

▪ **Book Reviews in Brief**

Following are reviews of some new books related to the field of psychology, caregiving and the like. Most books, if not all, can be purchased on Amazon.com or from the noted publishers.

***A Sacred Walk: Dispelling the Fear of Death and Caring for the Dying* (A&A Publishing, 2008, ISBN: 978-0-6152458-5-0; \$15.95)**

Reviewed by Susan Frissell, Ph.D.

With the increase of baby boomers becoming caregivers for parents, it's no wonder books are hitting the market that help to navigate the waters of caring for our loved ones. New to book shelves is *A Sacred Walk: Dispelling the Fear of Death and Caring for the Dying* by Donna Authers, an experienced caregiver herself. Authers presents seven different ways caregivers can learn to face their fears and better care for loved ones during their final moments of life.

Authers, who experienced a lot of death throughout her young life, consequently developed a fear of death. Until, that is, she first cared for her beloved grandmother. It was then that she discovered the trials and joys of being present for someone during the last months of life. "My grandmother's faith strengthened my own," notes the author, as she recalls how caring for someone who is dying taught her so much about living a full life.

Authers went from caring for her grandmother to serving as caregiver for many others over the years, both as a family member and as a representative of the Stephen Ministry, various hospice organizations, counselors, social workers and clergy. Realizing there are two groups for whom care is given: the person receiving care and the people who are giving the care, Authers reminds her readers not to lose sight of taking care of themselves.

An intimate and profound experience, says Authers, taking care of the dying and helping someone make the transition is very much a privilege. She does not offer any single, one-size-fits-all method for caregiving. Rather, she offers up what she has learned from years of opportunities of caring for others in their final days and months. Although not an "easy" experience by any means, says Authers, it is one you cannot afford to miss.

A Sacred Walk is a book with a spiritual message, revolving around faith. The author covers the seven common fears of dying and how caregivers can conquer them when dealing with death and dying. Those seven common fears include the fear of the process of dying; the fear of loss of control; the fear of the loss of a loved one; the fear of others' reactions; the fear of isolation; the fear of the unknown and, the fear that the person's life will have been meaningless. Authers offers suggestions about how to dispel these seven fears, allaying the trepidation many of us have around death.

The very fact that death will always bring sadness, yet does not have to be characterized by pain and sorrow is a point Authers makes in helping the reader come to some acceptance over what are normal life experiences and normal feelings. Some of the advice she gives includes:

Practice being a "caregiver" in everyday life by offering support to those around you;

Remember, you need care too;

Hospice is for the living. Because the dying process can last for weeks or months, hospice is there to offer support to family and friends, so take advantage of their consistent and reliable support network.

Don't treat death as a secret. No matter how strong a dying person's support system may be, he/she still experiences inner fears of dying. It's important they not remain unspoken. Encourage the dying person to identify those fears and help to alleviate them. Educating those involved is also important so they are aware of what to expect;

Anticipate what your loved one needs;

Harness the power of forgiveness;

Practice "good grief." Don't try to avoid the feelings of grief that accompany the loss of a loved one. Instead, learn to grieve well. By embracing the feelings of pain, sorrow, loss and hurt, you will be able to embrace life again with a stronger faith.

Authers also presents the nine "from-the-heart-answers" your dying loved one would like to be able to give you. Her style is "folksy," yet serious and thorough. *A Sacred Walk* is a must read for any Baby Boomer who is lucky enough to still have a living parent or aged relative to care for. Authers' book is a compilation of not only her own experiences but of suggestions from men and women who have passed various milestones on their "sacred walks."