

#DEATH

TWEET

TIMOTHY TOSTA
FOREWORD BY MEGORY ANDERSON

140 Perspectives on Being a
Supportive Witness to the End of Life

BOOK 02

A THiNKaha BOOK

#DEATH **tweet** Book02

140 Perspectives on Being a Supportive Witness to the End of Life

By Timothy Tosta
Foreword by Megory Anderson



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Advance Praise

“The Western world fears the naturalness of death and dying. Tim guides us to remember our humanness by urging us to fearlessly show up at the bedside.”

Rúna Bouius, Death Awareness Movement Activist & Executive Advisor

“Tim learned the true value of life through his cancer survival and hospice work. #DEATHtweet02, without hyperbole, cuts directly to the core of his beliefs: celebrate life, all the way to through its final chapter—Death.”

Vladimir Bosanac, Publisher, The Registry Magazine

“Tim has chosen to explore death as part of life and in the process has made this difficult, unsettling subject more approachable for us all.”

Roger Bush, President, Saxon Hamilton, Executive Consultation

“#DEATHtweet02 is a gem. Thank you @TTosta for offering clarity and love and illuminating the path of compassion.”

Vanessa Callison-Burch, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Hospice Journey

“Tim has a gift for taking deep concepts and expressing them in bite-sized phrases to be savored. Each tweet provides guidance on the wisdom of life’s closure.”

Judy Citko, Executive Director, Coalition for Compassionate Care of California

“#DEATHtweet02 is a thought-provoking assemblage of wisdom about loving well and letting go gently. I love this book.”

Mary Crawford, Values Based Financial Planner & Money Manager; Author of Mary Webb, Neglected Genius

“Easy-to-digest wisdom for people of any health and any age. If the Buddha tweeted, he might have written this!”

**Clark Freshman, Professor of Law, University of California,
Hastings College of Law**

“This beautiful book captures the essence of what it means to be alive, to be dying, and to witness both. Having survived my own death sentence, I was touched to the depths of my being.”

Suzanne Friedman, Author, Heal Yourself with Qi Gong

“Tim captures the flow between death and life. He does it in a way that is unique, yet has universal relevance. Though written for caregivers, #DEATHtweet02 is a book for all of us.”

**James Goodrich, PhD, Dean, School of Business,
Alliant International University**

“Tim commits himself to mindful, generous care for people facing the end of their lives. He distills into #DEATHtweet02 his long experience in pithy and compassionate aphorisms that help all of us as we confront our own death and the death of loved ones. #DEATHtweet02 is a gift.”

**Charles Halpern, Cofounder, Center for Contemplative Mind in Society;
Author, Making Waves and Riding Currents**

“#DEATHtweet02 is a meditation on what it is to open your heart wide and to give purely for the sake of giving. It is also about the inevitable abundance of love you receive in return.”

Christie Hind, Partner & Innovation Strategist, Cypress, LLP

“If I had #DEATHtweet02 when my mom was dying, my siblings and I could have talked more deeply with each other and supported her more lovingly.”

Tim Iglesias, Professor of Law, University of San Francisco

“Without considering death, life is confusing and superficial. #DEATHtweet02 delivers a compassionate message, offering critical support, wisdom and a genuinely helpful perspective.”

Jack Kornfield, Author of *A Path With Heart*

“As a psychologist, I would heartily recommend this sensitive, compassionate, and thought-inspiring book to anyone interested in facing death with integrity, comfort, and an affirmation for life.”

Susan Meyers, Psychologist and Family Therapist

“We read from #DEATHtweet02 aloud at a recent gathering of friends, coping with dying family and friends. Nothing can eradicate the pain, but sharing the perspectives from #DEATHtweet02 was a cathartic experience that moved us all.”

Diane Olmstead, Founding Partner, W3 Partners, Institutional Real Estate Investment Manager

“Tim’s lucid and compassionate aphorisms are an inspiration, providing great comfort and confidence to those in the end of life experience.”

Derek Parker, Director, Marin General Hospital; Internationally Renowned Healthcare Architect

“Once again, Tim Tosta finds that sacred space, where most of us struggle with our emotions, our words, and our spirit. #DEATHtweet02 allows us to stand amidst the realities of death and dying, not driven by fear and anxiety, but by wholeness and care.”

Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, Pastor, Mission Bay Community Church, San Francisco

“#DEATHtweet02 will make the end-of-life journey easier to endure and the mystery easier to understand.”

Joe Russoniello, Former United States Attorney, Northern District of California

“Through Tim’s innovative approach, #DEATHtweet02 gives more insight into the perspective of the individual dying than can be encountered in massive medical tomes attempting, but failing, to accomplish what he does here so lucidly.”

Bruce Spaulding, Gladstone Medical Research Institute; Former Senior Vice Chancellor, University of California, San Francisco

“Moving! Touching! Inspiring! The unique perspective of this book is informed by Tim’s personal journey in caring for others in the final moments of life. #DEATHtweet02 is an invitation that moves us to take action, creating new possibilities in our lives as we celebrate the lives of the people we care for.”

Katia Stavrou-Petersen, PhD, Psychotherapist and Business Consultant

Acknowledgments

My sister, Kathy, and her husband, Jack, gave their lives for a number of years in caring for my mother at the end of her life. Their extraordinary sacrifice also was shared by their children, Ryan and Megan. I can never thank them all adequately for their kindness, generosity, and love. But I hope that this acknowledgement helps.

Thank you also to the many friends, acquaintances, and colleagues who have encouraged me through your kind words and warm embraces to continue with this profound exploration of life, death, and meaning.

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Preface

Mom's Passing

Two days before my mother died, I sat beside her hospital bed, which recently had been moved into the ground-floor guest bedroom of her Santa Cruz home. I had cut short a ski vacation in Colorado on receiving a call from my sister, Kathy, who advised that Mom had stopped drinking liquids and was declining rapidly.

Mom had been diagnosed two years previously with Lewy Body Dementia, which manifests as a wicked blend between Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. The disease brings not only Alzheimer's cognitive degeneration over time but adds to it the physically degenerative attributes of Parkinson's.

During her last two years, we had all witnessed her decline as first, she struggled for memories, then words. Soon after, she lost her fine, and, ultimately, her gross motor skills. Like most with LBD, she experienced hallucinations and emotional ups and downs, but remained, by and large, the beautiful,

loving wife and mother that we had always known. Even as she became nonambulatory and lost much of her desire and ability to speak, she still had a way of communicating that made you feel that you remained the center of her universe.

That particular afternoon, I knew we were in the course of saying our final good-byes. At that point, I had been a hospice volunteer at San Francisco's Laguna Honda Hospital for three years. It was not unusual for me to be at the bedside of someone near death. I had long ago come to understand that as death approaches, the dying turn inward, knowing their final job in life is to disentangle the spirit from the body that no longer serves them.

At hospice, I often sit quietly in meditation, play music, or read stories or poetry at the bedside, recognizing that despite the closed eyes and the inward focus, there remains some outward attentiveness. So, as I carried on a one-way conversation with Mom, her eyes opened and she spoke with a clarity of days long past, advising, "I want a party."

I responded, "Well, of course. When would you like it?"

Mom replied, "Tonight."

“Then you will have it,” I said.

James, my then twenty-two-year-old son, had just stuck his head in the door and heard his grandmother’s wish. I looked at him and asked, “So, now what?”

We left Mom’s room and I advised Nancy, my wife, and Kathy of Mom’s wish. We decided to gather our family and a few close friends that evening at 5:00 at Mom’s bedside for “party time.” James and I talked about what we could do to make the event a bit more festive. We decided to head Downtown to see what ideas blossomed. We walked into the pharmacy and saw from the red hearts and pink décor that it was almost Valentine’s Day, a fact lost to me under the current circumstances.

James and I headed to the card aisle and proceeded to find cards to give Mother that would be appropriate for the various people expected to attend the party. We also found Mom a gift, a cute little brown bear with his arms clasped behind his back holding a red rose. We then went to a nearby Safeway to create a bouquet of red, white, and pink helium balloons for the event. I bought some champagne for our guests, then headed home.

At the appointed hour, about ten of us surrounded her bed, including my dad, Kathy and her husband, Jack, and their son, Ryan. They were joined by Nancy, James, Mom's good friends, Norma and Roger, two of Mom's caregivers, and me. The caregivers previously had awakened Mom and freshened her up a bit.

As we entered the room, she was alert with a smile on her face and a gleam in her royal blue eyes. We brought in the balloons and presented her with the stuffed bear. Mom was thrilled with the attention. She smiled widely and mouthed her thanks and appreciation. Then each of us read our Valentine to her while sitting next to her at the head of the bed. Then, as a group, we sang "For She's a Jolly Good Fellow" and toasted to her with champagne. We even put a mouth sponge in some champagne so that she could taste it. It wasn't to her liking, but even her distaste brought another smile to her face and laughter to us all.

After fifteen minutes, Mom's eyes began to close, so we eased out of her room to give her time for rest.

My youngest, Jillian, arrived from Tucson the following morning. I didn't know whether or not Mom again would awaken, but she roused herself on Jillian's arrival. Once again, her face lit up. She mimed her love and affection for Jill and, a few moments later, went back to her internal work.

By the time of Mother's passing, I had sat with many people at the end of their lives. Each life comes to an end in its own unique way. However, I have never seen an end come so gently or peacefully as it did with Mom.

On Valentine's Day morning, Mother entered into "active dying." In active dying, Mom left the outside world altogether. Her body sought to protect her vital organs for as long as possible. Her hands and feet first grew cool to the touch as blood was sequestered in the body's core, protecting her heart, lungs, and brain. Over the course of the day, the coolness spread up her arms and legs; her breathing became erratic and labored.

Then, toward evening, a dozen or so of us at the house, who only two evenings before had attended her "going away" party, gathered again to witness her final breaths. We held

one another as Mom's breathing slowed and became shallower. Finally, her heart stopped. Her brain allowed her three final breaths, then blessed silence.

At the time, I had been seated at the head of her bed with my arm draped lightly behind her. I felt the last of her life's energy depart from her body.

Mom died as she had lived: first attending to the well-being of everyone else, making sure that everything was okay with others, then attending to herself. She had left us in the same way that she was with us: generous, caring, compassionate, and filled with love. She showed all of us a good life and a good death.

After her passing, Norma, Kathy, and Jill stayed with her body and gave Mom a final sponge bath. Jill was then nineteen. I don't know how or why she stayed for the ritual, but I am pleased that she did. She has kept the Valentine's bear that had been given to Mom only hours before.

I had expected more emotions from my family and me surrounding Mom's departure. Then again, we had been

grieving for the years subsequent to her diagnosis. The way she departed was so gentle and serene that a grievous outpouring seemed inappropriate and unwarranted. She had departed giving love and surrounded by love. What possibly could have been better?

Intentions and Limitations

Death, as an event or even a subject of discussion, usually is a source of discomfort. But there are times when, in the case of a loved one, family member, or friend, it cannot be avoided. You are called up to be of service—to render your love and support. This humble volume is intended to help you through that passage, to support you in addressing your fears and uncertainties in the face of another’s pain and suffering, to reveal the extraordinary gifts you bestow through your companionship at the end of life.

I have tried to choose words carefully here. A supportive Witness has two attributes. Support is about empathy and compassion. This is more a job for the heart than the mind. It is a way of being rather than doing. This “beingness” is confirmed by the word “Witness.” For many of us, our principal pursuit in life, whether or not we are aware, has been to simply be “seen.” From the days of “Watch me, Mommy!” or “Daddy, look!” to the time of seeking recognition in career or public service or as a parent or friend, we know that having another

person truly see us validates our human existence. The great difficulty in the end-of-life process is that we are not sure that we now truly want to be “seen,” stripped of our camouflage, our pretense, our self-generated roles.

But from my years of experience in sitting with the dying, I have learned one thing—we all are worthy of truly being seen. We all are essentially good, generous, and loving beings. The opportunity for the Witness to support the Other in discovering and basking in this knowledge is the great work that lies before you.

I also have chosen the word “Other” carefully. It is intended to cover anyone at the end of life, irrespective of relationship. At the same time, it expresses the ultimate paradox for the Witness. At the end of life, the Witness and the Other often reach such levels of intimacy that the Witness and the Other become one.

Every perspective offered here, whether designated for the Witness, the Other, or simply “you,” fits all. Try out the perspective for yourself, share the perspective with the Other. It’s all the same.

There is one caveat to the perspectives of this book. For some, the end of life is not anticipated. An accident happens, a heart fails, a disease is detected, and life closes with great rapidity. The shared journey of Other and Witness seems too short. There is no time to contemplate or embody all of what is suggested here. But, perhaps, you still may access some insight from this small volume. Then, you will be better prepared for the next time.

Foreword

Perhaps you are reading this book because Death is visiting your house. Or perhaps It has come already and taken someone from you. I hope with all my heart that you were able to be a Witness to that very difficult, yet profound, experience.

My life is centered around helping those who are dying. Like Tim Tosta, I have been present at the deathbeds of many, many people. There is a simplicity to being present, holding both space and the person himself, as the sacred transition happens before your eyes. There is life and then there is not. In that simplicity, however, there is a myriad of emotions and fears, wonder, confusion, and a deep, quick-to-the-bone knowledge that something profound and cosmic is happening around you. And you—you—are the honored Witness to that human/cosmic transformation.

When Death visits our house, we have to let Death in. But the good news is that we can learn how to be present when it happens. Once we do that, you see, we are never the same again. Death changes not only the dying person, but

I think even more so, those of us who act as
Witness to Its arrival.

I am so grateful that Tim has written this book
out of his own experiences and learning. I
have never met anyone who has such clarity
about the role of the Witness. He has taken his
own experiences and, in simple tweets, he has
captured the process and the inner cacophony of
what a living person goes through watching and
waiting with someone who is about to die.

Please spend time with each tweet. Savor it.
Listen to its cadence. Go inside the meaning.
Come back out again and see if and how
you are changed.

The next time you are asked to be the Witness,
I can guarantee that you will be changed yet
again. Thank you, Tim, for giving us these
words. And thank you, Witnesses, for honoring
the dying by staying present until
Death takes Its leave.

Megory Anderson

Author of *Sacred Dying: Creating Rituals for
Embracing the End of Life*

www.sacreddying.org



Section I: The Supportive Witness—The Hero's Journey



Section I

The Supportive Witness— The Hero's Journey

In *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, mythologist and writer Joseph Campbell describes the archetypal journey of the hero from the call to enter an unknown world, to the trials once the call is accepted, to surviving the challenge and achieving a great gift, to successfully returning the great gift for the betterment of the world.

The supportive Witness to the end of life is such a hero, called to awareness in the face of the Other's passing.

As a supportive Witness, you learn about yourself—your fears, courage, caring, generosity, capacity for love, and purpose in life. You reveal your true self to yourself and the world.

1

Your path, as a Witness, is a hero's journey. You leave known territory, overcome challenges, and return transformed.

2

As you witness the Other's pain, suffering, and sorrow, you confront your own fear and grief.

3

Being a Witness demands courage. On this journey, you confront mortality.

4

As a Witness, you embark on the ultimate path of caring and love.

5

You already know how to care. It is
an essential part of your being.

6

Unconditionally supporting the
Other is one of the greatest gifts
you will ever give.

7

To overcome fear, you must
develop spacious awareness
in which your empathy,
compassion, generosity,
and love grow.

8

Witnessing is not what you are supposed to do, it is what you are called to do.

9

You come to see obstacles not as problems but as teachers, leading you to greater understanding.

10

Witness work has no success or failure. It is a process of giving yourself to something profound.

11

You begin to serve through what you do. You then serve through who you are.

12

Once you serve as a
Witness, you see how much
you have learned about
living with an open heart.

13

Remember why you are here:
to love AND be loved.

14

As Witness, you change the world,
one compassionate act at a time.

Section II: Observations on Death—Similarities and Differences



Section II

Observations on Death— Similarities and Differences

There are common elements in the varied paths to the end of life, yet each death is as unique as the individual being transformed. There is no right or wrong way to die. Hold no expectations, only the awareness of each moment.

15

Death is certain. Life until death is not. Death comes whether or not you are prepared.

16

The dying process reveals lessons about change, control, perception, discovery, and relationship.

17

Death teaches you to live in profound change and to accept its inevitability.

18

Death teaches you to surrender what you cannot control and flourish in the abundance of what remains.

19

Death teaches you to abandon perceptions that do not serve you while opening to the discovery of beauty and meaning.

20

Death teaches you to see your inherent goodness AND inextinguishable relation to others.

21

Every life has meaning, great or humble. It is not given by others; it arises from within.

22

You can find your meaning until your final breath.

Section III: The Other and the Healing Journey to Freedom



Section III

The Other and the Healing Journey to Freedom

At the end of life, there is a vast opportunity for clarity and acceptance. It arises from the fact that much of the Other's complexity is going away. This loss could be mourned, but it is better celebrated.

The Other is moving toward simplicity, a reduction to essence, a time of unburdening and of unlimited freedom.

23

The final passage of the Other is a
journey to freedom.

24

Freedom opens the Other to what
will be, apart from illness or injury.

25

Freedom offers the
attainment of wisdom,
beyond the concepts of
life and death.

26

Wisdom allows the Other
to live in the moment, to
accept what cannot change,
to heal the past, and to
accept death as a part of life.

27

Your life's narrative is a tapestry of patterned survival behaviors that manifests as your personality.

28

Your narrative is the lens through which, consciously or unconsciously, you interpret death and your reactions to it.

29

At life's end, relinquishing your narrative allows space for wisdom.

30

With wisdom, you see your life from an unencumbered perspective.

31

A review of life, without judgment,
reveals its meaning.

32

As you search for life's meaning, it
evolves and deepens.

Section IV: The Witness's Preparation—You Already Know What Is Needed



Section IV

The Witness's Preparation—
You Already Know What Is Needed

A supportive Witness seeks to be free from fear, from beliefs about how things should be, and from judgments of how things should go. This way of being is found in a calm, spacious state of mind, an awareness of the present moment, an engaged curiosity about how things might unfold, and an expectation that, whatever manifests, it will be met with generosity and kindness.

33

The Witness's work is about creating and holding space for the Other's journey.

34

To assist the Other, you bring your awareness, empathy, compassion, generosity, and love.

35

Spaciousness arises from
a quiet mind. Cultivate
spaciousness by slowing
down, talking less, and
simplifying your actions.

36

Contemplation, meditation, and
breathing practices help you
develop spaciousness.

37

With spaciousness comes
awareness. Mind quiets. Senses
heighten. You learn to truly listen.
You access wisdom.

38

Don't work on the Other.
Work on yourself. As you do,
you find your greatest value
in serving the Other.

39

Empathy is your capacity to sense the Other's inner state. It is the foundation of your relationship.

40

Empathy acknowledges, respects, and soothes the Other. It is generous and kind.

41

Compassion is your wish
to alleviate the Other's
suffering. It promotes your
caring competence. With
experience, it grows.

42

You don't create
compassion, you allow it.
Put yourself in the Other's
place. Do whatever
is necessary.

43

Kindness is compassion's sibling. It is your wish that the Other be happy.

44

Hold kindness as your intention.
Allow it to guide your thoughts,
speech, and actions.

45

The more open and relaxed you are,
the more compassionate and
kind you become.

46

By choosing compassionate and
kind thoughts, you become a more
compassionate and kind person.

47

Love is built from empathy,
compassion, and kindness.

48

Love is a beacon drawing you
home to yourself. In serving the
Other, your love becomes an act of
self-acceptance.

Section V: Pain and Suffering—Knowing the Difference



Section V

Pain and Suffering— Knowing the Difference

Pain is not elective. It may be marginal or excruciating. It may be intermittent or chronic. Different people experience pain differently. It is subjective, interpreted through memories, emotions, and beliefs. However, through medication, biofeedback, or contemplation, pain can be greatly reduced or eliminated. Suffering is optional. Overcoming it is a process. It requires insight, practice, and perseverance.

49

Pain is a discrete occurrence.
Suffering is resistance to the
recurrence of pain. Learn to treat
each separately.

50

Suffering can exist entirely without
pain. It is a product of emotions.

51

Emotion manifests through the body. But strong emotion is not pain, it is resistance.

52

As you experience pain, stay with it. Does it loosen its grip? Note your resistance. Is resistance more painful than pain itself?

53

By examining pain, suffering diminishes. By diminishing suffering, pain decreases.

54

As your awareness grows in dealing with your own pain and suffering, you learn how to support the Other.

55

With a physician's guidance,
the Other can control the
pain. With awareness, the
Other can reduce suffering.

Section VI: The Witness's Work—Awareness and Compassion



Section VI

The Witness's Work— Awareness and Compassion

The work of caring isn't really work. It is about being fully aware of and available to the Other; trusting that you already know how to care; opening yourself to your empathy, generosity, and wisdom; and letting the events unfold, moment by moment. You connect with the Other in a new way, beyond what you have known. You enfold the Other in your compassion.

56

You needn't be an expert in end-of-life care. Special knowledge may help, but it also can limit you.

57

Your work is to hold the Other in your compassion, kindness, and love.

58

What you offer the Other is companionship on a journey into the unknown. There are no routes or signposts.

59

You are with the Other to be, to connect, and to offer yourself, as appropriate.

60

The two principal obstacles you will face in this work are fear and your narrative.

61

Fear manifests physically. It clouds your perception, making you ineffective. Know that fear is a mind state, not reality.

62

Ground yourself. Become aware of
the present moment.
Fear will diminish.

63

To care for another requires that
you release your narrative. Let the
Other's needs free you from its
constraints.

64

As you operate from spacious awareness, you learn to listen to what the Other has to say.

65

Listening values and validates the Other. To truly listen grants an extraordinary gift.

66

True listening is an act of
empathy. You share the
Other's experience without
getting caught in the
Other's narrative.

67

Listening allows the Other to go deeper, to remove obstacles, to develop spaciousness within.

68

Become compassionate with yourself. Begin to quiet down, to see clearly, to hear acutely, to find stable ground.

69

Caring is not what you are giving,
it is who you are. It is not an object,
but a process.

70

Perhaps there is nothing to do but
be with the Other in pain and suf-
fering. Attending the Other with
compassion may be enough.

71

The Other may not be helpless. Find the Other's remaining capabilities. Look for actions or activities that allow the Other to succeed.

72

Collaborate with the Other, allowing the helping act to dissolve barriers between you. There is no giving and receiving. You are merged.

73

If you find yourself helpless with the Other, slow down. Helplessness is a gift by which you learn the Other's plight.

74

Don't be surprised if you find that
just being there is enough.

75

If you remain in the moment, there
is no past, there is no future,
only presence.

76

Ask the Other, “If your life was a symphony, how would you like it to close?”

77

Ask the Other, “If your life is a message, what is it you are sending?”

78

As the Other's narrative is released, room is made for exploring meaning. Without narrative, life review yields new enriched perspectives.

79

Don't judge the dying process. The Other may die calmly and peacefully or may struggle to the end. Let it be.

80

Ask the Other to envision a peaceful death to use as a guide for the remainder of this joyful life.

81

Look at the Other with kind eyes. Hold the Other's hand with gratitude. Console the Other by attending with an open heart.

82

Remember, it is not the Other that is difficult, but the situation.

83

Do your best. If all fails, it isn't because you didn't help; it's because you couldn't.

84

A grounded presence is medicine
for the Other. Putting the Other at
ease is treatment. Evoking
laughter is healing.

85

Hold up your love for the other like
a mirror. What will the
Other then see?

86

There are two good uses for memories. One, to release negativity. Two, to evoke joy and new perspective.

87

Negative memories cause suffering.
Allow them to come up and pass
away without judgment.

88

All past failures contributed
to making the Other.

Present awareness,
forgiveness, and detachment
discharge the past.

89

When the Other expresses fear, explore it together. Can you help the Other loosen fear's hold by seeing fear as only a thought?

90

Ask the Other to examine loneliness. It is a mind state. Can loneliness be allowed to pass to make room for awareness?

91

A loss of control may
cause distress or anxiety.
Help the Other see control
implies obligation. With no
obligation, freedom
is possible.

92

The Other needs no role or identity.
The Other is not a “doing”
but a “being.”

93

The Other’s purpose at life’s end is
only to be aware.

94

The Other is in the process of becoming. Explore what that becoming might be.

95

There is no right or wrong way to die, only the Other's way.

96

At the end of life, it is quite
alright to “not know.”
Accept uncertainty.
Find comfort in it.

97

At life's end, there is no
need to care what others
think. There need be no
expectations. Expectations
are burdens.

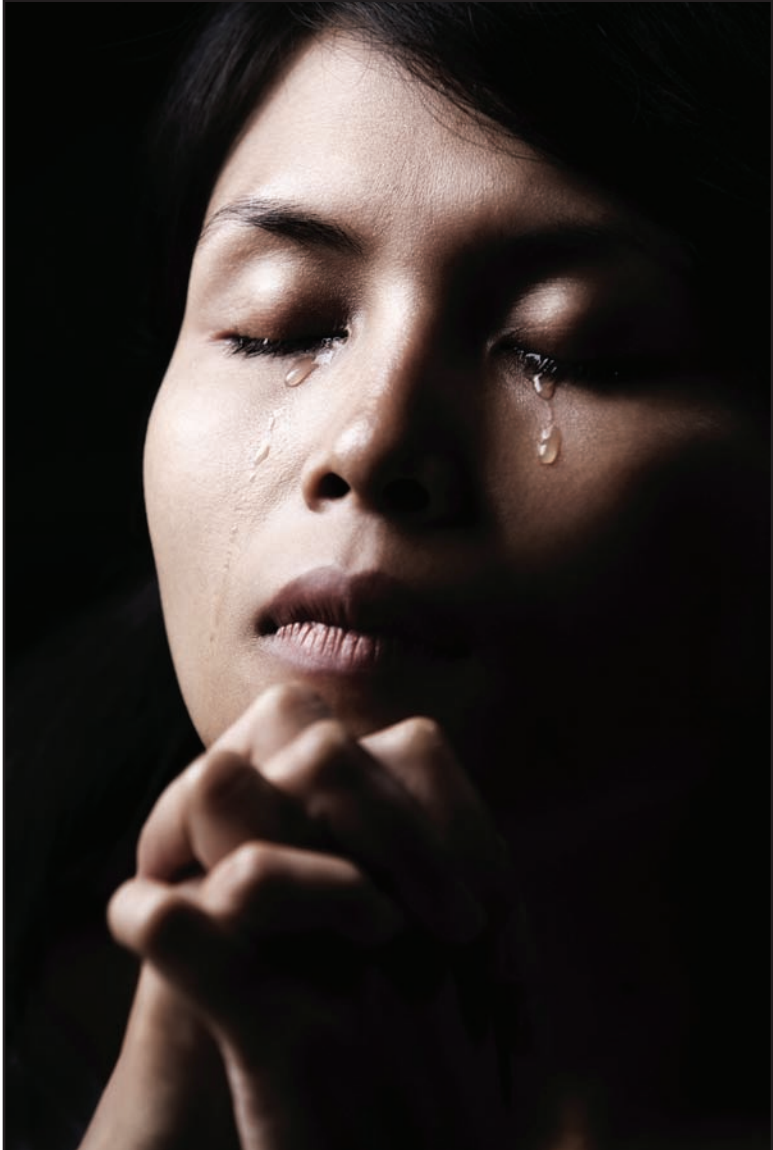
98

Slowing down at the end of life
allows the Other to focus on each
precious moment.

99

The paradox of the end of life is the
freedom it bestows.

Section VII: Compassion Fatigue—Saving Yourself for You and the Other



Section VII

Compassion Fatigue—Saving Yourself for You and the Other

The Hero's Journey is not a walk in the park. We may unconsciously resist it. Our narratives, beliefs, judgments, and expectations may keep us from accessing our innate wisdom and capabilities. We may not recognize the depths of our compassion and generosity. We can exhaust ourselves.

But we must catch ourselves. Self-care is essential. We owe it to ourselves and the Other.

100

When you feel tired, seek rest. It allows you to become aware of your body, your emotions, and your surroundings.

101

If service leads to frustration, if empathy turns to apathy, or if resignation rules your day, ask for help.

102

When exhausted, you default to your narrative. You lose awareness, disconnect from wisdom, and no longer effectively serve.

103

Make thoughtful backup plans early.
When exhaustion occurs, you can't
make thoughtful plans.

104

You are not indispensable. Another
compassionate being exists to
serve in your place.

105

Do only what you can. Do it with
compassion. Then, allow
another to serve.

106

Make peace with things as they
are. You may never know the final
meaning of what you have done.
That is alright, too.

Section VIII: Active Dying—Going Inward and Letting Go



Section VIII

Active Dying—Going Inward and Letting Go

At life's very end, the Other's departure begins. The outer world, the Witness' world, fades, and a new dimension opens for the Other. In this relatively short period, a disengagement begins as if the Other's spirit is untying the countless knots that have bound it to its failing body. Now, the caring and compassion of the Witness' work for the Other's journey is brought to fruition.

107

The Other will know when it
is time to die.

108

Active dying begins with the Other
turning inward, disconnecting from
the external world and
its inhabitants.

109

During active dying, the Other's physical energies focus on maintaining the body's core functions as the final transformation accelerates.

110

Active dying is done by the Other alone.

111

Active dying offers the Witness a final opportunity for compassion and love. Witness with the knowledge that the Other is attaining freedom.

112

The Other may wish to die unaccompanied. Respect that wish. It is the Other's journey.

113

When you sit with the Other in the final hours, do not create a separation from death. Witness it fully.

114

The Other's body will die, but as a result of your service, the Other may live on through you.

Section IX: Grief—Sorrow, Loss, and Renewal



Section IX

Grief—Sorrow, Loss, and Renewal

We are not strangers to grief. We know it from losses other than death.

Grief is nothing to be ashamed of or avoided. It is natural. It, too, is a journey to be experienced. Grief also is a great teacher.

115

There is no correct way or
time to grieve.

116

You grieve for the Other. You grieve
for yourself. At the heart of
grief is love.

117

Grieving requires patience. It comes, then goes, then comes again. Each grief has its own imprint, as distinctive and unique as the Other.

118

Grief is not an event; it is a process. You live with it, in the foreground and in the background.

119

Grief contains denial, anger,
bargaining, depression,
and acceptance—serially, in
combination, or recurrently.

120

As you experience grief, do so from grounded awareness and self-compassion. Be present with each experience.

121

Denying the consequences of the Other's passing is your way of letting in only what you can handle.

122

Anger expresses your pain. In grief, it arises when you feel safe enough to know you will survive. Eventually, it dissipates and you heal.

123

In grief, you bargain with the pain of loss. You would do anything not to feel it. Acknowledge the pain to loosen its grip.

124

In grief, depression may arise. It slows you down to contemplate the loss. From there, you rebuild.

125

Acceptance in grief acknowledges that the Other's loss is permanent.
You can now rest.

126

Losses are very personal and comparisons never apply. Only you know your loss.

127

In grief, there always are regrets. Regrets belong to the past. Let them go. If necessary, forgive yourself.

128

If there are things you wish you had said, express them to the Other now.

129

Tell your grief story. It dissipates your pain. It helps you recreate and rebuild structure.

130

Don't allow others to dampen your
grieving. This is your journey.

131

In grief, let your friends help you.
Accept their support.

132

When you surrender to grief, you discover that you are much stronger than you ever imagined.

133

Relief from grief is not disloyalty. You continue to love as the pain recedes.

Section X: Meaning at the End of Life—The Heroes' Journeys



Section X

Meaning at the End of Life— The Heroes' Journeys

Two transformations have occurred. The Other has found freedom. The Witness has been given new life. Both have experienced the lush beauty of the present moment, the interconnectedness of beings, the boundless capacity for forgiveness, generosity, compassion, and love. The Other has physically departed, yet remains inextricably a part of the Witness. The Witness returns to the world bearing the gifts of the Witness' experience.

134

Your passage with the Other will
remain with you for the balance
of your life.

135

The meaning of life is to fully
experience everything with
compassion and love.

136

As a Witness, you learn about the nobility of being human. You learn that death is part of life and the pathway to freedom.

137

As a Witness, you learn that the way to peace is through loving relationships, with yourself and others.

138

If you stay open to new possibilities, then life is lived in wonder. A life of wonder is a life of freedom.

139

Not saving people is in the nature of things. Mourn the loss and rejoice, knowing that you did your best.

140

The only thing that lasts
forever is love.

Afterword

Following my mother's death in 2007, our family became aware that my father was experiencing cognitive failure. It probably began long before my mother's decline, but we missed it. He subsequently was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, and we moved him into an assisted living community.

Dad left us on November 18, 2010. As with my mother, the days preceding Dad's passing were gracious, peaceful, and loving. Before his passing, my work already had begun on *#DEMENTIA tweet*, because I believe we need new perspectives and less suffering in the presence of dementia. We can recognize that our loved ones are still here, despite the loss of memory and the accompanying behavioral changes. More than ever, in dementia, our loved ones need our awareness, support, compassion, and love.

I wish you the best on your journey. May you find peace and happiness. Please share with me your discoveries.

Appendices

Appendix A:
Contemplation —
Following the Breath

Appendix B:
Contemplation —
Love and Kindness

Appendix C:
Resources

Appendix A

Contemplation—Following the Breath

Objective:

To develop your capacity to access spacious awareness. To allow you to experience being in the present moment.

1. Sit up straight in the chair with your feet flat on the floor. Rest your hands on your thighs or cup one in the other on your lap. Sense the natural stacking of your vertebrae up your back and through your neck to your skull. Roll your shoulders up, back, down, then release. Imagine there is a string gently pulling up your head from the top, allowing the vertebrae in your neck to separate. Then, release. Be sure that your head is not leaning forward. Pull your chin back and slightly down. This is about centering your body from hips to head, in a relaxed natural alignment. If it helps, move your torso gently and minimally from front to back and side to side to insure that you have found your center. Then confirm that you still feel connected to your feet and the ground beneath them.
2. Either gently close your eyes or cast a soft gaze at a spot on the floor six to eight feet in front of you.
3. Bring your awareness to your breath—either in your abdomen, which rises and falls as you breathe, or at the tip of your nostrils where the air enters and leaves your nose. Select the area that gives you the greatest bodily awareness. Do not change your breathing. Simply observe it.

4. Say quietly to yourself “In” when you inhale and “Out” when you exhale. Focus your attention on your breath. If you find your attention wandering, mentally note “thought” and bring your attention back to your breathing. Acknowledge any sensations in your body by mentally noting “sensation,” returning your attention to your breath. Do the same with any emotions or feelings that occur.
5. As you breathe, consider that your in-breath is bringing you clarity, calmness, and strength, while your out-breath removes fear, agitation, and confusion from your being. Sink into the spacious awareness that you have created.
6. When you have been seated for the appropriate time, gently open your eyes and move slowly and mindfully from the seated position.
7. Sometimes, it is easier to sit. Sometimes, it is harder. It is always valuable. You always learn about how you are in the moment.
8. Start with a sitting of ten minutes each day at an appointed time (early mornings usually work best). Lengthen your sitting in increments over time.

Appendix B

Contemplation—Love and Kindness

Objective:

To open your heart to yourself and the Other and to reaffirm the intention of your service.

Sit comfortably using the follow-the-breath contemplation of Appendix A. Once you have settled into your breath, begin a repeated recitation of the following phrases, slowly and quietly to yourself.

As you recite the phrases, allow them to enter and warm your heart. Fully experience your caring.

- May I be filled with love and kindness.
- May I be relieved of suffering.
- May I be peaceful and at ease.
- May I be happy.

After a few moments, shift your awareness to the Other and recite the phrases for the Other's benefit.

- May [the Other] be filled with love and kindness.
- May [the Other] be relieved of suffering.

- May [the Other] be peaceful and at ease.
- May [the Other] be happy.

It is powerful to perform this contemplation at the bedside in the presence of the Other. However, the Other's presence is not required.

Again, after a few moments, return to the follow-the-breath contemplation for the balance of your sitting.

Appendix C

Resources

The following websites provide useful information and links to other sources concerning the end-of-life process. You may wish to reference them for support.

Americans for Better Care of the Dying

<http://www.abcd-caring.org/>

Caring.com

<http://www.caring.com/>

Sacred Dying Foundation

<http://www.sacreddying.org/>

Zen Hospice Project

<http://www.zenhospice.org/prod/>

I cannot represent that the material contained in these sites is fully correct or complete. Please seek assistance before making any major care decision.

#DEATHtweet Book01: A Well-Lived Life through 140 Perspectives on Death and Its Teachings asks each of us to consider our mortality in a new light. Author Timothy Tosta draws upon his experiences as a cancer survivor and seasoned hospice volunteer to suggest that the common issues at the end of life can be brought forward to the present moment and resolved, allowing us to live more consciously, meaningfully, and lovingly.

Here's what others have said about *#DEATHtweet Book01*:

"In this beautiful book, the lessons are entirely about living—how to create happier, richer lives. Each tweet is lovely in itself and part of a fabric that moves me and makes me think differently about my own life."

Rick Foster, CoAuthor, *How We Choose to Be Happy and Choosing Brilliant Health*

"Like snowflakes, each tweet is unique, perfect. With death as a backdrop, the effect of their cascading one upon the other is breathtaking!"

Megory Anderson, Author, *Sacred Dying*

"#DEATHtweet01 powerfully and beautifully captures the complexities of what it means to be human: to love, to ache, to live and, yes, to die."

Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, Pastor, Mission Bay Community Church

"#Deathtweet01 is a thought-provoking, and ultimately inspiring, meditation on living well."

Karen Janowski, Partner, Ecostrategy Group

#DEATHtweet Book01 is available from HappyAbout Books, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and independent bookstores.

About the Author



Timothy Tosta is a cancer survivor, a seasoned hospice volunteer, and executive coach to the legal and business communities. He also is recognized as one of California's leading land use and environmental attorneys. Tim is the author of *#DEATHtweet Book01: A Well-Lived Life Through 140 Perspectives on Death and Its Teachings*. He is a regular contributor to the *Daily Journal*, California's leading daily legal newspaper, and a frequent lecturer to legal and business gatherings on topics of human potential, fulfilled living, and conscious dying, as well as planning, development, sustainability, and the environment.

Other Books in the THINKaha Series

The THINKaha book series is for thinking adults who lack the time or desire to read long books, but want to improve themselves with knowledge of the most up-to-date subjects. THINKaha is a leader in timely, cutting-edge books and mobile applications from relevant experts that provide valuable information in a fun, Twitter-brief format for a fast-paced world.

They are available online at <http://thinkaha.com> or at other online and physical bookstores.

1. *#BOOK TITLE tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Compelling Article, Book, and Event Titles by Roger C. Parker*
2. *#COACHING tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Insights On Making A Difference Through Executive Coaching by Sterling Lanier*
3. *#CONTENT MARKETING tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas to Create and Market Compelling Content by Ambal Balakrishnan*
4. *#DEATH tweet Book01: A Well-Lived Life through 140 Perspectives on Death and Its Teachings by Timothy Tosta*
5. *#DEATH tweet Book02: 140 Perspectives on Being a Supportive Witness to the End of Life by Timothy Tosta*
6. *#DIVERSITY tweet Book01: Embracing the Growing Diversity in Our World by Deepika Bajaj*
7. *#DREAM tweet Book01: Inspirational Nuggets of Wisdom from a Rock and Roll Guru to Help You Live Your Dreams by Joe Heuer*
8. *#ENTRY LEVEL tweet Book02: Inspiration for New Professionals by Christine Ruff and Lori Ruff*
9. *#ENTRYLEVEL tweet Book01: Taking Your Career from Classroom to Cubicle by Heather R. Huhman*
10. *#JOBSEARCH tweet Book01: 140 Job Search Nuggets for Managing Your Career and Landing Your Dream Job by Barbara Safani*
11. *#LEADERSHIP tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas to Help You Become the Leader You Were Born to Be by Kevin Eikenberry*

12. *#LEAN SIX SIGMA tweet Book01: Business Process Excellence for the Millennium* by Dr. Shree R. Nanguneri
13. *#LEAN STARTUP tweet Book01: 140 Insights for Building a Lean Startup!* by Seymour Duncker
14. *#MILLENNIALtweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Managing the Millennials* by Alexandra Levit
15. *#MOJOtweet: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas on How to Get and Keep Your Mojo* by Marshall Goldsmith
16. *#OPEN TEXTBOOK tweet Book01: Driving the Awareness and Adoption of Open Textbooks* by Sharyn Fitzpatrick
17. *#PARTNER tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Succeeding in Your Partnerships* by Chaitra Vedullapalli
18. *#PROJECT MANAGEMENT tweet Book01: 140 Powerful Bite-Sized Insights on Managing Projects* by Guy Ralfe and Himanshu Jhamb
19. *#QUALITYtweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas to Deliver Quality in Every Project* by Tanmay Vora
20. *#SOCIAL MEDIA PR tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Social Media Engagement* by Janet Fouts
21. *#SOCIALMEDIA NONPROFIT tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Nonprofit Social Media Engagement* by Janet Fouts with Beth Kanter
22. *#SPORTS tweet Book01: What I Learned from Coaches About Sports and Life* by Ronnie Lott with Keith Potter
23. *#STANDARDS tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Winning the Industry Standards Game* by Karen Bartleson
24. *#TEAMWORK tweet Book01: Lessons for Leading Organizational Teams to Success 140 Powerful Bite-Sized Insights on Lessons for Leading Teams to Success* by Caroline G. Nicholl
25. *#THINKtweet Book01: Bite-Sized Lessons for a Fast Paced World* by Rajesh Setty

#DEATH TWEET Book02

A Compassionate Approach to Supporting the End of Another's Life

"Without considering death, life is confusing and superficial. '#DEATH tweet Book02' delivers a compassionate message, offering critical support, wisdom and a genuinely helpful perspective."

Jack Kornfield, Author of 'A Path With Heart'

"We read from '#DEATH tweet Book02' aloud at a recent gathering of friends, coping with dying family and friends. Nothing can eradicate the pain, but sharing the perspectives from '#DEATH tweet Book02' was a cathartic experience that moved us all."

Diane Olmstead, Founding Partner, W3 Partners, Institutional Real Estate Investment Manager

"Tim's lucid and compassionate aphorisms are an inspiration, providing great comfort and confidence to those in the end of life experience."

Derek Parker, Director, Marin General Hospital; Internationally Renowned Healthcare Architect

Timothy Tosta, author of #DEATHtweet01-A Well-Lived Life through 140 Perspectives on Death and its Teachings, is a cancer survivor, a seasoned hospice volunteer, an evocative lecturer and writer, and an Integral Coach (www.coachingcounsel.com/blog). He also is one of California's leading land use and environmental attorneys (www.luce.com/timothytosta).



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