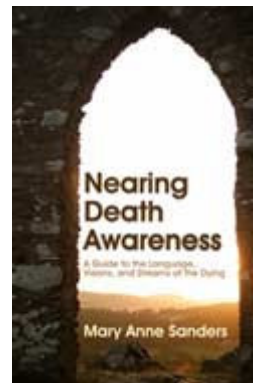


Visions of dying

Nearing Death Awareness: A Guide to the Language, Visions and Dreams of the Dying

Mary Anne Sanders, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007, 128 pages, ISBN 978 1 84310 857 3, £11.99



Accompanying those who dwell in “The Valley of the Shadow of Death” is always a privilege. The final days and hours of a person’s life are precious and of ultimate worth and value. It is important that all those with an interest in the support and care of the dying should attend to the unique individuality of the person approaching their end. We need to ask ourselves how we would like to be attended to and cared for during the last stages of our life.

There are, of course, patterns that emerge from prolonged experience of dying. One of the features of the dying process is a range of experiences which have been gathered together under the concept of “Nearing Death Awareness”. In this book, author describes different types of nearing death awareness (N.D.A.), including visions, dreams and symbolic language. She offers practical guidance for families and carers of the dying and how to respond appropriately and supportively to N.D.A. behaviour.

There are some who are very sceptical about this range of experiences and Saunders does not give any space to their critiques. I wondered also whether there were professionals who had had little or no experience of such visions or dreams and what they might make of some of the experience contained within these pages? At certain points, I found it difficult to enter into what was actually going on for those approaching death, but the experience is handled with care and sensitivity by the author. The book is a useful way in to a complex and contradictory subject.

James Woodward