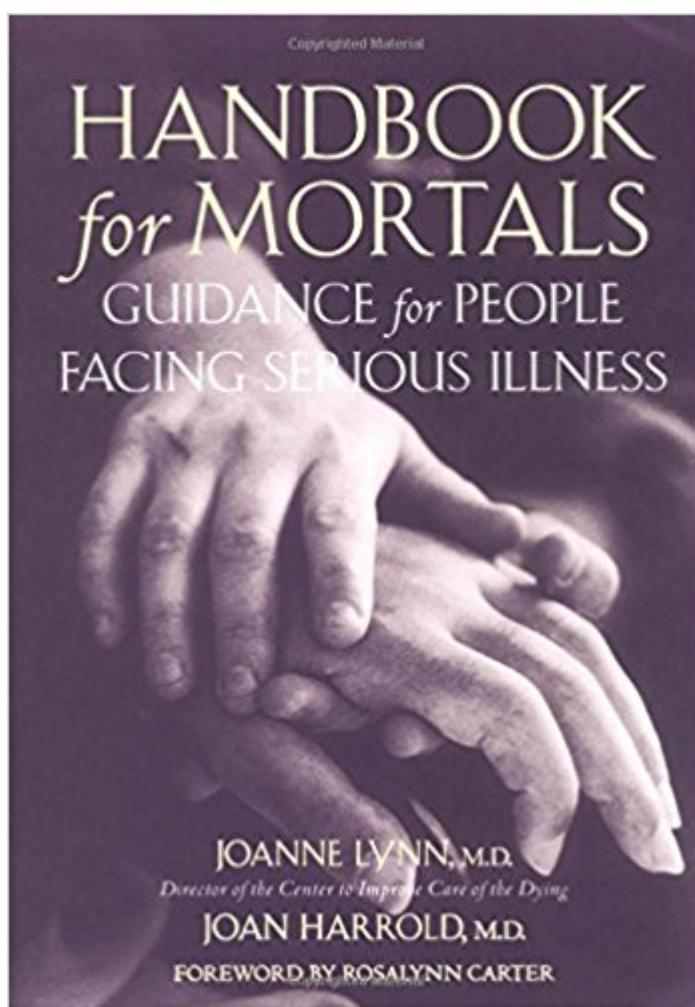


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# Handbook For Mortals: Guidance For People Facing Serious Illness



## Synopsis

Modern medical technology has changed not only the way we live but also the way we die. Until two generations ago, people usually died suddenly, after an accident or serious illness. Now, most of us may expect our dying to take longer, to require more care, and to demand more forethought than ever before. *Handbook for Mortals* is warmly addressed to all those who wish to approach the final years of life with greater awareness of what to expect and greater confidence about how to make the end of our lives a time of growth, comfort, and meaningful reflection. Written by Dr. Joanne Lynn and a team of expert physicians, this book provides equal measures of practical information and wise counsel. Readers will learn what decisions they will need to face, what choices are available to them, where to look for help, how to ease pain and other symptoms, what to expect with specific diseases, how the health-care system operates, and how the entire experience affects dying persons, their families, and their friends. Such practical information is indispensable. But equally important are the personal stories included here of how people have come to terms with dying, how they have faced their fears and made their choices. These give us moving firsthand insights into a profoundly important process, one that is increasingly kept hidden in our culture. From down-to-earth advice on how to talk to your doctor to inspiring quotes from such writers as Emily Dickinson, W. H. Auden, Jane Kenyon, and others, *Handbook for Mortals* encompasses the needs of both the body and the spirit in our final years.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1st edition (February 15, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195116623

ISBN-13: 978-0195116625

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 22 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #393,267 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Home Care #44 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Allied Health Services > Caregiving #118 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Critical Care

## Customer Reviews

Written for caregivers as well as the dying, *Handbook for Mortals* is an excellent resource for anyone facing the end of life. Authors Joanne Lynn, M.D., and Joan Harrold, M.D., offer sensitive and practical advice for the ambiguous final stage of a life-threatening illness--when hope for a recovery is waning and the patient and family members are turning toward a different horizon, that of accepting and supporting an imminent death. For the most part, the authors focus on physical concerns such as pain management, artificial feeding, and an especially poignant passage about assisted suicide. Because of their backgrounds, the authors are also comfortable discussing the emotional complexities of dying, such as offering advice on giving and receiving forgiveness and resolving conflicts in close relationships. (Lynn is director of the Center to Improve Care of the Dying at George Washington University and Harrold is medical director of a Pennsylvania hospice.) The handbook offers many sidebars, including "Words to Try" when speaking with a sick person: instead of saying, "Dad, you are going to be just fine," the authors suggest saying, "Dad, are there some things that worry you?" Proceeds from the sale of the book support Americans for Better Care of the Dying, a national charitable organization devoted to improving care for the last stage of life. --Gail Hudson --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Designed for caregivers as well as patients, this book combines insights and inspiration with practical information and sensible suggestions for coping with critical, debilitating illnesses and the attendant problems such as accepting a new lifestyle, controlling pain, getting help, deciding on medical treatment, and enduring a loss. The death of a child, sudden death as the result of an accident, and similarly atypical instances are discussed briefly. Throughout, there are poignant excerpts from literature and case descriptions. Appendixes list organizations and sources of further information or assistance. Constance Joness R.I.P.: *The Complete Book of Death and Dying* (HarperCollins, 1997), which includes statistics, varying cultural practices, and more information resources, covers the topic more comprehensively. Nevertheless, this handbook, edited by the director of the Center To Improve Care for the Dying (<http://www.gwu.edu/~cicd>), exudes a compassion and warmth that will appeal to individual readers. Margaret Norden, Marymount Univ. Lib., Arlington, VA  
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An excellent book for people with serious or terminal illness and their family and friends. I give this out to my patients when they are facing life and death decisions. It is very useful and can really help someone assess how they feel about life and death and what they want.

This is a very practical and "user friendly" guide for non-medical people to try to navigate the often difficult and long journey when someone they love is dying- even includes a section on children, babies, and even when there is a suicide. The last chapter is just references- sites that people can go to for specific illnesses and other resources. Very direct and down to earth- addresses issues most would rather avoid- pain, incontinence, etc. A forward by Rosalynn Carter states, "We often put off in life what is important, and sometimes it takes the shadow of death to make us appreciate that love, family and faith are really things that matter." Excellent resource.

There is not much out there that provides some insight into understanding death and dying and how to communicate with the terminally ill patient or family member. This book comes close but is a bit dated.

A great "guidebook" with reads from real people as well as resources. As a "Boomer" with elder parents and a volunteer in hospice, this book has a place in my library.

Excellent book for those confronting serious and terminal illness (and their caregivers). It gives clear info about what to expect, good advice on how to talk with doctors and loved ones, and gentle support for confronting our fears and concerns about illness and death. I have given this book to two people facing terminal illness, and both have thanked me and said the book was exactly what they needed. Highly recommended.

I've explored a lot of the end-of-life literature out there looking for the kind of book I would want to give to any friend, colleague, or client who is dealing with a serious illness of their own or their family, and this by far is the best I've seen in terms of practical and accurate information and advice about every the medical, practical, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of coping with serious and eventually fatal conditions.

As the wife of a young man dying of cancer, this book was an incredible aid to getting through each day and learning what to expect. That was 15 years ago. My sister-in-law faced the same situation recently when her husband was diagnosed, and I bought the book for her. She said she couldn't put it down until she read every page. We need to have that helping hand when we're hurting. This book is it!

We need insights to the things that face people when they are "hurting" Most that I do see are in the hospital for various reasons. Some people believe that God has a plan for them and look for His Divine healing. Others simply sneak a look ahead if they can and usually have lives filled with great uncertainty. Any and all help allows people like myself to visualize what makes them afraid. We all have problems with the unknown.

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