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An internationally recognized leader in medicine delivers powerful, practical wisdom to transform and heal relationships--a life-altering book about what really matters in living every day.

THE FOUR THINGS THAT MATTER MOST *A Book About Living*

Ira Byock, M.D.

"This beautiful book, full of wisdom and warmth, teaches us how to protect and preserve our most valuable possessions--the relationships with those we love. It shows that the things that matter definitely aren't "things," and how to empower your life in the right direction."

--Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

"The Four Things that Matter Most is a book of common sense wisdom that has the power to dynamically change your life. It is a pleasure to recommend a book that encourages you to transform the quality of your life in simple ways that actually work."

-- Caroline Myss, author of Sacred Contracts and Anatomy of the Spirit

We do not need another school shooting, another SARS epidemic, or another terrorist attack to drive home the fact that life is precious. Still, many of us wait until the brink of death to make an effort to renew our relationships with the most important and intimate people in our lives. Sadly, many of us wait until it's too late to clear away past tensions and tell significant others how much they mean to us, and are left with gnawing doubts and feelings of regret.

Through more than 25 years of caring for gravely ill patients and their families, Ira Byock, M.D., has come to appreciate the wondrous healing and life-transforming power of four simple phrases. In **THE FOUR THINGS THAT MATTER MOST: A Book About Living** (Free Press; March 8, 2004; \$23.00), Dr. Byock reveals how the right, honest, heartfelt words can soothe festering emotional wounds and resentments, strengthen connections, and bring lasting peace of mind when spoken not only in times of dire illness and crisis, but at *any time*-- and often -- throughout the course of daily life:

Please forgive me. I forgive you. Thank you. I love you.

"Again and again, I've witnessed the value of stating the obvious," Dr. Byock attests. "When you love someone, it is *never* too early to say 'I love you,' or premature to say, 'Thank you,' 'I forgive you,' or 'Will you forgive me?' When there is nothing of profound importance left

unsaid, relationships tend to take on an aspect of celebration, as they should.”

With an emphasis on making all cherished relationships—with aging parents, grown and young children, a spouse or partner, relatives near and far, and close friends—*current* and *complete*, **THE FOUR THINGS THAT MATTER MOST** illuminates the pragmatic healing potential of universal, everyday words. Through compelling real-life stories, culled from counselors who have embraced the “Four Things” in their practices as well as his own work with the terminally ill, Dr. Byock shows how to use expressions of forgiveness, gratitude, and affection as tools to repair the rifts that divide us and restore a sense of kinship, community, and humanity, while affirming our individual worth. Among the deeply affecting, personal examples that will inspire:

- Parents who took the time and spoke the words to make certain that their son knew how thoroughly they loved him before he left to fight for America in Iraq
- An elderly couple who rediscovered the bliss of their early love for one another after one spouse, long-ago betrayed but still bitter, dared to say “I love you”
- An anxious teenage girl’s first and last meeting with the father she had never known—who asked for and received her forgiveness and tenderness hours before he died of AIDS
- A father who suddenly decided to make amends with the grown children he had routinely neglected—and was rewarded with enduring bonds of warmth, respect, and friendship

Dr. Byock culminates with a thoughtful discussion of saying “good-bye” in the way the words were originally intended: *as a blessing*. Whether expecting to be separated for a few hours or forever, a conscious, attentive, genuine good-bye can be a treasured parting gift to others.

Rich in practical wisdom for interpersonal healing, **THE FOUR THINGS THAT MATTER MOST** offers hope for living fully with a sense of inner security even in the most uncertain, unsettling, and tragic times.

About the Author

IRA BYOCK, M.D., is a nationally respected authority on end-of-life care and a longtime advocate on behalf of the chronically ill and their families. His essays have appeared in the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* and his work has been featured on *Nightline*, *Dateline NBC*, *All Things Considered*, and HBO’s *Letting Go: A Hospice Journey*, as well as in the *New York Times Magazine*. Past president of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, he is currently Director of Palliative Medicine at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and on the faculty of Dartmouth Medical School. Also the author of *Dying Well* (Riverhead Books, 1998), he welcomes visitors to his web site, www.dyingwell.com.

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A Book About Living

By Ira Byock, M.D.

Publication Date: March 8, 2004

Price: \$23.00 hardcover

Pages: 240

ISBN: 0-7432-4909-7

Published by Free Press

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