

Death, Society, and the Human Experience (9th Edition)

By Robert J. Kastenbaum


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This landmark text in death education draws on contributions from the social and behavioral sciences as well as the humanities, such as history, religion, philosophy, literature, and the arts, to provide thorough coverage of understanding death and the dying process. The text focuses on both individual and societal attitudes and how they influence both how and when we die and how we live and deal with the knowledge of death and loss. Robert Kastenbaum is a renowned scholar in the field who developed one of the world's first death education courses and introduced the first text for this market.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

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New to this edition:

- Terri Scihavo's long suspension between life and death, as seen from biomedical, political, religious, and social science perspectives.
- Hurricane Katrina and how the United States dealt with issues relating to the deaths, alerting survivors, and more.
- The catastrophic tsunami of December 26, 2004 and its impact on society.
- A new section on 20th century genocide in Cambodia, Germany, Russia, India, China, Rwanda, Kosovo, and Turkey has been added to Ch. 8.
- Caregiver burnout and its prevention.
- Evaluation of grief counseling.
- The "green" funeral.
- Islamic afterlife beliefs and their relationship to terrorism.
- Concepts of heavens and hell are given expanded attention.
- New research on the role of imaginary companions adds to the understanding of how children interpret death.
- The "good death" in utopian societies.
- The events of September 11, 2001, which were the focus of Ch. 1 in the eighth edition, have been integrated within the overall text.

About the Author

Bob Kastenbaum's exploits as skating messenger apparently qualified him to become editor of two community newspapers, an eccentric career trajectory that somehow led to a graduate scholarship in philosophy and a Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Southern California (1959). He was most interested in fields of psychological study that barely existed at the time: lifespan development and aging, time perspective, creativity, and death and dying. Kastenbaum became part of an emerging cadre that overcame the prevailing neglect and resistance to these issues. He worked in varied settings as clinician, researcher, activist, hospital administrator, educator, and author. The innovative programs he introduced into a geriatric hospital and his article, "The Reluctant Therapist" have been credited with preparing the way for increased attention to the needs and potentials of vulnerable elders and terminally ill people. With Dick Kalish, he founded *Omega*, the first peer-reviewed journal focused on death-related issues. Kastenbaum taught the first regularly-scheduled university course on death and dying and came up with the first textbook

(*Death, Society, & Human Experience*, 1977). He also established the first university-based educational and research center on death and dying (Wayne State University, 1966). His other books include *The Psychology of Death* (1972, 1990, 2000); *Dorian, Graying: Is Youth the Only Thing Worth Having?* (1995), and *On Our Way. The Final Passage Through Life and Death* (2004). He has also served as editor of the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*, (2993) and two previous encyclopedias. In the public sphere he has served as a co-founder of The National Caucus on Black Aging, consultant to the United States Senate Special Subcommittee on Aging, and participant in developing the Veterans Administration's geriatric research and educational centers, and the landmark National Hospice Demonstration Project. Kastenbaum lives in Tempe, Arizona with Bunny (wife), Angel (The Incredible Leaping Dog), enhanced by Pumpkin and Snowflake in the cat department. Along with his continuing research interests, Kastenbaum has been writing book and verse for musicals and operas. He notes that nobody has died in the two most recently premiered operas (*Closing Time; American Gothic*, music by Kenneth LaFave), but cannot make any such promises about the next opera.

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