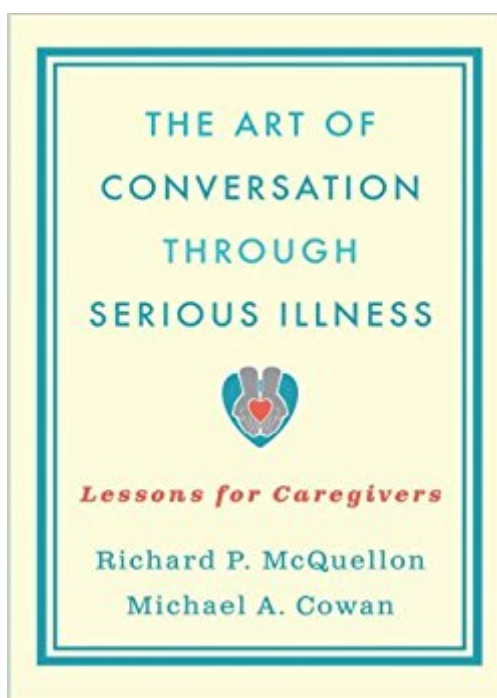


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# The Art Of Conversation Through Serious Illness: Lessons For Caregivers



## Synopsis

Every day, thousands of people receive a diagnosis of serious, life-threatening illness, and their families and friends suddenly become caregivers. Despite the best of intentions it is not always easy to communicate well under these circumstances, or find deep empathy for something one has never before experienced. When is it best to speak, and when to be silent? How can someone provide real comfort, and how can relationships with loved ones facing serious illness be enhanced in this most difficult time? This book is about how to be an encouraging caregiver and friend under the most difficult circumstances, when the possibility of death is all too real. The authors believe that open dialogue must not be avoided until the last minute when opportunities will be limited, but that caregivers and loved ones can embrace this time, mortal time, honestly as a way to sensitively and compassionately engage with those for whom a central fact of life is realized--that all of our lives are time-limited. In *The Art of Conversation Through Serious Illness*, the authors consider how to best listen to and speak with one facing life-threatening illness, with lessons on being a primary conversation partner, becoming properly empathic and receiving empathy, maintaining everyday conversation, using platitudes appropriately, understanding healthy denial, and talking about dying. Offering bedside guidance usually only available to professionals and peppered with insightful anecdotes from the authors' own experiences, this gentle, succinct book is appropriate for anyone going through this uniquely difficult yet universal life experience.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book is unique in that it includes health care professionals in the category of caregivers. Clinicians are not only having these conversations with their patients but are also advising and guiding family and friends who may feel uncomfortable and inexperienced with these important conversations. This book is an excellent resource not only for family and friend caregivers, but also for hospice and palliative medicine professionals and other medical colleagues." --JOURNAL OF PALLIATIVE MEDICINE"Overall this is a thoughtful and compelling book that draws you into the narrative. If you are looking for an academic research-based tome to cite in your studies, then this is not the book for you. But if you value the fact that clinical practice really should be guided by the patient's experience and what we can learn from that, then you really should take a look at this small gem of a book." -- Robert Becker, Senior Lecturer in Palliative Care, Staffordshire University Faculty of Health and Severn Hospice Shropshire, England

Richard P. McQuellon, Ph.D. is Professor of Medicine, Comprehensive Cancer Center of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. Michael A. Cowan, Ph.D. is Assistant to the President, Loyola University New Orleans, and Executive Director of Common Good, a network of civic organizations working to rebuild and transform post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans.

My mom is fighting cancer and none of us like to talk about death or the feelings associated with it. This book talks frankly about the patient and caregiver, giving you lots of food for thought and the courage to have those conversations and the appropriate time to do so.

I didn't realize the book dealt primarily with cancer patients. I was looking for info on a wide variety of serious illnesses.

I read this book at a time that I was losing my Dad to cancer. My Dad was talking about dying and how hard it was to sit and think about dying. This book gave me a new way to listen to my Dad's conversations and a new way to respond to his words about dying. It helped me to read about other experiences from care takers, health professionals and from the people that are going through this. I think it helps just to know that other people feel the same way you do. After I read the book I passed it along to my 3 children. They all remarked about how it helped them to know that other people reacted to some of the situations the same way they did. This book is full of helpful insights and knowledge. Thank you Dr. McQuellon and Michael Cowan for taking the time to write this book to help people like me.

For someone who is in her twenties who has not had much experience with death, Richard McQuellon's book, "The Art of Conversation Through Serious Illness" has deeply moved me and the words of wisdom that he has shared has opened my eyes. When I lost my grandfather back when I was a teen, I knew nothing of this sense of time that we are given on this Earth. I only felt the sense of urgency that death brings that Dr. McQuellon speaks of. Even after all this time, this book really resonated with that particular event in my past. It allowed me to see and understand human behavior, how my reaction to death was similar or different from other members in my family. Even though "death" may be a heavy subject to talk about and it may be that we as a society only bring up death when it's right there in front of us-- Dr. McQuellon allows us to see that in this world we should be honest and compassionate human beings and that even in our most trying times that we should always be here for one another with open arms. I have learned a lot from this book, it was an easy read with great and very real personal experiences that Dr. McQuellon and his co-author Dr. Cowan shares with their audience. It is a book that not only taught me how to cope with a very difficult but "universal experience" but also how to just be a better friend.

How can we bring comfort to those who struggle with loss? Dr. McQuellon shares his insights from years of experience in this practical guide. He tells us how to engage in conversations that bring peace and sustain hope. Experience the "click of contact." "Listen carefully and respond thoughtfully". Grow in the virtues and skills Dr. McQuellon extolls. Read this book and apply its lessons! The rewards will be fulfilling. --Jeff Brice 1/25/14

I enjoyed reading Richard McQuellon's wonderful book, "The Art of Conversation through Serious Illness." I've gone through it several times to try to absorb all the wisdom he and his co-author Michael Cowan offer. One thing that particularly resonated with me is how applicable much of what is discussed in the book relates to everyday "non-mortal time" life: listening carefully, responding thoughtfully, being empathic, timely use of platitudes and encouragement, and the compassionate power of silence. I will keep this lovely, easily-read book handy for future refresher readings, along with other works that have helped guide me in recent years.

The book contains good information to start with but is not exactly what I was looking for. I know you cannot get a book to "tell" you what to say, but it did give a good perspective of what the dying person may be thinking.

This book is invaluable to both health care workers and loved ones supporting people with devastating illnesses. I began to implement the lessons/wisdom that I drew from this concise yet eloquent resource almost immediately. Highly recommended!

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