

Preface

In *The Last Dance: Encountering Death and Dying*, we offer a comprehensive and readable introduction to the study of death and dying, one that highlights the main issues and questions. The study of death—or thanatology, from the Greek *thanatos*, meaning “death”—is concerned with questions rooted at the core of our experience. Thus, the person who sets out to increase his or her knowledge of death and dying is embarking on an exploration that is partly a journey of personal discovery. This is a journey that has both cognitive (intellectual) and affective (emotional) components. Thus, *The Last Dance* embodies an approach to the study of death and dying that combines the intellectual and the emotional, the social and the psychological, the experiential and the scholarly.

The title *The Last Dance* relates to a book written by Carlos Castaneda about the warriors of the Yaqui Indian tribe in Central America. Because a warrior can die on any day, the warrior makes a dance of power in the face of death. Castaneda says that, to truly live, we must keep death over our left shoulder. In other words, death is part of life and, because we can die at any time, we should be dancing through life.

The painting on the cover, *The Dance of Life*, by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, evokes thoughts of the inexorable, compelling cycle of life. It depicts a festival dance on the Asgaardstrand beach on a midsummer night. An indifferent moon sheds light on the water while the dancers dance a roundel, a ring dance. One woman is entering the dance, another is leaving. There is youth, innocent new life, and age.

We are sometimes asked how we came to write a college textbook on death and dying. Lynne says, “It’s as simple as the realization that students hated buying the many books needed for studying all of the topics important to learning about death and dying. And I hated having to assign all those books. One day at the start of a new semester, after getting the usual complaints from students, I whined to Al, ‘Why isn’t there just *one* book that a student could pick up and put under his or her arm that would cover all of these topics?’ Al’s response was, ‘Well, why don’t we write one?’”

So, some years ago, after five years dedicated to research and writing, *The Last Dance: Encountering Death and Dying* was born. Each subsequent edition reflects the changes and transformations that have occurred in the field of

death studies. This book provides a solid grounding in theory and research as well as in methods for applying what is learned to readers' own circumstances, both personal and professional. It encourages a constructive process of self-discovery. *The Last Dance* is not an indoctrination to any particular point of view but, rather, an introduction to diverse points of view. The values of compassion, listening, and tolerance for the views of others are emphasized. Readers may form their own opinions, but when they do we hope it is only after considering other possibilities in a spirit of open-mindedness. Unbiased investigation leads to choices that might otherwise be neglected or overlooked.

While retaining the popular features of earlier editions, this new edition of *The Last Dance* reflects the ongoing evolution of death studies. Although people sometimes think, "What changes about death?" the truth revealed in these pages is that much has changed in recent decades and continues to change in the present. Because of this fact, every chapter has been revised to integrate the latest research, practices, and ideas and to enhance clarity of presentation.

Throughout the text, we give attention to the ways cultural and ethnic viewpoints shape our relationship with death, and there is specific discussion of the viewpoints and traditions associated with people of African heritage, Hispanic heritage, Native American heritage, Jewish heritage, Celtic heritage, Arab heritage, Oceanian heritage, and Asian heritage, including the diverse cultures of Southeast Asia as well as the cultures of India, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. In the pages of *The Last Dance*, you will also find coverage of

- Ongoing developments in care of the seriously ill and dying, especially as they pertain to hospice and palliative care
- Death through the life course, from infancy through later adulthood, including a new section on death and the college student
- New directions in mortuary services, including personalized funerals, "green burials," and innovative options for body disposition and memorialization
- A changing health care system and its impact on dying and death
- How the Internet is influencing our relationship to death, dying, and bereavement in the digital age
- Insights about grief gained through an appreciation of the dual process and two-track models of coping with bereavement, as well as other models that can aid in understanding bereavement, grief, and mourning, including discussion of working through grief, maintaining continuing bonds with the deceased, and "telling the story" or narrative approaches to coping with grief
- How achieving the "Care-Full Society" and striving toward the creation of "compassionate cities" could improve and enhance our encounters with death

In addition, this edition contains new and updated material on physician-assisted suicide, remembrance rituals and linking objects, grief counseling and grief therapy, horrendous death, the placebo effect, familicide, and the death of a companion animal.

The study of death is unavoidably multidisciplinary. Accordingly, contributions from medicine, the humanities, and the social sciences are all found here in their relevant contexts. Throughout the book, principles and concepts are made meaningful by use of examples and anecdotes. Boxed material, photographs, and other illustrative materials expand upon and provide counterpoint to the textual presentation. Specialized terms, when needed, are clearly defined. Accompanying this edition is a companion Online Learning Center, www.mhhe.com/despelder10e, designed to promote mastery of the material covered in the text itself. We urge readers to make use of these features.

Chapter-by-Chapter Tour

Before you begin using *The Last Dance*, please join us for a quick tour through the text.

- In Chapter 1, we look at expressions of attitudes toward death in mass media, language, music, literature, and the visual arts. We ask what it means to live with an awareness of death, and we explore death anxiety, or fear of death. We conclude by examining the reasons people tend to be unfamiliar with death in modern, cosmopolitan societies.
- In Chapter 2, we investigate how we learn about death throughout the life course.
- In Chapter 3, we explore historical and cultural factors that shape attitudes and practices relative to dying and death.
- Chapter 4 shows how public policy affects our dealings with dying and death by means of a society's "death systems." Certification of death, the role of coroners and medical examiners, the functions of autopsies, procedures for legally defining and making a determination of death, medicolegal views of homicide and capital punishment, and rules regarding organ donation and transplantation are important aspects of the death system. An instructive cross-cultural example describing how Japan has dealt with ethical, moral, and legal questions involving brain death and organ transplantation wraps up this discussion.
- Care of dying persons is the primary focus of Chapter 5. Topics include health care financing; rationing of health resources; the relationship between caregivers and the patient; hospice, palliative care, and home care; elder care; trauma and emergency care; death notification procedures; and caregiver stress and compassion fatigue.

- Chapter 6 deals with a variety of issues and decisions that pertain to the end of life. Some of these issues and decisions become important in the context of diagnosis and treatment—for example, informed consent. Others come to the fore when individuals face a more immediate prospect of dying. These include choices about withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining medical treatment, physician-assisted death, and euthanasia, as well as issues involving artificial nutrition and hydration. Also discussed is the rule of double effect, which may be invoked when a medical intervention that is intended to relieve suffering leads to death. Some issues regarding the end of life can be dealt with before the crisis of a life-limiting illness—for example, making a will, setting up a living trust, obtaining life insurance, and completing advance directives to express wishes about medical treatment in the event one becomes incapacitated.
- Chapter 7, with its focus on how people live with a life-threatening illness, gives attention to the psychological and social meanings associated with such illnesses and offers insight about the ways individuals and families cope with “living-dying,” from the time of initial diagnosis to the final stages of the dying trajectory. Discussion includes treatment options and issues, as well as pain management and complementary therapies. The chapter concludes with sections on the social role of the dying patient and advice about being with someone who is dying.
- The ceremonies and rituals enacted by individuals and social groups after a death form the content of Chapter 8. Death rites and customs create opportunities for expressing grief and integrating loss. This chapter examines the nature and function of last rites, with particular attention to the history of mortuary services in the United States. Information about the options for funeral services and body disposition, as well as a discussion about making meaningful choices, completes the chapter.
- Chapter 9 is devoted to helping readers gain a comprehensive understanding of bereavement, grief, and mourning. A number of important models of grief are discussed, with the recognition that any notion that “one size fits all” is likely to be inadequate. An understanding of the ways people experience and express grief, and of the variables that influence grief, demonstrates that there are many ways to cope with grief and to provide support to the bereaved. The concluding section shows that, despite loss, bereavement can present opportunities for growth.
- Employing a life-span perspective, Chapters 10 and 11 deal with death-related issues associated with different stages of life, from early childhood through old age.
- Chapter 10 includes discussion of children with life-threatening illness and discussion of children as survivors of a close death. It provides guidelines for helping children cope with change and loss.
- Chapter 11 examines losses occurring in adulthood, such as miscarriage, stillbirth, and neonatal death, and the death of a child, a parent, a spouse,

or a close friend, as well as losses associated with aging. A new section on death in the lives of college students has been added for the tenth edition.

- Chapter 12 offers insights into suicide and its risk factors, including the social and psychological context of suicide and suicidal behavior; life-span perspectives on suicide; psychological autopsies; suicide notes; and suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. The chapter concludes with advice about helping someone who is in a suicidal crisis.
- Chapter 13 broadens the scope of death-related risks and threats. These include accidents and injuries, disasters, violence, war, genocide, terrorism, emerging diseases, and other examples of horrendous and traumatic death.
- Questions about human mortality and its meaning are at the forefront in the final two chapters of the book. Chapter 14 describes a variety of both religious and secular viewpoints, as well as accounts of near-death experiences, to present a survey of concepts and beliefs concerning immortality and the afterlife. Whether death is viewed as a “wall” or as a “door” can have important consequences for how we live our lives.
- Chapter 15 emphasizes personal and social values that are enhanced by learning about death. Examples of new directions in thanatology include efforts to bridge research and practice, clarify the goals of death education, gain an international perspective, and create compassionate cities, as well as to improve cultural competence. What does it mean to live with death and dying? Bringing together a host of topics covered in earlier chapters, this final chapter presents food for thought that can stimulate consideration of how a “good death” might be defined.

For those who wish to pursue further study of particular topics, a list of recommended readings is provided at the end of each chapter, and citations given in the chapter notes provide guidance to additional sources and references. Thus, while the text serves as an introduction to a broad range of topics in death studies, readers are pointed to resources for investigating topics that evoke special interest.

Supplements

In addition to the textbook itself, there are a number of instructor and student resources available.

- The Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/despelder10e provides instructors with a Test Bank, Instructor’s Guide, PowerPoint presentations, quizzes, and other premium instructor’s content. This premium content contains numerous files ranging from instructor’s resources on the Web to activities an instructor might use such as a questionnaire to examine attitudes and experiences.
- For students, the Online Learning Center, www.mhhe.com/despelder10e, offers a glossary, and each chapter has quizzes, Web activities, chapter objectives, key terms, and flashcards.

Acknowledgments

The Last Dance has been reviewed by professors in a broad range of academic disciplines. Their suggestions have helped to make this text an outstanding teaching tool. Formal reviews have been provided by Jennifer T. Aberle, Colorado State University; Susan Adams, University of Central Arkansas; Joel R. Ambelang, Concordia University, Wisconsin; Lisa Angermeier, Indiana University at Bloomington; Patrick Ashwood, Hawkeye Community College; Thomas Attig, Bowling Green State University; Ronald K. Barrett, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles; Michael Beechem, University of West Florida, Pensacola; Laura Billings, Southwestern Illinois College; John B. Bond, University of Manitoba; Tashel Bordere, University of Central Missouri; Sandor B. Brent, Wayne State University; Tom Bruce, Sacramento City College; John P. Colatch, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania; Elizabeth M. Collier, The College of New Jersey; Richard Cording, Sam Houston State University; Charles A. Corr, Southern Illinois University; Gerry R. Cox, Fort Hays State University; Illene N. Cupit, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay; Steven A. Dennis, Utah State University; Kenneth J. Doka, College of New Rochelle; Donald J. Ebel, Minnesota State University; Alishia Ferguson, University of Arkansas; Stephen J. Fleming, York University, Toronto; Audrey K. Gordon, Oakton Community College; Judy Green, Walsh University, Ohio; Debra Bence Grow, Pennsylvania State University; John Harvey, Western Illinois University; Russell G. Henke, Towson State University; Lorie Henley, Finger Lakes Community College; David D. Karnos, Eastern Montana College; Linda C. Kinrade, California State University, Hayward; Dennis Klass, Webster University; Anthony Lenzer, University of Hawaii at Manoa; Daniel Leviton, University of Maryland; Paul C. Luken, Arizona State University West, Phoenix; J. Davis Mannino, Santa Rosa Junior College; Coleman C. Markham, Barton College, North Carolina; Wendy Martyna, University of California, Santa Cruz; Samuel J. Marwit, University of Missouri; Debbie Mattison, University of Michigan School of Social Work; Marsha McGee, Northeast Louisiana University; Walter L. Moore, Florida State University, Tallahassee; Lachelle Norris, Tennessee Tech University; Tina Olson, Arizona State University; Leah Rogne, Minnesota State University; Vincent M. Rolletta, Erie Community College; Cheri Barton Ross, Santa Rosa Junior College; Lee Ross, Frostburg State University, Maryland; Rita S. Santanello, Belleville Area Community College, Illinois; Thomas W. Satre, Sam Houston State University; Edwin S. Shneidman, University of California, Los Angeles; Virginia Slaughter, The University of Queensland; Judith M. Stillion, Western Carolina University; Gordon Thornton, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Jeffrey S. Turner, Mitchell College; Mary Warner, Northern State University, South Dakota; Hannelore Wass, University of Florida, Gainesville; Jack Borden Watson, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas; John B. Williamson, Boston College; C. Ray Wingrove, University of Richmond;

Robert Wrenn, University of Arizona, Tucson; Joseph M. Yonder, Villa Maria College of Buffalo; Margaret H. Young, Washington State University; and Andrew Scott Ziner, University of North Dakota. In addition to those named, other colleagues and students have generously shared ideas for enhancing and improving the text. We thank all who have offered helpful suggestions about the book through its successive incarnations.

We also thank our collaborators who have helped prepare ancillary instructional materials over the course of various editions of *The Last Dance*. These include Barbara Jade Sironen, Patrick Vernon Dean, Robert James Baugher, Matt and Kelley Strickland, and Carol Berns, who deserves special thanks for her work on this edition's test bank and other resources for instructors, as well as on the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/despelder10e. In addition, we are grateful to staff members at many museums, libraries, and governmental institutions who have assisted us in our research and in gathering both text and art resources over the years.

Over the course of ten editions of *The Last Dance*, we have had the pleasure of working with many talented people who exemplify excellence in publishing. At McGraw-Hill, among the many individuals who helped bring this book to press, we want to particularly thank Mike Sugarman, publisher *par excellence*; Terri Schiesl, production maven, who at the outset got the ball rolling down the right track; and Erin Guendelsberger, developmental editor, who guided the typescript into production with attention to detail, good cheer, and thorough professionalism. To all whose help was instrumental in bringing this edition of *The Last Dance* to readers, our heartfelt thanks.

L. A. D.
A. L. S.

Additional McGraw-Hill Resources

- Craft your teaching resources to match the way you teach! With McGraw-Hill Create™, www.create.mcgraw-hill.com, instructors can easily rearrange chapters, combine material from other content sources, and quickly upload personal content such as a course syllabus or teaching notes. Find the content you need in Create by searching through thousands of leading McGraw-Hill textbooks. Arrange your book to fit your teaching style. Create even allows you to personalize your book's appearance by selecting the cover and adding your name, school, and course information. Order a Create book and you'll receive a complimentary print review copy in three to five business days or a complimentary electronic review copy (eComp) via e-mail in minutes. Go to www.create.mcgraw-hill.com today and register to experience how McGraw-Hill Create™ empowers you to teach your students your way.
- With the CourseSmart eTextbook version of this title, students can save up to 50 percent off the cost of a print book, reduce their impact on the environment, and access powerful Web tools for learning. Faculty can also review and compare the full text online without having to wait for a print desk copy. CourseSmart is an online eTextbook, which means users need to be connected to the Internet in order to access it. Students can also print sections of the book for maximum portability. For further details, contact your sales representative or go to www.coursesmart.com.