



Choosing to Die: A Daughter's Story of Supporting Her Mother's End of Life through Assisted Death

Theresa E. Evans

AmazonKDP

(290pp)

979-899326633-6

About what it's like to watch and prepare for a loved one's scheduled death, Choosing to Die is a powerful memoir.

Theresa E. Evans's powerful memoir *Choosing to Die* puts a human face on the controversies surrounding medically assisted death.

Leading up to her Catholic mother's death via Canada's Medical Assistance in Dying program, Evans's memoir is raw and revealing, as when Evans recalls how she and her two sisters gathered at their family home in the months before their mother's scheduled departure to reflect, create goodbye rituals, and prepare for her passing. Elsewhere, the book moves between the present and the past, with each chapter revealing more of her mother's often harrowing story and Evans's philosophies around somatic practices and nature, which herein are couched in terms of how her mother's experiences affected her family members' lives.

While discussions of the benefits of medically assisted death are present, the book is most concerned with revealing what it's like to watch and prepare for a loved one's scheduled death. Its considerations of grief are keen, expressed with beauty, calm, and acceptance. Lighthearted moments arise, too, as with memories of Evans's mother being a clown, and with the chapter-opening plant diagrams and descriptions that are reminiscent of vintage textbook aesthetics.

The prose is grounded in uplifting nature analogies. These reflect Evans and her mother's shared love of horticulture, with parallels drawn between botanical and human cell processes. Scientific details are made accessible, and Evans's experiences as a nurse make the book more edifying. Vivid descriptions of the family's house, garden, meals influenced by Evans's paternal Italian heritage, and the seasonal changes are shared in parallel with her mother's demise.

With each chapter functioning as part of a countdown to death, the book's sentimentality is sometimes overpowering. For the most part, though, the book does an able job of capturing both the enormity and the normality of death as a natural life process. Its attention to the collective experiences of Evans's family are emotive, as are its considerations of topics including infant loss and (in brief) sexual assault. And the book moves toward a strategic conclusion in which an image of the women in the family makes their loss feel all the more tangible and moving.

Choosing to Die is an insightful memoir about grief, loss, choice, generational trauma, fear of mortality, and the bonds formed and broken over a lifetime.

TAMARIN CARTER (March 26, 2026)

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