

BEING MORTAL: BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CREATED BY THE [UNC UNIVERSITY LIBRARY WEBSITE](#).

In *Being Mortal*, Gawande, a practicing surgeon, addresses his profession's ultimate limitation, arguing that quality of life is the desired goal for patients and families. Gawande offers examples of freer, more socially fulfilling models for assisting the infirm and dependent elderly, and he explores the varieties of hospice care to demonstrate that a person's last weeks or months may be rich and dignified. (*Blurb taken from MacMillan Publishers website.*)

Ten Discussion Questions

1. This book blends personal narratives and anecdote with facts and statistics drawn from research. How does this affect your reading of the text? What stories or facts had the most impact on you as a reader?
2. How have the central issues of *Being Mortal* (i.e., mortality, end-of-life care, aging, and death) affected your life?
3. Recalling the story of Lou Sander and his daughter Shelley and the conflicts Shelley faces as she navigates caring for her father, how would you handle (or have you handled) caring for an older relative?
4. What are the author's main critiques of nursing homes? What do you think about the tensions between keeping older adults safe and helping them live their best lives?
5. Discussing mortality can be uncomfortable. How has reading *Being Mortal* changed or redefined your feelings about mortality? What uncomfortable conversations might you be willing to have now?
6. Recall the story of Peg Bachelder's decision to try hospice and have as many good days as possible before she died. Peg's definition of a good day meant something very specific to her: teaching music lessons and interacting with her students. What would your good day look like if you were in Peg's situation?
7. Why do people have a difficult time choosing hospice care? How would you know that hospice care was right for you or a family member?
8. The author describes three kinds of relationships doctors have with patients: paternalistic, informative, and interpretive. What kind of relationship are you most comfortable with? What kind do you think is most effective?
9. In chapter eight, Gawande discusses the necessity of courage when faced with aging and sickness. What do you think this means for someone who is older or sick?
10. Throughout the text, Gawande tells the story of his father's illness and death, including the rituals detailed in the final scene? How does this affect your reading of the book? What role does ritual, tradition, or spiritual practice play in your navigation of mortality?

THE [UNC WEBSITE](#) IS A GOOD PLACE TO LOOK FOR RELATED INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOOK, SUCH AS AVAILABLE MEDIA AND POPULAR ARTICLES. LINKS FOR OTHER DISCUSSION GUIDES FOR **BEING MORTAL** CAN ALSO BE FOUND ON THE WEBSITE.