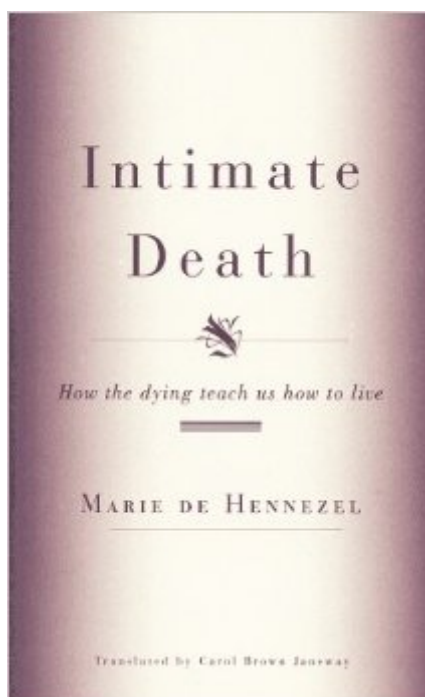


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# Intimate Death: How The Dying Teach Us How To Live



## Synopsis

An extraordinary book and an immediate bestseller abroad, *Intimate Death* tells readers how to help those who are dying face the end squarely and with acceptance, bringing back both peace and dignity to death. 224 pp. Author tour. 40,000 print.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 182 pages

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Product Dimensions: 1 x 5.2 x 9 inches

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (18 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #537,088 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in [Books > Medical Books >](#)

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## Customer Reviews

The subtitle "how the dying teach us how to live", had a unusually specific meaning for me. As I watched my emotional response and empathy to the conversations between Hennezel and terminally ill patients, I began to notice how many patients wanted to die earlier, not later, until, that is, their conversation with Hennezel. And, in each case, the patient was glad to live another few weeks or months because, during the conversations, they began to resolve some outstanding issues about their lives. Just as Hennezel helped them awaken to the value of attending to unfinished business, I too came to realize how much unfinished business I have myself. Or, put another way, I see the backlog of things-I've-hoped-to-do (since retirement) through the lens of "unfinished business." And I've since realized that other authors such as Stephen Levine *A Year to Live: How to Live This Year as If It Were Your Last* have emphasized the same point. The conversations between Hennezel and her terminally ill patients are invariably moving because of the compassion that Hennezel and the nurses on the staff extend to their patients. On pages 47-50 Hennezel refers to the field of Haptonomie (found in the French (but not the English) Wikipedia) associated with Frans Veldman which is about the importance of affection and human touch for "affectivity." This is as widely appreciated around child birth as it is under appreciated at the time of

death (in the US at least).

A Head Butler reader wrote to tell me about her 88 year-old mother, who was, last month, clearly failing. Her family made "the hard decision" to bring her to a hospice. There she sipped her favorite wine, listened to the Three Tenors, flirted with her husband of 65 years. Then she stopped eating, went unconscious --- and, soon, was gone."I have never experienced a person's body and spirit moving towards death," the e-mail continued. "I am still searching for the words. To be tending to this woman I know and love so well and to not know what she was experiencing internally at this most ultimate of moments --- was she seeing people from beyond? Was she afraid? How much do you feel when the body starts shutting down? She seemed to hold on for quite a while; was it anything we said that allowed her to go? (If, indeed, we had anything to do with it at all.) Please tell me if you know of a particular book that might comfort..."Yes. I know of such a book. It is "Intimate Death: How the Dying Teach Us How to Live." I have read it several times since it was first published in 1987, and, with each reading, I have more admiration for its author. These 182 pages are loving and wise. Even more, they are thrilling --- for Marie de Hennezel, a French psychologist, spent years "accompanying" the dying on their path toward death.I mean that literally. Her book begins: "I am at Bernard's bedside." Bernard has AIDS. (Reminder: This book was written in the mid 1980s, when AIDS was a death sentence.) He's spending his last days at the small, new "palliative care unit" where de Hennezel works. He happens to be a personal friend, but that doesn't really matter: "We have made each other a promise, and now I am here beside him, keeping a patient, emotional vigil.

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