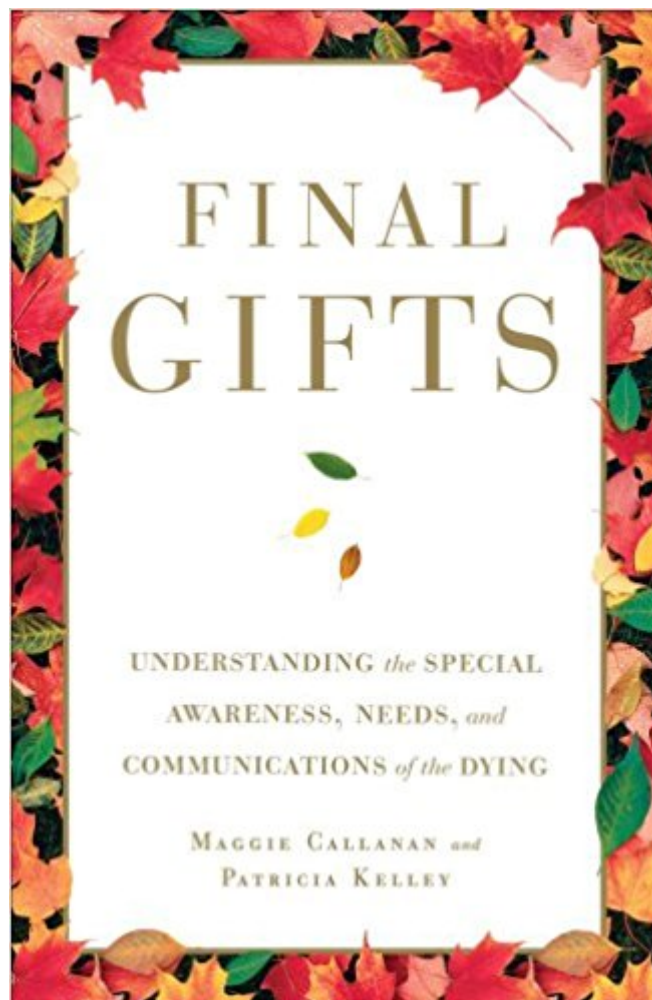




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# Final Gifts: Understanding The Special Awareness, Needs, And Communications Of The Dying



## Synopsis

In this moving and compassionate classic—now updated with new material from the authors—hospice nurses Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley share their intimate experiences with patients at the end of life, drawn from more than twenty years' experience tending the terminally ill. Through their stories we come to appreciate the near-miraculous ways in which the dying communicate their needs, reveal their feelings, and even choreograph their own final moments; we also discover the gifts—of wisdom, faith, and love—that the dying leave for the living to share. Filled with practical advice on responding to the requests of the dying and helping them prepare emotionally and spiritually for death, *Final Gifts* shows how we can help the dying person live fully to the very end.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Impressive insights into the experience of dying, offered by two hospice nurses with a gift for listening. The "final gifts" of the title are the comfort and enlightenment offered by the dying to those attending them, and in return, the peace and reassurance offered to the dying by those who hear their needs. Callanan and Kelley describe a phenomenon they term "Nearing Death Awareness"—which resembles somewhat the near-death experience sometimes reported by individuals revived after being clinically dead. Nearing Death Awareness, however, develops slowly, and the dying person seemingly drifts for a time between two worlds. Attempts by the dying to communicate about this awareness, often expressed in symbolic language or gestures, may be misunderstood by those around them, who dismiss the expressions as mere "confusion."

According to the authors, dying messages fall into two categories: descriptions of what they are experiencing (such as the places they see, the presence of others no longer alive, or their knowledge of when death will occur) and requests for what the dying need for a peaceful death (a reconciliation, for instance, or the removal of some barrier to departure). To illustrate, Callanan and Kelley include numerous examples of Nearing Death Awareness from their years of caring for the dying. And they offer practical advice not only to involved family members but also to professional caregivers on how to recognize, understand, and respond to a dying person's messages. No lugubriousness or false cheerfulness here, but acute observations and astute advice on a difficult topic. -- Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Treasure” – clear, authentic, responsible, and profoundly moving. – • Sandol Stoddard, author of *The Hospice Movement* “Beautifully written, illuminating and reassuring” – Final Gifts is truly a gift to us all. – • Judy Tatelbaum, author of *The Courage to Grieve* “These richly told stories enable us to respond to the dying in new and authentic ways.” – • Ira R. Byock, M.D., author of *Dying Well: The Prospect for Growth at the End of Life*

I read this book when my mother passed away and it was great. I loaned it to a friend so I had to buy another now that I am caring for my brother who is terminal. This book is such an easy read because it is full of stories and most people would identify with at least one or more of them. The stories and the explanations from the authors really help you look for "signs" and listen to words that may give you insight into a loved one who is passing. The book also offers questions to ask your loved one who is passing that will lessen confusion for them and give them a more peaceful passing. It has stories about several faiths as well as agnostics so most people will relate to at least a few of the stories. Highly recommended for helping you and your dying loved one.

This book is excellent. My mother (a retired RN and hospice nurse) recommended it to me when a friend of mine was terminally ill. Written with love, compassion, and great depth by two hospice nurses, it explores the special ways dying loved ones communicate: what they are feeling, seeing, anticipating. The insight is so helpful for those who are being left behind. I keep a copy on my bookshelf and another on my kindle; and I have bought dozens of copies over the years to give away.

I read this book on the recommendation of a friend who said it had greatly helped her as a caregiver during her father's terminal illness. I can see why: written by two hospice nurses with 20 years' experience helping terminally ill patients and their loved ones, it's an insightful and very practical work that takes much of the mystery out of the process of dying and offers advice that, if followed, can significantly improve communication between the dying and their caregivers and/or family members, to the emotional benefit of all concerned. With several seriously ill loved ones in my life right now, I plan to use my copy of this book as a reference and guide when the time comes.

The central message of this book is that many people who are dying have special awareness and even some degree of control over their dying process and tangential happenings such as intuitive communication. It is worth reading for those seeking to learn about the many possible paths that an individual death can take, and for those who are in a position to help a loved one through his or her own unique process. Similar to another 3-star reviewer, I also found the examples rather repetitive and I also would not recommend it for those immediately dying, unless they have a positive / accepting outlook toward the experience. I read this book as a general introduction to the field of compassionate presence at the end of life, preparing for serious effort in that field as a volunteer. For those having a similar perspective or just looking for a more in-depth existential description of dying in American culture, I recommend Dr Ira Byock's book *Dying Well*, which I bought at the same time. That book goes deeper into fewer death experiences to make points about what the dying are immediately facing and how we (who, after all, are also the dying, just not as immediately) can help and can learn.

I am my elderly mom's caregiver who is very ill with cancer. I have 2 chapters left to read but this book has been so helpful to me. The author is like a counselor and support system to the reader. So many of the stories are similar to mine and my mom's

I purchased and read this book in preparation of my fathers passing. What I learned turned out to be invaluable. I feel I was able to truly able to connect with my dad in the way and at the time he needed to be able to say goodbye. If you're at the place where you're looking for insight and information on this subject, get this book.

My mother was nearing the end of a nearly 7-year battle with advanced breast cancer, when I found

this wonderful book. Thank God I'm a fast reader, as her condition deteriorated rapidly, and she became bedridden and practically non-communicative within two days of the book's arrival. Although her body seemed ready for death, something seemed to be holding her back, causing her to become agitated. Using the clues in the book, I realized that she was waiting for my father to say good bye and to tell her he'd be okay. Once I convinced him to do this, she passed peacefully about six hours later, surrounded by those she loved.

Wonderful book for helping understand the many stages a patient goes through while suffering a terminal illness. It really was an interesting read and I found it quite inspiring. I highly recommend this book.

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