

Communicating at the End of Life

"*Communicating at the End of Life* views out-patient hospice care through the eyes of a doctoral student doing ethnography by volunteering. The book offers an honest record of what volunteer visits feel like, moment by moment. New hospice volunteers and volunteer-coordinators will find the book of particular interest." —Arthur W. Frank, University of Calgary

"This is an account of Elissa Foster's moving experiences as a hospice volunteer, focusing in particular on communication and drawing on many stories of her experiences of being with dying people. It also reflects a critical engagement with a wide range of existing academic literature derived from sociological, anthropological and other kinds of studies of dying and hospice care. In bringing these two areas of experience and scholarship together, the author has produced a significant and insightful work, likely to be of great value to people involved both in hospice care and in developing academic perspectives on this. I congratulate the author on her achievement." —Clive Seale, Brunel University

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Communicating at the End of Life: Finding Magic in the Mundane

By Elissa Foster



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COMMUNICATING AT THE END OF LIFE

Finding Magic in the Mundane

ELISSA FOSTER

"This book offers extraordinary insight into the emotions and surprising beauty of dying experiences. Foster strikes just the right balance between personal experience and empirical rigor." —Athena du Pre', University of West Florida

This enlightening volume provides first-hand perspectives and ethnographic research on communication at the end of life, a topic that has gone largely understudied in communication literature. Author Elissa Foster's own experiences as a volunteer hospice caregiver form the basis of the book. *Communicating at the End of Life* recounts the stories of Foster and six other volunteers and their communicative experiences with dying patients, using communication theory and research findings to identify insights on the relationships they form throughout the process. What unfolds is a scholarly examination of a subject that is significant to every individual at some point in the life process.

Organized chronologically to follow the course of Foster's involvement with hospice and the phases of the study, the book opens with Part 1, providing background and contextual information to help readers understand subsequent stories about communication between volunteers and patients. Part 2 of the volume emphasizes the adjustments required by the volunteers as they entered the world of hospice and the worlds of the patients. Part 3 underscores the importance of improvisation and finding balance within the role of volunteer—in particular how to be fully present for patients as well as their family members. The volume concludes with Part 4, which addresses how volunteers coped with the death of their patients and what they learned from the experience of volunteering.

Communicating at the End of Life is appropriate for scholars and advanced students studying personal relationships, health communication, gerontology, interpersonal communication, lifespan communication, and communication & aging. Its unique content offers precious and meaningful insights on the communication processes at a critical point in the life process.

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