little manual on how to be an empathetic presence during the death of a loved one.

I have a friend who is dying and I am afraid to visit him because I don't know how to act or what I am not supposed to say. I bought some other books about death and dying and Sacred Passage was also suggested. I didn't think I would like it because it has some Tibetan Buddhist stuff in it and I am a Catholic. But, anyway, I got it and liked it better than the other ones because it gave me some actual ways to act and also told me that if I don't know what to say I am not obligated to say anything, really. That was such an eye opener for me. I definitely recommend this book to anyone who is forced to be around a dying person and feels afraid, like I am. This book gave me hope that I

would be able to do it. I even bought two more copies to give to people for presents. Thank you to the author for helping me so much.

This survey of providing fearless, compassionate care for the dying reflects the author's work as an emergency room RN and her own brother's diagnosis of terminal cancer, which led to her search through Eastern teachings for spiritual wisdom and insights. The Western fear of death generates denial and isolation; Tibetan Buddhism focuses on the nature of death, and Sacred Passage illustrates two practical applications of the philosophy for the dying and their caretakers.

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