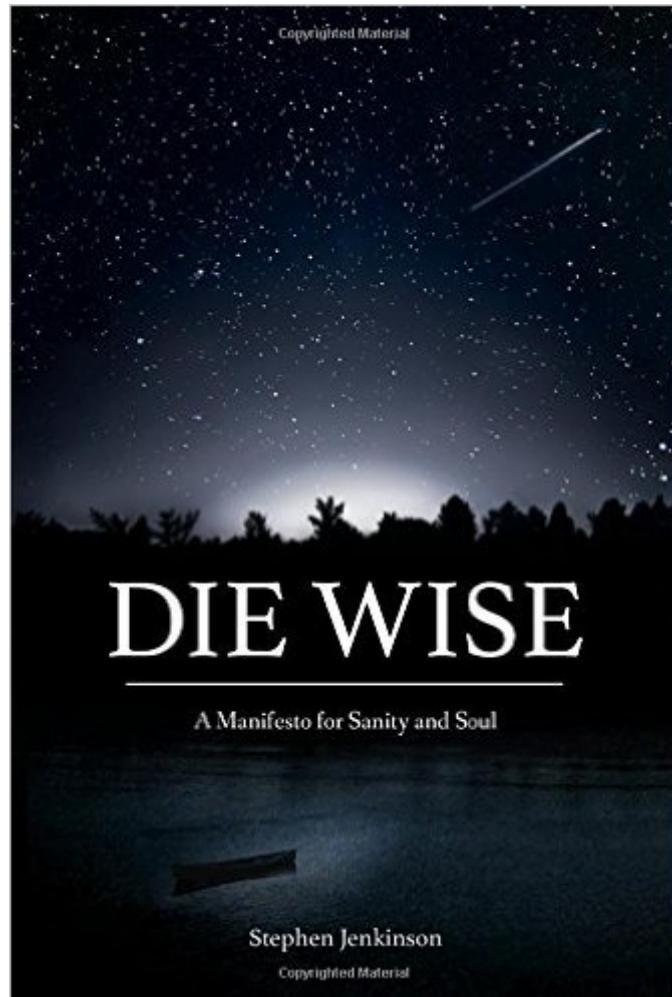


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# Die Wise: A Manifesto For Sanity And Soul



## Synopsis

Die Wise does not offer seven steps for coping with death. It does not suggest ways to make dying easier. It pours no honey to make the medicine go down. Instead, with lyrical prose, deep wisdom, and stories from his two decades of working with dying people and their families, Stephen Jenkinson places death at the center of the page and asks us to behold it in all its painful beauty. Die Wise teaches the skills of dying, skills that have to be learned in the course of living deeply and well. Die Wise is for those who will fail to live forever. Dying well, Jenkinson writes, is a right and responsibility of everyone. It is not a lifestyle option. It is a moral, political, and spiritual obligation each person owes their ancestors and their heirs. Die Wise dreams such a dream, and plots such an uprising. How we die, how we care for dying people, and how we carry our dead: this work makes our capacity for a village-mindedness, or breaks it.

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## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I very much wanted to like this book. I loved The Smoke Gets In Your Eyes and was hoping that this would be a great companion book on the important subject of America's death phobia from a different angle. So let's start with the good: the author clearly knows his subject. His deep commitment to it saturates the pages. He addresses some critical issues surrounding death, dying, and - importantly - struggling to die in our modern culture. He has good stories that have the

potential to movingly speak to the complications we've created for ourselves, and the horrible positions so many people find themselves in. The book has tremendous potential for power, depth, and impact. Unfortunately, it never achieves that potential. It was agonizingly slow to read and hard to process, because the author has an exceptionally idiosyncratic writing style (for lack of a better description). I read a lot, in many different genres, so I'm usually pretty good at adapting to an author's writing style. But here I found myself constantly re-reading sentences - not just twice, but four and five times trying to decipher what the author was saying. Sentences and paragraphs were set up in ways that, although technically grammatically acceptable, were extremely hard to follow, bouncing back and forth between people and subjects. Powerful lessons and subtle emphasis were completely obscured by unnecessarily hard to follow writing. Although everything was genuinely connected, and should have been woven seamlessly together as part of a larger picture, transitions were not smooth. The text didn't jump jaggedly from one topic to another so much as never clearly establish where you were or where you were going.

The excellently titled "Die Wise" by Stephen Jenkinson is a work of passion, poetic sensibility and high intelligence. So why only three stars: well, it may seem I quibble, but let me state my case. First, Jenkinson, despite his deeply rooted prose, tends to overwrite. If you had all the world and time, you could imagine yourself sitting down with an interesting and knowledgeable friend and discussing various aspects of life. All to the good. But let's face it: you're not a participant in this "discussion." You are an audience member. You have no input and are at the mercy of whatever the speaker (Jenkinson) wishes to throw into the mix. If he takes a left turn and you want to go right, too bad. For example, he announces that he will tell a story. Fine. But more than 29 lines later he is still telling you what a story is, what it stands for, how it changes, matters and expresses. In delightful prose, perhaps, but somewhat off the point of the book. Here is a lovely part of it, though: " . . . stories that can only be told when the land sleeps under snow, when the saplings snap, when the night sky is so blue black that the stars are like ragged holes dug through from the other side to let the light of the Other World into this one for a time." See what I mean? Glorious, but off the mark. Second, he tends to objectify medical personnel, using them to make his point without regard to their humanity. Perhaps he doesn't mean to do this, but it comes across that way. Third, somebody, either Jenkinson or someone at North Atlantic Books made the really stupid decision to print the book in small, gray print. I can't tell you how difficult it is to read! My eyes were aching and watering after 25 pages.

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