



Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul

Stephen Jenkinson

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Die Wise does not offer seven steps for coping with death. It does not suggest ways to make dying easier. It pours no honey to make the medicine go down. Instead, with lyrical prose, deep wisdom, and stories from his two decades of working with dying people and their families, Stephen Jenkinson places death at the center of the page and asks us to behold it in all its painful beauty. *Die Wise* teaches the skills of dying, skills that have to be learned in the course of living deeply and well. *Die Wise* is for those who will fail to live forever.

Dying well, Jenkinson writes, is a right and responsibility of everyone. It is not a lifestyle option. It is a moral, political, and spiritual obligation each person owes their ancestors and their heirs. *Die Wise* dreams such a dream, and plots such an uprising. How we die, how we care for dying people, and how we carry our dead: this work makes our capacity for a village-mindedness, or breaks it.

Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul Details

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From Reader Review *Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul* for online ebook

Adam says

A slow, heavy, somber meditation on what author and self-appointed Angel of Death Stephen Jenkinson (formerly a palliative care worker) considers the great cultural dearth of our time, namely the way we as a culture approach and handle death and dying. It's a slow-burning book that doesn't offer easy answers.

Jenkinson believes any sane and healthy culture must have a sane and healthy relationship with death and dying--not just in funeral parlors and graveyards, but in our houses, our places of worship, in public discourse. Dying, in Jenkinson's view, is not something that happens to us but rather something that we do. Our deaths should serve as examples for future generations of how to accept death as part of the natural course of life, rather than a monolithic oppositional entity to be hidden behind closed doors and away from the hearts and minds of the living. This book is his exploration of where we as a culture went wrong, and how we can go about setting it right.

Well-written and engaging--barring a couple clumsy metaphors and a handful of typos--but definitely not a book to read in one sitting. It is a story, a meditation that need time to be chewed on in pieces. Fortunately, even in the face of perhaps the most somber of our life's moments, there are heartwarming anecdotes and levity from Jenkinson's career sprinkled throughout that prevent this work from spiralling into nihilism or existential angst.

This book doesn't offer easy answers or a single "a-ha!" moment, and it isn't meant to, but it speaks to many truths about the role of death and dying in a culture addicted to pain management and cures. Just have something a little more light-hearted on hand when you finish.

Sarah says

I adore this book!! I know many believe it to be a long wordy read. However, perhaps it makes sense to think of it as a journey. It took me approx. 4 months to finish the book. I would read for a while, put it down, think it through and then pick it up again. Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed the way it was written. Enjoy the Journey!

Beth says

Every now and then a voice sings truth to my soul. Stephen Jenkinson is one of those people. His call to normalize death rings true. It is a call I intend to answer.

Christine Rausch says

Thank you Stephen! Beautifully written. All your thoughts should be common sense but, unfortunately,

much of our society is definitely lacking in common sense.

Dean Zochert says

As has been said, it is a book for all who, come what may, will not live forever. Probably the most important book I've ever read. It's not just about dying, though. It's about how we're living, how we have lived for decades, if not centuries, and how that has precipitated over the years to form the death-phobic culture we live in...and die in...mostly miserably. The author's style is poetic and lyrical, a master wordsmith, for certain. (I'm also listening to the audiobook at the same time, where one can really appreciate his style in the spoken word.) The book is called A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul, and I think that tag line spot on.

D says

(I think this will be 4 or 5 stars for many, but it's not an easy read and those who could profit most may give up early.) After 10 years of experience in so-called palliative care, and plowing through 288pp of this book, I get to what I know already. "The big revelation!" Grrr... Am I just listening to someone who likes to hear himself talk. Or am I so ignorant of my ignorance of palliative care as it is "normally" carried out? Living in California may be my advantage. To die at home and by-pass the funeral industry is common in my small area. ...So why did I persist with this book? Because I believe there's always more to learn. ...And because I wonder... am I missing something? That's always a good question. So I continued reading to the end and indeed found parts that were well worth the time. So read for those small gems that suddenly pop off the page. Or read because our hospital-and-funeral industrial culture persists in allowing us to avoid the hands-on teachings of a natural occurrence. (Yes, I read all the way to the end and am glad I did.)

Ralph says

Stephen Jenkinson has been a worker in what he refers to as the "death trade" for over 20 years. It gives him a lot of experience in dealing not only with dying people but also with their family and friends, with his own thoughts and feelings about death and dying, and with cultural attitudes toward death and dying. He starts with talking about how death-phobic our society has become. It leads us to ignore and even strenuously deny that we are dying right up to the moment of the death of our body. He maintains (and I agree) that the phobia robs us of the opportunity to participate in the last, great experience of our life. It traumatizes those left behind who continue to see death as a horrible experience to be dealt with through pain killers and sedatives, ignoring the opportunity to see value in the life we are leaving.

Not that death and dying will always be wonderful, spiritual and pain free. He acknowledges that dying is hard work - but work well worth the effort both for the dying and those left behind.

After making us aware of the death phobia, Jenkinson moves on to the work of learning how to die wise. It is not simple or easy. Do not expect a 10 step program leading to a dying wise. It isn't there. Jenkinson's observations range from immediate and practical to vague and spiritual. This is entirely appropriate. Dying is often physically stressful and messy. It also calls on the dying and those close to one who is dying to examine their spiritual beliefs.

There are a lot of clues and suggestions about where to start working toward dying wise, but no concrete program. Finding our own way is part of the hard work of dying. The book is replete with stories sharing Jenkinson's experiences - very few of which end with an obvious moral or a triumphant display of his wisdom in helping people to die wise. They do illustrate the difficulties of dying wise in our society. They provoke thought, prod the reader to review attitudes, to think about how to be with those who are dying, and to plan as best we can for how we will approach our own death.

I vacillated between giving four and five stars to this book because of Jenkinson's writing style. He frequently uses long, long sentences replete with multiple parenthetical interjections and compound conditions. The sentences flow marvelously, often poetically, but I found myself having to stop, back up and parse (and re-parse) the sentence to see what was actually said. At times, I found this quite frustrating. Perhaps that is for the good. It certainly has kept me from racing thoughtlessly through the book as I might with a sci-fi thriller. It is a book to be read in small bites with each bite being chewed over with great attention. I found it well worth the effort.

Jennifer Padron says

Die Wise is tough to read because Jenkinson writes in such deep prose broadly. I found myself needing to read passage after passage after passage in order to feel adequately read on his thinking. Yet, the book is the best there is on anything related to Right to Die or Die with Dignity. Jenkinson's training facility in Ontario emailed me on my query to add to the Wait List, "... there isn't going to be further training" due largely to the fact that Jenkinson's Training for Death & Dying study or for Death Doula(ship) that they cannot handle capacity currently. When I asked where else I could go, my email went unanswered. I imagine it bobbing up and down on a beach somewhere, in a bottle.

Bette says

Somewhere the author admitted that he loves words - and this book supports his passion! Some chapters flowed with intriguing stories and salient points. Other places I had to slog through. Ultimately I didn't finish the book; I applied my new strategy of accepting that I can stop reading a book that just isn't resonating with me. Perhaps I will pick it up another time.

Eli Fry says

Best book I've read. Society needs to hear this. There is such a thing as dying wise and dying well and we aren't doing it. It's a toxic thing in our culture, not knowing how to die well, not knowing what grief is. Please read this book

erin c. says

important message, although wish author would have focused a little more on a solution/path forward rather

than continuing to reiterate the problems...

Linda Watkins says

Since we are all terminal, it seems wise to get ready for our own demise. This is an excellent book for helping us get conscious about what is coming to all of us & how we want to do it. Unlike any book of this kind that I have read before. Wish I had this when I working hospice. Well worth the read

Kathleen says

Best to listen to it. The guy is an amazing storyteller and he is the narrator. It is mesmerizing. I am almost finished with it and I intend to immediately begin it again. The wisdom imparted is invaluable and I feel that my life is enriched because of it.

Debra says

This book was a difficult but enlightening read. The author writes beautifully about a topic we all must wrestle with while facing the death of a loved one or our own inevitable death. I think he makes some very valid criticisms of the medical community and even palliative care, however, he speaks from a wealth of experience and observations of those who are dying and their families and friends. We have a culture that fights the whole concept of deathinstead of making it a normal part of life. He questions the assumption that there is a benefit to "more time" in a very practical manner. More time generally morphs into more dying sadly. With raised awareness perhaps we can all die wiser.

Mary says

Very thought provoking.
