



# The Measure of Our Days: A Spiritual Exploration of Illness

*Jerome Groopman*

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## **The Measure of Our Days: A Spiritual Exploration of Illness Jerome Groopman**

With *The Measure of Our Days*, Dr. Jerome Groopman established himself as an eloquent new voice in the literature of medicine. In these eight moving portraits, he offers us a compelling look at what is to be learned when life itself can no longer be taken for granted.

These stories are diverse--from Kirk, an aggressive venture capitalist determined to play the odds with controversial chemotherapy treatments; to Elizabeth, an imperious dowager humbled by a rare blood disease; to Elliott, who triumphs over leukemia and creates for himself a definition of success--but each, in the words of Maggie Scarf, "transmute the misery of terrible suffering into a marvelous celebration of the sweetness of human life." Far from medical case studies, these are spiritual journeys of questioning and self-awareness, embarked on by the physician as well as the patient.

## **The Measure of Our Days: A Spiritual Exploration of Illness Details**

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Author : Jerome Groopman

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# **From Reader Review The Measure of Our Days: A Spiritual Exploration of Illness for online ebook**

## **Ellen Snyder says**

Just reread this book, and I still find the stories fascinating and well-written. Dr. Groopman is a conscientious doctor who grapples with questions of life and death in his practice of blood diseases (mostly AIDS) and oncology. He recounts how various people react when facing a critical diagnosis.

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## **Maria says**

This book could not have come at a better time with my dad's terminal illness! I cannot recommend this book highly enough for everyone to read. This doctor writes in layman's terms what goes on in the body when we are suffering with certain types of illnesses through patients' stories but at the same time offers up inspiration. I loved the 9 different cases and how people dealt with their illnesses. You come out of the reading with the attitude of, "Live each day as if it were your last" ...because it very well could be.

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## **Kaethe says**

If people are able to find something meaningful in being sick then I don't begrudge them that. I just find the endless uniting of health and spirituality as unhelpful for most, who are going to end up feeling that they weren't just unlucky, but that there is something fundamentally wrong with them. Honestly, it's this kind of thing that makes me think doctors are way to credulous.

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## **Darnell says**

Mostly case studies, not much reflection or synthesis. Not what I was looking for but possibly useful to others, so no rating.

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## **Ron says**

This is a fine book, a thought-provoking and informative portrayal of a Harvard physician working to save the lives of patients with blood diseases and cancer. However, its title is somewhat misleading. Groopman is first and last a scientist, and there is little that is "spiritual" or inspirational about his point of view. When he speaks of miracles, it is the advances of medicine in the laboratory he is talking about.

Each chapter in the book is devoted to a particular patient, and what Groopman gives readers is a case history describing their symptoms of illness, diagnosis, and courses of treatment. He also devotes attention to the personalities of each of his patients, particularly as they face life and death crossroads in their lives. We come to appreciate that his strength as a doctor is in a combination of training, skill, and an ability to regard

patients as individual persons, not just cases of disease.

Groopman's approach as a physician is to use medical technology to help his patients buy time, thus allowing them to achieve the full "measure of their days," even when that is only a few months or years of remission. While in the early stages some patients seem fatalistic about their potentially fatal illnesses, he discovers that nearly all come around to his belief that life is too precious to surrender when medicine can postpone death.

I recommend this book for its clear-eyed and heart-felt description of doing battle against disease and for its well-detailed portrayals of doctor-patient relationships. As companion volumes, I'd also recommend David Biro's "100 Days," in which a doctor tells of his own bone marrow transplant, and Abraham Verghese's "My Own Country," an Indian-American doctor's AIDS memoir.

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### **hhhhhhhhh says**

Cindy's story was disturbing on a number of levels and I was uneasy this was going to have other homophobic sentiments, but the tender way he wrote about his friendship with Alex overrode my dismay.

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### **Elaine says**

Encouraging stories of how people have made meaning from serious illness.

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### **Gail says**

Powerful

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### **Nancy says**

Does a good job weaving the science with a personal and spiritual commentary on illness and death. A compassionate physician who "gets" that his patients bring as much to his life as he does to theirs.

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### **Linda Lipko says**

Heavy, densely emotional, soul searching, heart wrenching, spiritual and hopeful are but some of the words I use to describe this book containing complicated medical terminology and eight cases of cancer patients who faced death. Groopman powerfully describes both his spiritual insights and his patient's journey with serious illness.

It took longer than usual for me to read this because I wanted to do justice to each story.

A frequent contributor to The New Yorker, this prolific writer also has a string of credentials that are

amazingly incredible and include the Recanati Professor of Immunology at Harvard Medical Center, the head of the experimental medicine program at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and he is a cutting edge research specialist regarding aids, cancer and diseases of the blood.

With all those hard-earned roles, you would think the book would be egoistic, pedantic and difficult to understand. But, this isn't the case. He explains medical terminology in a fascinating way and I learned a great deal about the complexities of cancer.

While filled with complicated medical descriptions, it is the heart breaking stories that make this a stellar book written by a truly remarkable man.

These are gut wrenching stories of his journey walked with patients who face cancer, their struggles, pain, desiccation of the body and their experiences of living in hope against the overwhelming odds of survival.

I highly recommend this book and give it five stars --a rating I use sparingly.

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### **Faith Lowery says**

*I don't have the exact read start and finish dates on many books I have read this year. The dates are approximated, as I have been in & out of the hospital, and on bed rest, and read 2-5 books a day depending on the book & length and my ability to focus. All dates are approximated, by month.*

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### **Susan Rothenberg says**

We should all have a doctor like Jerome Groopman - not be sick enough to need him, but to have a doctor who cares and communicates that caring. This book has the stories of patients who are dealing with end of life concerns and issues. It is both moving and enlightening, as are all of his books. Reread in September 2011 prior to hearing him speak.

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### **Laura says**

This is a very moving book that I think everyone should read. Dr. Groopman is a physician, author, and researcher who specializes in cancers and HIV/AIDS. Several of the eight patients he focuses on in this book were early AIDS patients. While this isn't what I would necessarily called a faith-based book, Dr. Groopman recognized that some things can still be learned from the lives of those who no longer can take anything for granted. And in these circumstances, both patient and physician learned from each other. One quote hit me in the gut, as Dr. Groopman was discussing HIV treatment with a young female patient of his in 1995. The wise doctor said, "I can see a time when HIV becomes a chronic controlled condition, like diabetes, rather than a progressive downhill disease. Taking anti-HIV drugs will be like a diabetic taking insulin. When will this happen? I can't say exactly when, but I believe it will. I don't agree with you. HIV does not have to be a death sentence, not for people like you." And you know what? He was right.

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**Carol Catinari says**

A very interesting book to read. Dr. Groopman addresses the medical issues of the patients of his specialties, cancer and Aids...but also the human and emotional needs of his patients. Each story told delves into what the patient goes through from diagnosis to treatment and often to death. These stories show us what those patients learn...and also the growth experienced by this caring doctor.

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**Karl Nehring says**

A truly inspiring book. Dr. Groopman writes insightfully about the relationships between doctor and patient, doctor and illness, patient and illness, medicine in the particular and medicine in the general, with an eye toward the spiritual dimensions that these relationships reveal.

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