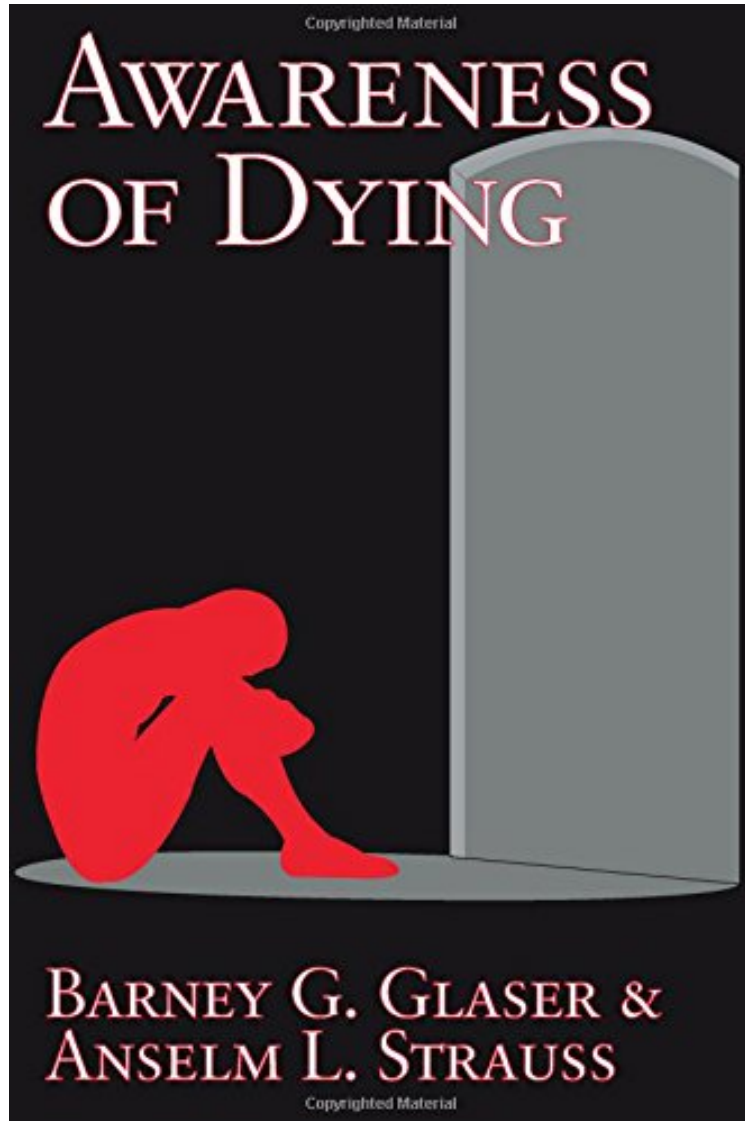


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## Awareness of Dying

*Barney G. Glaser, Anselm L. Strauss*

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**Barney G. Glaser, Anselm L. Strauss : Awareness of Dying** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Awareness of Dying:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. If you wish to answer why people shun or otherwise distance themselves from you in this time of need, the theoretical discourseBy saxmanleeWhat I find most interesting about this book is that I have already experienced the phenomenon. When I was eleven, I was shielded by my parents and doctors as to the true nature of my uncles illness. I also figured out that my uncle also did not know he was dying. I overheard a conversation between my mother and grandmother, explaining the shouting my uncle did on his

ambulance ride to the hospital where he later died. He never knew he was in liver failure. At sixteen, my grandfather was dying from kidney disease in the hospital on the hospice floor. This time I knew he was dying. In fact everyone but my grandfather knew he was dying. He was a jovial, positive man, and I now believe that he was pretending he was not really sick so as to enjoy his last few weeks and not spend his time looking at sad, depressed faces. His attitude helped us be around him. I also remember noticing how attentive the nurses were with him. Both of these experiences are given names and explained in *Awareness of Dying*. *Awareness of Dying* was originally published in 1965 by Glaser and Strauss and revised in 2009. This book is a substantive theory book dealing with medical disclosure to terminally ill patients. It is a study of awareness contexts as they pertain to dying in hospitals. Though someone who experiences unexpected loss may not find this to be a good, quick self-help book, it can help explain why people react the way they do to someone's expected loss. If you wish to answer why people shun or otherwise distance themselves from you in this time of need, the theoretical discourse in this book can provide needed wisdom. Glaser and Strauss note that medicine is vastly improving. Due to these improvements, it will be more common for an American to die in the hospital versus their bed at home. This phenomenon will create for the dying person, family, nurse, and doctors an awareness that will become more and more central to what happens as people pass from life to death in American hospitals. The researchers were seeking to understand four situations of dying in the hospital. In the first situation, family, doctors, and nurses know the death will be timely but patients do not individually recognize their own death. In the second situation, patients think they know what is going on and ask their family, nurses, and doctors questions, trying to elicit certain answers. In the third situation, each person knows that the patient is dying but all parties mutually ignore the status. In this situation you usually find a young person (i.e., someone in their thirties or forties) who is not willing to accept this fate. In the fourth situation, everyone knows death is imminent and everyone is comfortable talking about it. The fourth situation is usually an elderly person who has lived their life and accomplished what they had wanted. If you experienced any of the above four situations, you may want to read this book. Glaser and Strauss were able to develop the overarching theory of Awareness Contexts. Out of Awareness Contexts came four types, which each correspond to the situation analyzed. They are closed awareness, suspected awareness, mutual pretense awareness, and open awareness. In order to place a person in each context, Glaser and Strauss interviewed dying patients, family members, doctors, and nurses. They looked at the cues, tones, and body language to determine which situation a person falls into. They realized that once rapport is established, the family and hospital parties will play their parts. It is the patient who is vulnerable and will often cross the awareness boundaries out of fear. However, Glaser and Strauss discovered that in some situations (i.e., the person is not considered socially desirable), the nurses and doctors will not put up any veils or pretend that everything is alright. In these situations, hospital staff members may be found freely discussing the patient's fate without any concerns of who will overhear. In other situations (i.e., a young child or routine surgery), where there was no expectation of death, death came as a shock and seemed to temporarily paralyze the staff from performing routine tasks. With later publications of this book, the non-expectation of death became the medical malpractice area. Glaser and Strauss also found that nurses had difficulty with young children and/or people their own age because this was not the normal social order of death. However, for these two types of dying people, the doctors seemed to distance themselves so as not to appear affected.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. *Awareness of dying, awareness of good research* By Dr. Jones First, let me state that I only decided to purchase this book because of its place as an exemplar of qualitative research. I did not buy the book because I have an interest in medical affairs. I only mention this because I had no way to judge that aspect of the book. Anyway, this book is a useful example of how to write up qualitative social science. Its strength rests in the fact that the authors are able to create with much success the details associated with the experience, as well as the meaning of these events for those involved. This is an important step in making one's research relevant for those reading it, and this book's authors get it. All in all, one of the more enjoyable examples of this type of research.

Should patients be told they are dying? How do families react when one of their members is facing death? Who should reveal that death is imminent? How does hospital staff—doctors, nurses, and attendants—act toward the dying patient and his family?

This well-written book reports the results of intensive field work in six California hospitals to explore some of the social aspects of dying. Sociologists are provided with valuable research, related to an integrated substantive theory with wide generalizability; they will also find some discussions concerning theory in general; and the book contributes to the sociology of knowledge as well as medical sociology. On a societal level, the book should help to erase some of the taboos surrounding death as a social topic. On the personal level, the authors provide occasional suggestions as to how the patient and the family might be more effective in their efforts to secure information for and from the medical personnel with whom they interact. Glenn M. Vernon, *American Sociological* [T]he present volume is of interest to chaplains, social workers, counselors, as well as medical personnel, there is sufficient reference to intrafamily and family-hospital relationships to make it useful to teachers who see death education as an important part of family life

education. [T]he book is written in non-technical language and could be used in adult education and junior and senior years of high school as well as for more advanced study. Rose M. Somerville, *The Family Coordinator Awareness of Dying* is an attempt to take cognizance of this development in our American hospitals, and in doing so the authors, who studied intensively six hospitals in the San Francisco Bay area, hope to contribute to a more rational and compassionate treatment of our dying citizens. Their book is certainly a most welcome and important contribution to the development of such treatment and should be required reading for all medical personnel concerned with this aspect of medical service. This reviewer believes their scheme has much merit, for never before has he read such a clear, explicit, and insightful account of this multifaceted problem. Robert Fulton, *American Journal of Sociology*

About the Author Barney G. Glaser is founder of the Grounded Theory Institute in California, and has also been a research sociologist at the University of California Medical Center, San Francisco. He is the author or co-author of several books, including *The Grounded Theory Perspective II* and *Experts versus Laymen: A Study of the Patsy and the Subcontractor*, published by AldineTransaction. Anselm Strauss (1916-1996) was an American medical sociologist and professor at the University of Chicago. He was elected fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1980.