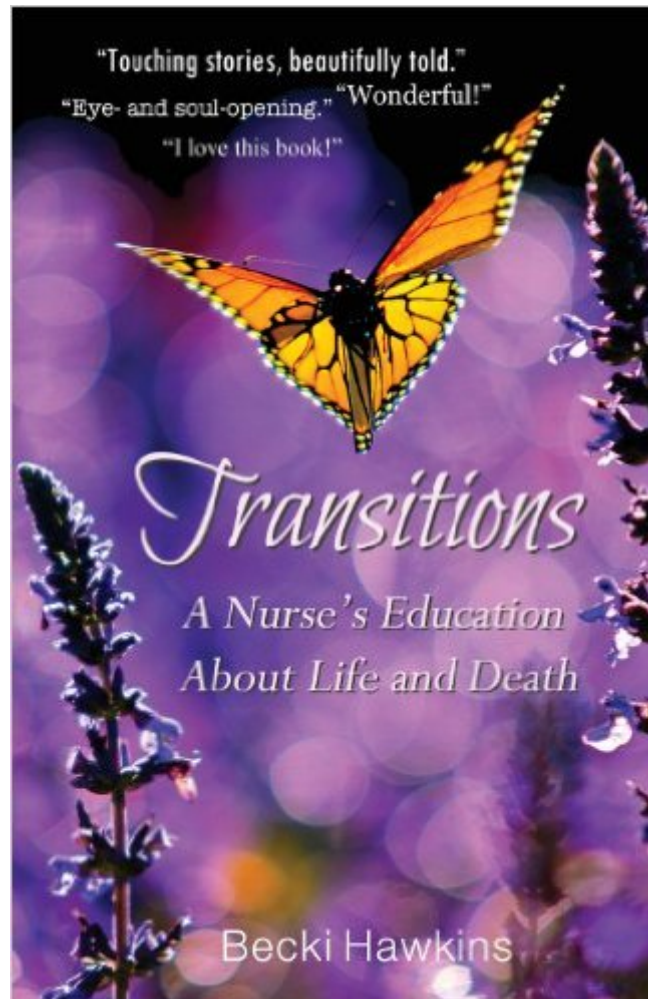


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Transitions: A Nurse's Education About Life And Death



Synopsis

Transitions: A Nurse's Education about Life and Death is a collection of stories from Becki Hawkins's patients over the past thirty years of her career. She started off as a nurse's aide, became a registered nurse, and began her career in oncology. A couple of years later she also started seeing hospice patients. She also did outpatient oncology nursing, home health/hospice, became a hospice chaplain, and later a hospice volunteer. She now sees patients on a volunteer basis. She began writing a feature column, "Beyond Statistics," for a local newspaper when her husband told her one evening after her shift at work, "Please don't tell me about it. Write it down." The first article was published in 1986. These stories are the patients' stories and their education to Becki as she visited them about the transitions we make in life and in death. Some of them involve patients in the nursing home, others in the hospital or an outpatient setting, and many others in the patients' homes. Some of the patients were strangers, some were friends, some acquaintances, and some were family. You will find humor, heartbreak, wisdom, and frequent spiritual allusions in Transitions. The author reminds us that life is brief and fragile, and laced with story after story of how each of us is "learning" in this place that one patient named "Earth School."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Becki Hawkins has an incredible way with words. Her writing style is so comfortable and genuine that you quickly feel like she is a dear friend. Most of the stories are told in a journalistic style, as an observer relating the experience as directly as possible. Each chapter is only 2 or 3 pages long, yet the reader can envision the entire life story that accompanies of these heartfelt glimpses of lives in

transition. The book is separated into 3 sections. The first is called the Early Years. It covers Becki's initial acclimation to the world of nursing and her many challenges and lessons learned. The second section is called Hospice Gifts. These stories are so incredibly beautiful. With an absolute minimum of words, Becki conveys a wealth of depth. The third section is called Family where she writes about transition experiences with family members. Becki's caring shines through in every story, often simply in the words she chooses and the loving way she tells each story. This is a truly amazingly wonderful book. I can be a picky S.O.B. And I believe it's better to tell the truth than to sugar coat it. You'll have to trust me on that. But when I give high praise, it means something. A close relative of mine is experiencing a real tough patch right now. They just entered hospice care. I don't think I need any extra help dealing with it, but I can tell you this book has made a very positive difference for me in many ways. Another reviewer on Goodreads gave this book 1 star and said she couldn't finish it because she felt it was syrupy and overly religious in tone. I strongly disagree. Becki Hawkins shows respect for all approaches to death, both religious and non-religious.

Becki Hawkins, a hospice nurse and a chaplain, has given us a collection of moving stories in the voices of rural Oklahomans facing death. She has also given us a perspective of hope and confidence in human generosity, courage and compassion. Ms. Hawkins' stories were originally published as a column for a local newspaper. One easily imagines these stories emerging as something of a therapeutic journal at the end of a day's pilgrimage through farm country: fording creeks, fending off attack geese and copperheads one minute, sceptical patients and family members the next. Ms. Hawkins' training and her own nature (I do know her personally, and so will you, if you read this book) helped me see that a chaplain's greatest gift to the dying and the survivors often lies simply in helping to create the space for grief to do its work. One of the best stories ends with her sitting down in a kitchen and folding laundry with the overwhelmed wife of a patient. These stories resist the temptation to dwell on the macabre and the messiness of caring for sick and incapacitated patients, providing a respectful close-up look at living rooms that have been turned into sick rooms, complete with beside toilets, IVs, tables full of syringes and other accoutrements of nursing care. The stories are not those of a clinician but of patients and their families as they begin the ultimate transition: making peace with one another, their infirmities and the inevitable end of this life. Ms. Hawkins writes in the vernacular of the people she serves. Her stories reveal a great comfort with common people of modest means. Her descriptive talent draws the reader into these people's homes and lives with great, yet light-hearted sensitivity.

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