

## Discussion Questions for **Being Mortal** by Dr Atul Gawande

1. What is the significance of the title of this book? Would you have given it a different title? If yes, what would it be?
2. What are the central ideas discussed in the book? What issues or ideas does the author explore?
3. How do those issues affect your life? How so – directly on a daily basis, or more generally. Now, or sometime in the future?
4. What evidence does Dr Gawande use to support the book's ideas? Is the evidence convincing to you? Give some examples to support your position.
5. What surprised you most about the book? Did your opinion of the book change as you read it? How?
6. Dr. Gawande is fairly harsh in his criticisms of today's assisted living options as well as nursing homes. From your own experiences, would you agree or disagree with his perceptions. Where would you agree? Disagree?
7. Dr Gawande discusses the two different positions of senior adults: The adult child who wants their parent(s) in safe environment and the parent wanting to be independent. Discuss his statement "Assisted living isn't really built for the safety of older people, so much as for the sake of their children." What is your personal experience with this?
8. Have you had experiences with palliative care and/or hospice care? If yes, how would you describe that experience? Have you thought about incorporating that care into your End of Life Planning? Why or why not?
9. In the Coping with Cancer study, it was reported that 2/3 of patients reported having no conversations with their doctors about their goals for End of Life care, despite having on average 4 months from death. How have you, or would you begin conversations with your doctor or the doctor of a family member?
10. The author describes 3 kinds of relationships that doctors have with patients.
  - a. The Paternalistic
  - b. The Informative
  - c. The Interretive

Which kind of relationship do you think our parents were most comfortable with? Which are you most comfortable with? How does this help or hinder discussions of your own End of Life Care planning.

11. Dr Gawande talks about the need for us to have conversations with our family members about serious End of Life issues: The 5 Questions that he feels all people need to address for themselves and as well as talk with their families about are:
  - a. What is your understanding or where you are and of your health (or illness)?
  - b. What are your fears or worries for the future?
  - c. What are your goals and priorities?
  - d. What outcomes are unacceptable to you? What are you willing sacrifice and not?
  - e. What would a good day look like?

Which of these questions have you incorporated into your own or your family's discussions? Which are the hardest questions for you to address? Which are the hardest for you to talk to your family about? Which questions would you feel comfortable talking with your doctor about?

12. How would you describe "a good day" for yourself?