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## **When Death Arrives**

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A month ago, [while reflecting on my uncle's recent death](#), I was powerfully reminded that death informs life. When we imagine ourselves on our deathbeds, looking back on our time in this world, we surface the things that really matter to us and ultimately define a successful life. By contemplating our deaths, we inevitably start to focus on what we want to do with the rest of our days. It's our choice: we can ignore death (for as long as we can get away with it), or we can recognize its potential for life-altering change.

This morning, while reading about the film critic and television co-host Roger Ebert's passing, I came across his remarkable essay, "[I do not fear death](#)."

Over the past ten years, Ebert endured cancer and other health problems, which gave him many opportunities to unflinchingly contemplate his own mortality. He knew he would die sooner than many of us, and yet, as he asserts in his essay's title, he was unafraid of death. If anything, he used death to help him define a life well-lived. For him, that meant a life of kindness.

He wrote: "I believe that if, at the end, according to our abilities, we have done something to make others a little happier, and something to make ourselves a little happier, that is about the best we can do." In dying, Ebert has given us a potent lesson on how to live.

*Photo: Randall Michelson/WireImage*