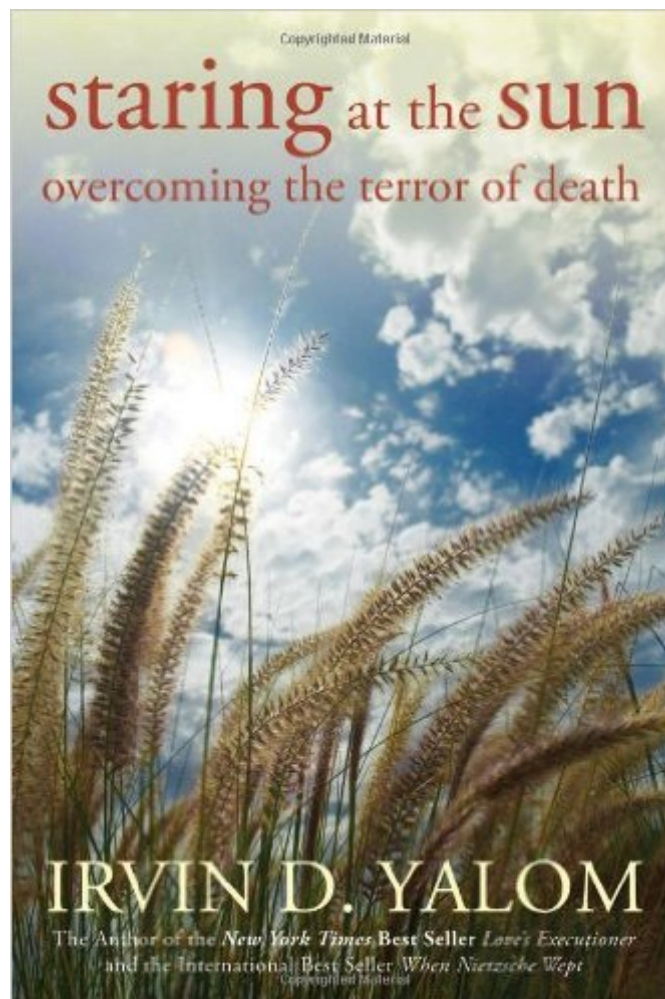


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Staring At The Sun: Overcoming The Terror Of Death



Synopsis

Written in Irvin Yalom's inimitable story-telling style, *Staring at the Sun* is a profoundly encouraging approach to the universal issue of mortality. In this magisterial opus, capping a lifetime of work and personal experience, Dr. Yalom helps us recognize that the fear of death is at the heart of much of our anxiety. Such recognition is often catalyzed by an "awakening experience"—a dream, or loss (the death of a loved one, divorce, loss of a job or home), illness, trauma, or aging. Once we confront our own mortality, Dr. Yalom writes, we are inspired to rearrange our priorities, communicate more deeply with those we love, appreciate more keenly the beauty of life, and increase our willingness to take the risks necessary for personal fulfillment.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Jossey-Bass; 1 edition (April 20, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0470401818

ISBN-13: 978-0470401811

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 1 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 167 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #43,236 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Developmental Psychology #104 in Books > Self-Help > Relationships > Love & Loss #172 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Aging

Customer Reviews

The philosopher Martin Heidegger once remarked that we can live intensely only if we stare death in the face every moment of our lives. Bestselling psychiatrist Yalom (*Love's Executioner*) attempts to put this principle into practice in a sometimes thoughtful, often repetitious book. Drawing on literature and film, as well as conversations with his patients, Yalom demonstrates how the fear of retirement, concerns about changing jobs or moving to another city, or changes in family status (such as the empty nest) are rooted in our deepest, most inescapable fear: of death. Yet, he says, this anxiety can prompt an awakening to life and help us realize our connections to others and our influence on those around us. Through such experiences we can transcend our sense of finiteness and transiency and live in the here and now. In a final chapter, Yalom offers instructions for therapists seeking to help their patients overcome death anxiety. Although in the 1980s Yalom, now

76, provided new insights into the human psyche with his innovative method of existential psychotherapy, this book recycles well-known philosophical insights, but Yalom's humane, calm voice may bring them to a new audience. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The idea that the anxiety of facing death can prompt an awakening to life strikes a powerful chord * BOOKSELLER * Unlike many psychotherapists, Yalom writes like a dream * OXFORD TIMES *

This book was quoted in another book I just finished reading and I downloaded a sample first. Before I finished the sample, I bought the book. I was recently sick and had no medical diagnosis to my symptoms. An intense fear of death and dying arose several times during my sickness. Two such episodes were so powerful, I felt consumed by fear of dying daily. I wouldn't let myself go to sleep on some nights. When I started reading this book, I first was scared even more. All this death talk!! However, I could not stop reading! I was obsessed with reading more and just dealt with the fear. Now, that I've finished the book, I feel so much more peace, relief that there are many, countless, people who have felt what I have been feeling. That my fears are natural progression in life and not death premonitions. I really like the questions in the Afterward and will go back over time to answer these for myself and write them down. Thank you Dr. Yalom.

Should be recommended reading for everyone! Brilliant discussion of the topic, and ultimately comforting!

One of the best books I have read. Essentially, it helps you deal with issues you might have regarding death. If you have death anxiety which does not let you get rid of some things in the back of your mind then you should take a look. The book reads from the point of view of a therapist who has dedicated time to help people get rid of their fear of death. Not a boring read. Therapy for a cheap price.

Understanding the truth about our mortality is the best way to lead a more authentic and meaningful life. Dr. Yalom, with his personal stories and professional psychiatric case histories, addresses this simple but terrifying reality with grace, humor, and brilliance!

This book... if I had only had it much sooner in my life. Probably the first time in my life I would call

one book profound. I highly recommend it and its hard to put down. What a gift.

Well, this is something Aaron Beck missed out. (According to Wikipedia he is 88. He was frail and seemed to have some age-related cognitive decline when I saw a training video of him a few years ago). "I'm going to die one day:" why wasn't that listed as a core belief? Maybe because it's true. Positive thinking is my number one CBT pet hate. I remember an early, childhood realization that I was going to die one day. I noticed that you (children) had baby teeth, then adult teeth, then false teeth, then, then you died. One of my children fears dying. Don't know about the others. My father has great religious faith and he still fears dying. This book/CD is good for the therapist and good for everyone else, too. I'd get the CD over the book to save the time reading it. I have not checked, but I do not think that it is read by the author, but is read by someone who does voice work.

I was looking for a secular humanist book on death that would be helpful to an 89 year old friend. It's a tall order to expect existential explanations to compete with the solace offered by the heaven myth that I don't believe a word of. This book fits the bill quite well, but only in the last half. The first half is geared toward those of any age who have anxieties that prevent them from living a full life. At the root of these anxieties, the author asserts, is the fear of death. Yalon uses dream therapy in search of an "awakening event." Sounds a lot like being born again, but I can see how it might be effective. Whatever helps therapy is worth trying. My previous attitude about dreams was this: Dreams result from the temporary suspension of brain pattern organization during sleep. The normal inhibitory mechanisms that keep thoughts correctly channelled during wakefulness don't function and all bets are off. Randomness prevails and there's no telling what will emerge. The dreamer may end up in a bar on Mars talking to a shaggy dog that reminds him of the cow his aunt's neighbor (from Iowa) once had, while getting a haircut from a one-eyed Rastafarian. As the same time, dreams do recur in a person, suggesting significance. The general pattern of fleeing from some danger but never quite being caught is widespread among different people - I suppose even in different cultures. Both of these patterns escape the randomness that was the essence of my theory. The (self-described) aging author admits to facing end of life issues himself. Chapter four recruits help from Epicurus, Nietzsche, and many other philosophers. Chapter five is a beautiful essay about escaping the loneliness of death through connections with people, definitely worth passing on (oops, bad word) to my friend. The remaining chapters follow suit. This is an excellent book for those who acknowledge that the conventional view of an afterlife is a myth - instead, your legacy consists of the ripple effects you leave on those you touched during your brief tour on earth. Highly recommended.

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