



Advice for Future Corpses and Those Who Love Them
By Sallie Tisdale

Discussion Guide

General Themes & Personal Reflection

1. Tisdale suggests we live in a state of denial about death. Did this book challenge your own deeply held beliefs or fears about mortality? Which fears resonated most with you (pain, loneliness, loss of dignity, the unknown)?
2. What does a "good death" mean to you? Did the author's exploration of various scenarios (e.g., dying at home vs. in a hospital, a sudden death vs. a prolonged illness) change or reinforce your perspective?
3. Tisdale writes, "Dying is not a passive event... it is a verb. An act." What do you think she means by this, and how can a person actively participate in their own dying process?
4. The book covers a wide range of emotions and experiences surrounding death, from the "heartbreaking" to the "joyful." Were there any specific anecdotes or descriptions that you found surprisingly joyful or profound?
5. The author draws on her experiences as a palliative care nurse. How did her professional, yet personal, perspective influence your reading experience? Did her directness make the topics easier or harder to confront?

Practicalities & Planning

6. Tisdale emphasizes the importance of communication and making one's wishes known. What specific conversations do you feel more prepared to have with your loved ones after reading this book?
7. The book discusses various options for post-death body care, from traditional burial/cremation to green burials, resomation*, and more. Which options were new to you, and which seem most appealing for yourself or your family?
8. The book touches on creating a "death plan." Have you made an advance directive or other end-of-life plans? Do you feel motivated to do so now?
9. Tisdale gives practical advice for caregivers, including what to say and what *not* to say. What was the most valuable piece of advice you took away for being present with a dying person?

Dignity & Grief

10. The concept of "dignity" in dying is a major theme. Tisdale suggests true dignity comes from an internal attitude, not physical autonomy. Do you agree with her assessment that nothing the human body does naturally while dying is undignified?
11. The author describes grief as a "long march in bad weather" and a "profound disruption," not a linear process. How does this description compare to your own experiences with grief, or your understanding of it?
12. Tisdale mentions that grief is a story that needs to be told repeatedly. How can we, as a society, better support people in their need to tell their story, rather than pressure them to "move on"?
13. The book is heavily influenced by a Buddhist perspective on impermanence. How did this spiritual viewpoint blend with your own worldview? Did it offer a new way of thinking about life and loss?

Final Thoughts

14. The subtitle includes "and Those Who Love Them." In what ways is this book as much for the living and the grieving as it is for the "future corpses"?
15. The book is filled with moments of dark humor and a healthy dose of irreverence. What were some of your favorite dry or funny observations that helped lighten the mood when discussing such heavy topics?
16. Tisdale notes that a good playlist can be essential for the final moments or memorial services. If you had to pick one song to be played at your funeral or celebration of life right now, what would it be?
17. If you had to summarize the book's core message in one sentence, what would it be?

***Resomation** (a trademarked term) is the process of **alkaline hydrolysis** (also known as water cremation, aquamation, or flameless cremation), an environmentally friendlier alternative to traditional flame cremation or burial. It uses water and an alkaline solution (potassium hydroxide) to accelerate the natural decomposition process.