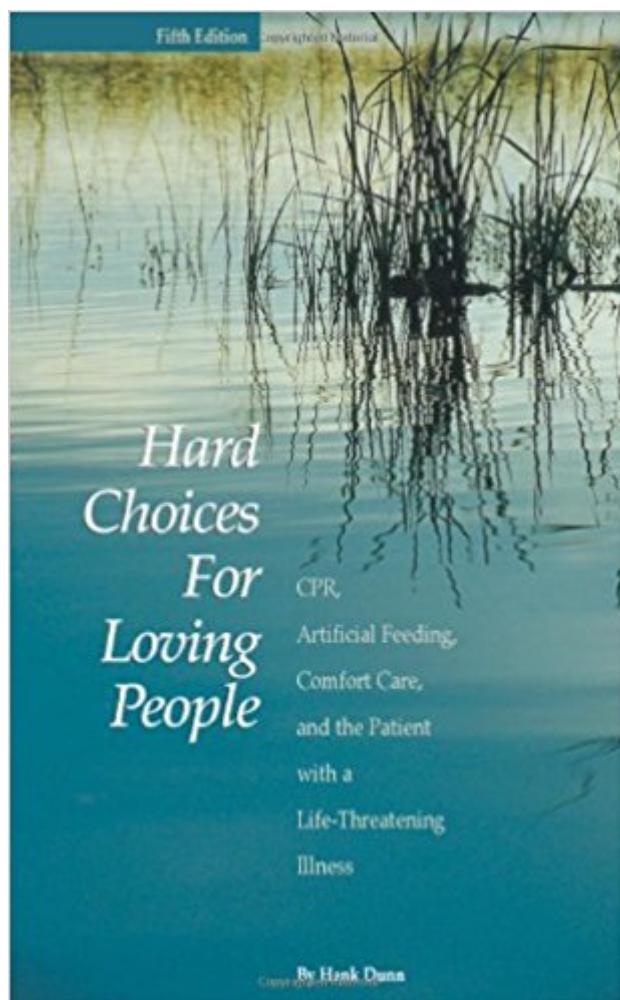


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# Hard Choices For Loving People: CPR, Artificial Feeding, Comfort Care, And The Patient With A Life-Threatening Illness, 5th Ed.



## Synopsis

Hard Choices for Loving People: CPR, Artificial Feeding, Comfort Care and the Patient with a Life-Threatening Illness, Fifth Edition is a guide to help patients and families with end-of-life decisions. Millions of people have been helped and comforted by the common sense and practical advice found in these pages. Hank Dunn draws on his extensive experience as a chaplain in a nursing home, hospice program and hospital. In Hard Choices he shares stories of many of the patients and families he has helped guide through this most difficult and important time in their lives. He also has conducted a thorough search of the medical literature citing almost 150 journal articles of research into the topics discussed in the book. In the very first pages the reader is encouraged to first consider the goals of medical care. What is the appropriate medical goal for this patient at this phase of life? Is it to (1) cure, (2) stabilize functioning or to (3) prepare for a comfortable and dignified death? The first chapter deals with CPR, resuscitation attempts. Research has shown that this treatment offers little if any medical benefit to patients who have more than one or two medical problems, who cannot live independently or those who are in the final stages of a terminal disease. Chaplain Dunn is convinced that patients in those conditions or their families choose ineffective resuscitation attempts for emotional and spiritual reasons, not because the treatment offers hope of saving the life. The second chapter addresses the issues surrounding artificial feeding tubes. Receiving nutrition and hydration through a tube helps many patients who have lost the ability to swallow. Some of these patients live otherwise normal lives except for receiving food and water through a tube. But for some people the treatment offers little if any benefit. There is a growing body of research that clearly shows that an artificial feeding tube for an advanced dementia patient (like Alzheimer's) has no medical benefit and can actually harm the patient. Dunn also reviews the evidence supporting the fact that dying without artificial hydration is the compassionate, natural and peaceful way to leave this world. Hospice, respirators, dialysis, antibiotics, hospitalization and pain control are other medical treatments covered in Hard Choices for Loving People. In several places throughout the book special attention is given to making these decisions for children and for people with dementia. The concluding pages of the book address the emotional and spiritual concerns at the end of life. People of any faith or of no faith tradition have found these words helpful. Chaplain Dunn feels the journey at the final stages of life is a journey to letting go and letting be. The Spanish version of this book is titled *Decisiones Difíciles para los Seres Queridos*.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

Since 1983, Hank Dunn has been ministering to patients at the end of their lives and their families. He served as a nursing home chaplain at Fairfax Nursing Center and as a staff chaplain for the Hospice of Northern Virginia, now Capital Hospice. Chaplain Dunn is a graduate of the University of Florida and received his Master of Divinity degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. After serving 5 years as a youth minister at a very traditional church in Macon, Georgia, he moved to the DC area to be a part of the very nontraditional Church of the Saviour. He worked a year as a carpenter and for 4 years directed an inner city ministry before moving into the chaplaincy in 1983. He is a past president of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. He has served on the Ethics Committee at the Reston Hospital Center and the Chaplaincy Advisory Board at the Loudoun Hospital Center. He continues to volunteer as a chaplain at the Loudoun Hospital and at the Loudoun Adult Medical Psychiatric Services. For several years, Chaplain Dunn volunteered at Joseph's House, a home for formerly homeless men with AIDS. He is also a Volunteer Pastoral Associate at his faith community, Vienna Baptist Church, where he is especially involved in the retreat ministry at the Lost River Retreat Center in West Virginia. To help him explain end-of-life decisions to patients and families, he wrote a booklet to hand to them so they could reflect on the issues discussed. As an afterthought, he sent the book out to other institutions to see if they would be interested in purchasing it for the people they serve. First published in 1990, Hard Choices for Loving People has sold over 3,000,000 copies, and is being used in more than 5,000 hospitals, nursing homes, faith communities, and hospice programs nationwide. His second booklet, Light in the Shadows: Meditations While Living with a

Life-Threatening Illness, Second Edition was released in 2005. This is a collection of reflections on the emotional and spiritual concerns at the end of life. Hank Dunn is a frequent speaker on topics related to the end of life. He enjoys backpacking, kayaking, and hiking.

If someone you love is on the downward slide with dementia or another fatal illness, and you are agonizing about the kind, wise, way to proceed with possibly life-extending medical treatments (or not), this is the one book to buy and read. I treasure it and recommend it frequently. Hank Dunn has a firm moral compass, a wealth of experience as a hospice chaplain, and a clear, reassuring, and simple prose style. It's important to remember that many seemingly miraculous medical technologies have enormous downsides and can cause, rather than reduce, our suffering. No need to do this.

"The generations alive today are the first generations faced with making such difficult choices about potentially life-prolonging medical decisions." (p. 6) As a hospital chaplain, the author has 30 years of experience ministering to patients at the end of their lives. He first wrote this small booklet to give to patients & families as a source of information about medical treatments & choices. The 5th edition (2009) here has been expanded to 80 pages. After an introduction which discusses the goals of medical care, the 5 chapters are 1. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation; 2. Artificial Hydration & Nutrition; 3. Cure Sometimes--Comfort Always: Hospice, Palliative Care, & the "Comfort Care Only" Order; 4. Treatments to Consider--Practical Help for Decisionmaking; & 5. The Journey to Letting Be. Clicking to Look Inside at the old-fashioned Table of Contents allows us to see not only the chapter headings, but also the contents of each chapter. Dunn presents the pros & cons of these medical treatments in clear, simple language. I am grateful to learn this info. before I have an urgent need for it.

I loved this book for courageously and compassionately "laying it on the line" about end of life decisions. It is eye-opening rather than depressing to read. I pounced on this book when I found it at a health providers office. It was extremely welcome, because I had tried and failed to get anything but vague summary information from medical and legal sources. Finally, here are the straight forward details and likely outcomes for each individual life-extending option. This book gave me the information I needed to refine my advance directive. I even bought additional copies to give to my loved ones so they will understand the reasons behind my wishes and not feel guilty about withholding care. I recommend it to anyone writing an advance directive, and to health practices and

hospitals who want their patients to be more informed.

This short (75 pages), informative book by Hank Dunn, a healthcare chaplain, presents clear and concise answers to the families of those nearing death. He notes that prior generations did not have feeding tubes, ventilators or CPR Â¢â€œ so they were not faced with the choices facing many today as they age. He describes the issues in using these, pro and con, and offers clear steps to choosing the best route in a particular situation. The final chapter The Journey to Letting Be (23 pages) is the most valuable. This can be helpful to families as well as the person who is dying. He notes, Â¢â€œWe will die whether we give up, let go or let be.Â¢â€œ He hopes dying patients will have Â¢â€œa sense of being upheld by a loving God.Â¢â€œ

To me as a Chaplain...this is a must-have book...written by a very experienced Chaplain. I use it as reference when speaking to groups about the hard choices we find ourselves or our loved ones facing when approaching end of life. I worked as a Respiratory Therapist for many years before entering Chaplaincy...I've been a bedside caregiver witnessing the dilemmas first hand. I can say that the authors years of experience are evident in his discussions. I bought an extra copy of this book for a Chaplain friend.

It's hard to say that I "loved" a book about death and dying, but for anyone facing difficult end of life decisions, this book is an excellent reference. My husband's hospice counselor gave me the book, then I gave my copy to my husband's son to help explain some of our decisions. I got another one when my cousin's father went to hospice. I heard it was available on , and so have purchased several to have available for anyone other loved ones that find themselves in similar situations. It addresses many questions that I had from a Christian perspective.

I am a former Hospice Nurse and am presently a spiritual volunteer at our local hospital. The need for this kind of information is tremendous and invaluable to all persons - before one faces imminent death. Understanding ones choices and making them known to their loved ones greatly reduces the stress of caring for someone with a terminal disease. Well written and easy to understand. Must reading for everyone!

There are millions of how to books for everything from archery to yoga, and least 10,000 books about childbirth and child-rearing, but almost nothing about the end of life. No one really wants to

talk about feeding tubes and living wills and do not resuscitate orders. Dunn has written a powerful book about the things that one wants to discuss— but everyone needs to. Hard Choices opened up a very tough discussion for my family and gave us a framework to keep the conversation from “going off the rails.”•Strongly recommended for families trying to cope with what the hardest decisions they will ever make.

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