



Discussion Guide for *Near the Exit*

1. Have you ever visited a place that made you think about mortality? If so, what about it made you reflect on issues of life and death?
2. Which of Erickson's journeys did you find most thought-provoking? Why?
3. What events in your life have forced you to confront your own mortality?
4. Erickson quotes author Richard Rohr as saying you don't want to leave your spiritual homework until the night before the test. For you, what might that spiritual homework include?
5. Who in your life has been a role model for how to die well? What made their death a good death?
6. Are you afraid of dying? Why or why not?
7. What do you think happens after we die?
8. Erickson writes, "While a terminal diagnosis frequently jolts people into contemplating spiritual questions, aging often happens so slowly that we can easily miss the chance to learn from it." Do you think this is true? If so, what are the spiritual lessons to be learned from aging?
9. Has your perspective on mortality changed as you've grown older?
10. What rituals or practices do you think would help people in our society better deal with mortality? Have you learned anything from this book that you'd like to incorporate in your own life?
11. Erickson describes some of the beliefs relating to ancestors in cultures across the globe. Have you ever felt that you've received a message from someone who has died?
12. Does the Mexican Day of the Dead holiday appeal to you in any way? Why or why not?
13. How can faith communities better support and care for people at the end of their lives?

14. Have you ever tried to meditate? Do you think meditation can be a tool for dealing with aging and preparing for death?

15. Do you have an advance health care directive? Have you known people who didn't have one and had difficulties at the end of their lives as a result?

16. Erickson writes that she believes funerals are for the living, not the deceased. Do you agree? What rituals would you like at the end of your life, if any?

17. What cultural differences have you observed in relation to end-of-life issues and customs?

18. Of the people in Erickson's book, who do you think has the healthiest attitude toward death?