



# The Art of Conversation Through Serious Illness: Lessons for Caregivers

*Richard McQuellon, Michael Cowan*

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Every day, thousands of people receive a diagnosis of serious, life-threatening illness, and their families and friends suddenly become caregivers. Despite the best of intentions it is not always easy to communicate well under these circumstances, or find deep empathy for something one has never before experienced. When is it best to speak, and when to be silent? How can someone provide real comfort, and how can relationships with loved ones facing serious illness be enhanced in this most difficult time?

This book is about how to be an encouraging caregiver and friend under the most difficult circumstances, when the possibility of death is all too real. The authors believe that open dialogue must not be avoided until the last minute when opportunities will be limited, but that caregivers and loved ones can embrace this time, mortal time, honestly as a way to sensitively and compassionately engage with those for whom a central fact of life is realized--that all of our lives are time-limited.

In *The Art of Conversation Through Serious Illness*, the authors consider how to best listen to and speak with one facing life-threatening illness, with lessons on being a primary conversation partner, becoming properly empathic and receiving empathy, maintaining everyday conversation, using platitudes appropriately, understanding healthy denial, and talking about dying. Offering bedside guidance usually only available to professionals and peppered with insightful anecdotes from the authors' own experiences, this gentle, succinct book is appropriate for anyone going through this uniquely difficult yet universal life experience.

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