



Live Responsibly, Die Thoughtfully
“How To Navigate The Rest Of Your Life With Intention And Grace”
By Johanna Munson. 2024. 90 pages.

Review by K. D. Kragen, KaveDragen Ink., kdkragen.org

Johanna Munson (johannamunson.com), Death Doula, licensed Willow End-Of-Life Educator® (willoweol.com), and CEO of End Of Life Resources LLC, “supports adults in facing inspiring and challenging decisions and conversations around who and what matters most” (p. 81).

This short, well-organized, focused, and clearly written guide begins with Johanna’s story, and then guides one into their own story, laying out four steps for end of life planning: 1) conquering avoidance; 2) overcoming resistance to our mortality; 3) being accountable; 4) living responsibly – that is, living well for yourself *and* for others, for those you love, family, friends, and planning for your death and final disposition (putting your affairs in order).

The book’s calling: “If you don’t choose to live responsibly, you will die irresponsibly” (p. 15-16). The goal: rather than death dividing family, preparing for one’s death can lead toward uniting one’s family and loved ones through difficult times. What a great idea!

Johanna calls her reader to resist the common ‘cultural taboo’ against talking about death and one’s own mortality – and thus avoiding altogether planning for death. Planning for one’s death, by the way, is more than just having your medical physician’s directive posted on your refrigerator (though that’s a good idea). There’s also the need, e.g., for an updated will, and considering preplanned-prepaid funeral arrangements (e.g., Cook Family Funeral Services, cookfamilyfuneralhome.com/plan-ahead).

The primary goal of *Live Responsibly, Die Thoughtfully* is helping one overcome resistance to starting one’s mortality planning journey. Then, having thus started the journey, to guide one along the way. In other words, “overcoming resistance to the idea of death as early as possible is so critical. The sooner you work through the process, the more time you will have to *live* responsibly before you ‘kick the bucket’ responsibly” (p. 43).

“Being Accountable” (Step 3) raises this question: “How do I want to live my life knowing my loved ones will be taken care of because my wishes are clear?” The latter part of the book seeks to guide one through to answering this question, while recognizing that living responsibly will look different for every person. In other words, it is a very personal journey, seeking authentic living, which needs to include being “mortality-aware” (kind of like being spatially aware, but through time, temporal awareness). How empowering such mortality-awareness can be, “to view your mortality in light of opportunity rather than tragedy” (p. 56).

“Living Responsibly” (Step 4) takes the reader not to the end of the journey, but to the real beginning, where now one is well-equipped for the road, and the adventure. Johanna’s guide book walks her reader, in a sense, to the starting line, equipping them for the beautiful and gracious opportunities ahead. *It’s a short read but the journey of a lifetime.*

Live Responsibly, Die Thoughtfully makes an excellent and very practical companion to Amy Getter’s *The Lamaze of Dying: Practicing For The End Of Life* (2010), which examines the Hospice and Palliative Care side of the story, care-giving at the end of life. My review of Amy Getter’s book is available at <https://www.kdkragen.org/kd-reviews.html>.