

# Intimate Death: How the Dying Teach Us How to Live

By Marie De Hennezel

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## Intimate Death: How the Dying Teach Us How to Live By Marie De Hennezel

How do we learn to die? Most of us spend our lives avoiding that question, but this luminous book--a major best-seller in France--answers it with a directness and eloquence that are nothing less than transforming. As a psychologist in a hospital for the terminally ill in Paris, Marie de Hennezel has spent seven years tending to people who are relinquishing their hold on life. She tells the stories of her patients and their families. de Hennezel teaches us how to turn death--our loved ones' or our own--from something lonely and agonizing into a sacred passage. She discusses the importance of an honest reckoning, the value of ritual, the necessity of touch. In imparting these lessons, **Intimate Death** becomes a guide to living more fully, more intensely, than we had thought possible.

"Unique...Of all the books I have read about the endings of our lives, this elegiac testimony has taught me the most."--Sherwin B. Nuland, M.D., author of **How We Die**

"The quiet, obvious truths [de Hennezel] discovers in her work--these things have a kind of cumulative power."--Washington Post Book World

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### Editorial Review

From Library Journal

French psychologist de Hennezel shows the dying how to live every last minute to the fullest. A best seller abroad.

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From [Booklist](#)

Hennezel is a psychologist in a Paris hospital's palliative care unit for the terminally ill who also works with the dying at an AIDS hospice and in their homes. This book, a best-seller in France, is basically a journal of about a year of her professional life, which is no longer traditionally professional, for she has disposed of so-called professional distance. She perches on the edge of the bed when she first meets a new patient, and she freely holds and kisses her patients to assure them that they are not dying in solitude. She strives to learn what unfinished personal business they may have with family members, friends, or themselves and helps them conclude it. But if she gives much, she insists that she obtains even more: "true intimacy." Telling many stirring deathbed stories, Hennezel adds powerfully to the rising chorus (e.g., in part, M. Scott Peck's *Denial of the Soul*) in favor of palliative care of the dying. *Ray Olson*

Review

"Unique... Of all the books I have read about the endings of our lives, this elegiac testimony has taught me the most." - Sherwin B. Nuland, M.D., author of *How We Die*

"This book is a lesson in life. The light it sheds is more intense than any mere knowledge could provide." - President Francois Mitterand

"The quiet, obvious truth [de Hennezel] discovers in her work—these things have a kind of cumulative power."- *Washington Post Book World*

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**Helen Johnson:**

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**Nicholas McNeal:**

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