

***Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande**

Discussion Questions from Reading Group Guides

1. Why do we assume we will know how to empathize and comfort those in end-of-life stages? How prepared do you feel to do and say the right thing when that time comes for someone in your life?
2. What do you think the author means when he says that we've "medicalized" mortality?
3. What surprising facts did you discover about the physiology of aging?
4. Did you read Alice Hobson's story as an inspiring one, or as a cautionary tale?
5. What does it mean to you to treat someone with serious infirmities as a person and not a patient?
6. What realities are captured in the story of Lou Sanders and his daughter, Shelley, regarding home care? What conflicts did Shelley face between her intentions and the practical needs of the family and herself?
7. What do you fear most about the end of life? How do you think your family would react if you told them, "I'm ready"? How do we strike a balance between fear and hope, while still confronting reality?
8. Our society seems to favor attempts to "fix" health problems, no matter the odds of their success. Why do you think it's so difficult for doctors and/or families to refuse or curtail treatment? How should priorities be set?
9. What is your attitude toward old age? Is it something to avoid thinking about, or a stage of life to be honored? Do you think most people are in denial about their own aging?
10. Discuss the often-politicized end-of-life questions raised in the closing chapters of *Being Mortal*. If you had to make a choice for a loved one between ICU and hospice, what would you most want to know from them? What would you be willing to endure for the possibility of more time?
11. As the author learns the limitations of being Dr. Informative, how did your perception of doctors and what you want from them change? What would you want from your doctor if you faced a serious illness?
12. How was your reading affected by the book's final scene, as Dr. Gawande fulfills his father's wishes? How do tradition and spirituality influence your concept of what it means to be mortal?