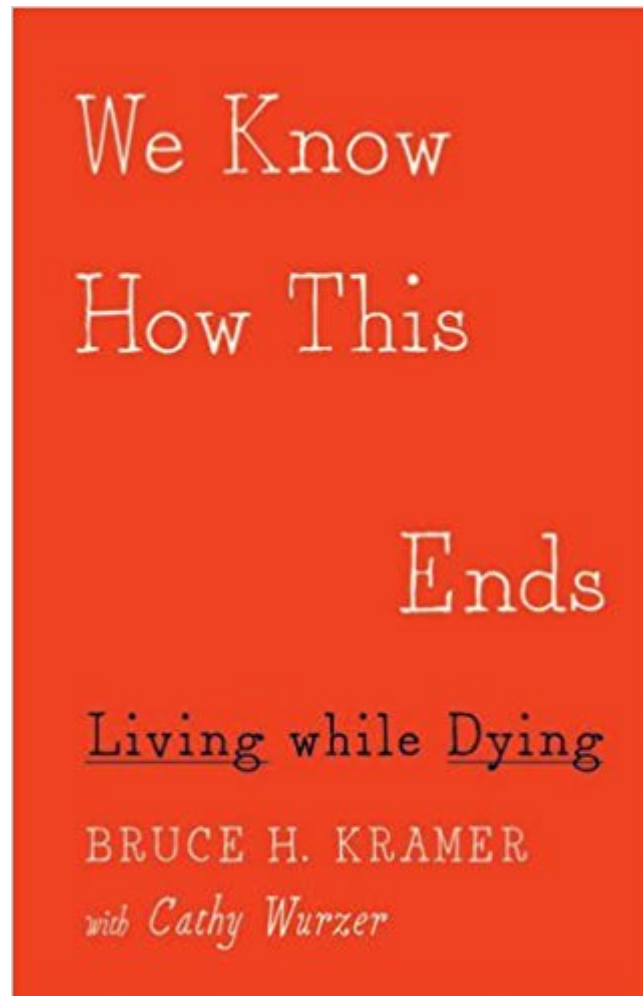




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We Know How This Ends: Living While Dying



Synopsis

2010 had been a very good year for Bruce H. Kramer. But what began as a floppy foot and leg weakness led to a shattering diagnosis: he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. ALS is a cruel, unrelenting neurodegenerative disease where the body's muscles slowly weaken, including those used to move, swallow, talk, and ultimately breathe. There is no cure; ALS is a death sentence. When death is a constant companion, sitting too closely beside you at the dinner table, coloring your thoughts and feelings and words, your outlook on life is utterly transformed. The perspective and insights offered in *We Know How This Ends* reveal this daily reality and inspire a way forward for anyone who has suffered major loss and for anyone who surely will. Rather than wallowing in sadness and bitterness, anger and denial, Kramer accepted the crushing diagnosis. The educator and musician recognized that if he wanted a meaningful life, embracing his imminent death was his only viable option. His decision was the foundation for profound, personal reflection and growth, even as his body weakened, and inspired Kramer to share and teach the lessons he was learning from ALS about how to live as fully as possible, even in the midst of devastating grief. At the same time Kramer was diagnosed, broadcast journalist Cathy Wurzer was struggling with her own losses, especially the slow descent of her father into the bewildering world of dementia. Mutual friends put this unlikely pair—a journalist and educator—together, and the serendipitous result has been a series of remarkable broadcast conversations, a deep friendship, and now this book. Written with wisdom, genuine humor, and down-to-earth observations, *We Know How This Ends* is far more than a memoir. It is a dignified, courageous, and unflinching look at how acceptance of loss and inevitable death can lead us all to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

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"Security and immortality are both superstitions; the best we can do is make an adventure of our lives. In this exquisite book, Bruce H. Kramer finds adventure the most unlikely of places: the death sentence that is ALS. *We Know How This Ends* is a moving tale that teaches us more about living well than any self-help book ever can." [Å](#) •Dan Buettner, New York Times bestselling author of *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who* [Å](#) [Å](#)ve Lived the Longest [Å](#) "What comes through most powerfully in Kramer's story is not the pain but the quiet surge of gratitude and joy he has discovered in confronting his imminent death." [Å](#) •Next Avenue, Twin Cities Public Television "The revelatory journey that Bruce H. Kramer and Cathy Wurzer take us on is full of insight, wisdom, sorrow [Å](#) •and joy. This beautiful book should be required reading for all patients, caregivers, and clinicians to better understand that there can be growth and peace and exuberant life even while dying." [Å](#) •Jon Hallberg, M.D., University of Minnesota "As Bruce [Å](#) [Å](#)s yoga teacher, student, and friend, I have witnessed the story behind this magnificent tale of becoming. I have watched his strength, his grace, and his willingness to love. Bruce [Å](#) [Å](#)s prose is courageous and penetrating, elegant and unprecedented. This book will change your life." [Å](#) •Matthew Sanford, author of *Waking: A Memoir of Trauma and Transcendence* "Bruce H. Kramer turns his diamond-hard diagnosis like a prism, reflecting light and joy in surprising places. We need to hear this story now. The honesty and clarity of Kramer and Cathy Wurzer invite us to consider how we live in the face of impending death or unwanted change." [Å](#) •Susan Allen Toth, author of *No Saints around Here: A Caregiver* [Å](#) [Å](#)s Days

Bruce H. Kramer (1956 [Å](#) [Å](#) 2015) was former dean of the College of Education, Leadership, and Counseling at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was the creator of *The Disease Diary* (<http://diseasediary.wordpress.com>), a popular blog about life with ALS, and coauthor of *Leading Ethically in Schools and Other Organizations*, a realistic look at leadership ethics. The host of Minnesota Public Radio [Å](#) [Å](#)s flagship news program *Morning Edition*, Cathy Wurzer has been broadcasting conversations with Bruce H. Kramer about his ALS experiences since 2011. She is also the cohost of *Almanac* on Twin Cities Public Television, the longest-running weekly public affairs program in the nation.

Eloquent prose. I am at the beginning still but am compelled to alert the reader. I am giving only three stars for one structural point that was confounding. There is a second voice woven into the book with no attribution. Nowhere in the preface did it say Cathy Wurzel, PBS journalist, would also weave her family story into the narrative. I guess I should have noticed the cover was "with..." Once I read online Cathy opens the chapters I reread her excellent Prologue to find where I missed the cue. Beautiful book, but just know when you hit page 4 and there's a woman talking, it's the journalist. I found it really weird....

Reading this book felt much like being let in on an amazing secret. The perspective and insight offered by both authors is beautiful and relatable. I really believe this is a "must read" for everyone. You don't have to have ALS or lose a father or marriage in order to take away something really meaningful. The book is an inspiration to live well and live fully!

This evocative volume contains rich, personal and universal accounts of disruptive, chronic conditions, resiliency and hope. Kramer not only aids the reader in knowing more from the inside about ALS but because he still had his rich mind and deep heart, his comments, as a care-receiver, about caregiving are all the more poignant. The volume deserves a wide reading audience.

Dr. Kramer creates an intense exploration of meaning while his body deteriorates around his highly functioning brain. I ate a box of crackers while reading this book, even though food could not soothe my emotional reactions. What's with a medical professional who simply pronounces the ALS diagnosis and sends Bruce and Ev on their way to multiple referrals? Ev declares that the doctor did not give Bruce even one brochure! What's with a 7:30 a.m. clinic appointment which involves getting up at 4:00 a.m. in order to prepare and drive the distance? The horrors of ALS include no-known-cures although research continues. Dr. Kramer surveys emotional and spiritual remedies as coping mechanisms. He maintains a sense of irony and humor throughout. Then he died, just days before his book was released. The coauthor from Minnesota Public Radio broadens the scope of exploration by looking at Alzheimers Disease - a form of the mind dying while the body functions, at least until the end. Putting all of these perspectives into a cohesive narrative required italics for one author and regular print for Dr. Kramer. I had to pay attention as the voice and situations changed in each chapter. Maybe Dr. Kramer's wife, Ev, will write about lessons-learned as an aide to caregivers, family, and friends of people diagnosed with ALS.

I have stage IV breast cancer. I was initially diagnosed in 2000. I am still here, but I am not as active as I used to be and periodically I think, "this is it". This book was very helpful as he found new ways to normalize as he got weaker. Love is where it is at. His sharing was so helpful and anyone else going through this (though his was ALS), end of life will find this thoughtful and not sappy. I appreciated what he shared.

Courageous and inspiring story. Bruce never loses his strength and optimism. He really demonstrates faith in action.

Beautiful story of life, living, healing and death.

He had a great attitude. Thought it was going to give me a bit more insight in addition to my Hospice training. I did not find that to be so, so as far as that was concerned I was disappointed.

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