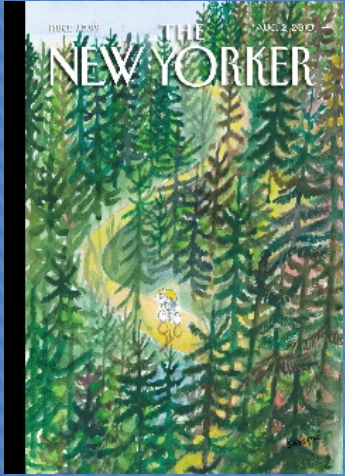


LETTING GO



Atul Gawande

From The New Yorker, August 2, 2010. Gawande, an author of such books as Being Mortal and The Checklist Manifesto, is also a general and endocrine surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, MA. Gawande won the National Magazine Award for this piece exploring hospice care and the limits of modern medicine.

Step 1 – Pre-Reading Activities

Deepen your experience by working through the questions to the right before reading the article.

Discuss with friends or think/write about the following questions:

- Is the goal of medical care for the terminally ill to keep the patient alive as long as possible?
- How would you feel if a loved one decided to forego treatment for a terminal illness? Do you think you could support them in their decision?
- Do you agree with the poet Dylan Thomas:

"Do not go gentle into that good night...Rage, rage against the dying of the light?"

Step 1: Pre-Reading Activities

Vocabulary

One of the great “side effects” of reading is growing your vocabulary. As you read “Letting Go,” pay attention to the words on the right as they appear in the article, and see if you can determine their meaning from the context of the passage. Google them later to see if you were right.

tantamount

sheaf

mutinous

intercede

opted

dwindling

riven

perilous

intrinsic

rally

scrupulously

epiphany

solace

skein

Step 1: Pre-Reading Activities

Idioms

Non-native speakers of English – and even native speakers -- can find certain older American and British idioms puzzling. Here are a few Gawande used in this article. Come back to them after reading the article and see if the context helped you understand the meaning.

take the measure

geared up

fanned out

walk of life

pinned their hopes

in the thick of things

flea market

it was no wonder

fluke

cart away

let nature take its course

doodles

bundled up

lend a hand

dropped off a cliff

down-to-earth

Important!

STEP 2 – Read the
article – TWICE!!
(no, really!)

IF POSSIBLE, print out a hard copy of the article. The first time, read simply for information, for pleasure. The second time, read slowly, noticing unfamiliar words, interesting uses of punctuation, or anything that gets your attention. On the hard copy, highlight interesting words or phrases, or anything that jumps out at you.

HERE'S THE LINK:

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/02/letting-go-2>

STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Style

Did you notice.....

How Gawande keeps the reader's interest by mixing medium and long sentences with short ones?
Changing the rhythm of a passage with a simple sentence can be powerful:

She spent the remainder of the summer at home, with Vivian and her husband and her parents, who had moved in to help. She loved being a mother. Between chemotherapy cycles, she began trying to get her life back.

STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Style

Did you notice.....

How in this key passage, Gawande crystallizes everything in one paragraph?

This is the moment in Sara's story that poses a fundamental question for everyone living in the era of modern medicine: What do we want Sara and her doctors to do now? Or, to put it another way, if you were the one who had metastatic cancer—or, for that matter, a similarly advanced case of emphysema or congestive heart failure—what would you want your doctors to do?

STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Style

Did you notice.....

How Gawande confesses his own misconceptions about hospice care:

The picture I had of hospice was a morphine drip. Outside, I confessed that I was confused by what Creed was doing. Like many people, I had believed that hospice hastens death.....

STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Paraphrasing Step-by-Step

Paraphrasing is often done by a series of revisions, moving things around and trying on different words and phrases until you get the right balance between the original text and your own words.

On the right is a passage from *Letting Go*, which we're revising to accurately reflect Gawande's original. Let's break it down.

Read the passage below, and look for the underlined words "hospice care seemed to extend." That's a string of words Gawande used in his text.

Original passage:

Curiously, hospice care seemed to extend survival for some patients; those with pancreatic cancer gained an average of three weeks, those with lung cancer gained six weeks, and those with congestive heart failure gained three months. The lesson seems almost Zen: you live longer only when you stop trying to live longer.

Here's a paraphrased version, still using the string of five words – "hospice care seemed to extend." Everything else in the passage has been paraphrased accurately – different word choices than the author, but the ideas and information are there. Not as interesting, maybe.....

Hospice care seemed to extend the lives of some patients; pancreatic cancer patients averaged three weeks, lung cancer patients averaged six weeks, and CHF patients lived about three months longer than those who didn't use hospice. For these patients, no longer "fighting" the disease lengthened their lives.

STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Paraphrasing Step-by-Step

Rewrite the passage to the right in your own words. When paraphrasing, it's important to avoid using sequential groups of 3-5 words from the original text. Using that much of the original author's phrase could be seen as plagiarism.

But that pesky word string is causing problems.

Hospice care seemed to extend the lives of some patients; pancreatic cancer patients averaged three weeks, lung cancer patients averaged six weeks, and CHF patients lived about three months longer than those who didn't use hospice.

How would you rewrite that phrase? How about:

Some patients who received hospice care lived longer; pancreatic cancer patients averaged three weeks, lung cancer patients averaged six weeks, and CHF patients lived about three months longer than those who didn't use hospice. For these patients, no longer "fighting" the disease lengthened their lives.

We still used "hospice care," but that's only two words; also it's a well-known phrase. The rewritten passage conveys the same information as the original, but is worded differently, which is the mark of a successful paraphrase.

YOUR TURN!!!

STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Paraphrasing Step-by-Step

Let's compare the final product!

Here's the original phrase:

Curiously, hospice care seemed to extend survival for some patients; those with pancreatic cancer gained an average of three weeks, those with lung cancer gained six weeks, and those with congestive heart failure gained three months. The lesson seems almost Zen: you live longer only when you stop trying to live longer.

Here's the paraphrased version:

Some patients who received hospice care actually lived longer; pancreatic cancer patients averaged three weeks, lung cancer patients averaged six weeks, and CHF patients lived about three months longer than those who didn't use hospice. For these patients, no longer "fighting" the disease lengthened their lives.

YOUR TURN!!!



STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Paraphrasing Exercise

Rewrite the passage to the right in your own words. When paraphrasing, it's important to avoid using 3-5 words in a row from the original text. Using that much of the original author's phrase could be seen as plagiarism.

Paraphrase the following passage into your own words. Remember not to use more than 3-5 words from the original text in your paraphrase.

These days, swift catastrophic illness is the exception; for most people, death comes only after a long medical struggle with an incurable condition—advanced cancer, progressive organ failure (usually the heart, kidney, or liver), or the multiple debilities of very old age. In all such cases, death is certain, but the timing isn't. So everyone struggles with this uncertainty—with how, and when, to accept that the battle is lost.

STEP 3: Post-reading Activities

Critical Thinking

One way to get a good piece of writing to stick with you is to spend some time thinking and writing about it.

Critical Thinking Questions. Answer in complete sentences.

1. What are some of the thoughts and emotions patients and their families struggle with by accepting hospice care?
2. For the most part, medical professionals are trained to prolong life no matter the cost – physical or financial. Should doctors and nurses try to adjust their roles in the face of a terminal illness? How might they do this?
3. How has modern medicine changed our cultural perception of the process of dying?

Post-reading Activities: Vocabulary Building

In their book, “Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning,” (a GREAT book, BTW) authors Peter Brown, Henry Roediger III, and Mark McDaniel explore recent advances in cognitive psychology research that challenge our traditional ideas about the best way to learn.

One of the biggest takeaways is that the process of recalling recently studied material (like vocabulary) makes you more likely to retain the information: e.g., taking a short vocabulary quiz a week or two after you studied the material, instead of cramming for a test at the last minute.

Quizlet, a free learning app, is a great tool for reviewing, recalling, and *retaining* information, using games, flashcards, and other tools. There’s even a mobile app for your phone.

A Quizlet has been prepared using selected vocabulary from the article. Let us know if there are words you’d like added to it.

○ Find it here: http://bit.ly/letting_go_vocab

Read2Write Exercise Submissions

For those of you who completed the written exercises associated with this Read2Write – excellent!! If you'd like to send them to the Writing & Career Services office for feedback, attach your document (preferably in Word) to an email and send it to sphworkwrite@llu.edu.

You'll get feedback in the form of comments, suggestions or high-fives as soon as possible after we receive it. If you'd like to make an appointment to discuss your work or learn how to improve your writing in general, fill out an appointment request [here](#).

We hope you enjoyed reading (and maybe writing about) the amazing work of Atul Gawande.



Got a question about writing?
Send an email to sphworkwrite@llu.edu, or
request an [appointment](#).