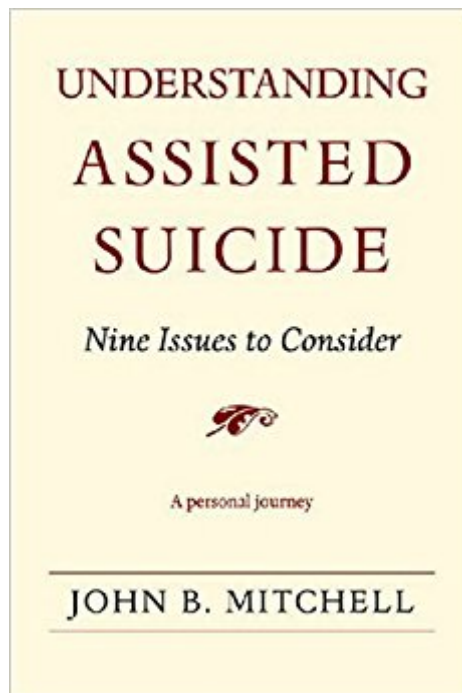




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# Understanding Assisted Suicide: Nine Issues To Consider (Writers On Writing)



## Synopsis

Assisted suicide remains one of the most emotionally charged and controversial topics—and the issue isn't going away any time soon. As the baby boomer generation ages, many of us will watch as our parents—and ourselves—grow older, and wonder at the decisions that lie ahead. *Understanding Assisted Suicide* provides both a fresh take on this important topic and the framework for intelligent participation in the discussion. Uniquely, the author frames the issue using his own experience watching both his parents die, which led him to ask fundamental questions about death, dying, religion, and the role of medicine and technology in alleviating human suffering. In concerns about assisted suicide, each person's "big picture" has largely been created out of picking and choosing from nine separate snapshot albums. *Understanding this* offers a perspective for quickly determining the sources of another's opinion on assisted suicide, as well as the issues they are not considering. Most importantly, *Understanding Assisted Suicide* offers a clear, easy-to-traverse landscape over which those who are sincerely looking for their own answers can navigate. The "nine-issue structure" allows both careful exploration of separate issues and a view of the full spectrum of ideas involved.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John B. Mitchell is Professor of Law at Seattle University School of Law. He is the co-author of *Pretrial Advocacy: Planning, Analysis, and Strategy* and *Trial Advocacy: Planning, Analysis, and Strategy*.

I teach Christian adults and the class wanted to understand the other side of Assisted Suicide. This book is very well researched and brought much discussion. When the author, who is a writer, lost his parents, he became interested and found there was no literature out there that covered all the facets. His book includes the nine issues to consider before forming your own opinion.

"This is a book about ideas," writes the author John Mitchell. "It was born, however, out of deep emotion." "Understanding Assisted Suicide" recounts the author's intellectual journey following the deaths of his parents. His father, who died first, asked his children for help in ending his struggle against advanced pancreatic cancer. His mother, succumbing to Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, needed assistance as well. The author acknowledges that like most people facing these crises, he and his sister were not fully prepared for the wrenching decisions that had to be made. But in the years that followed, Mitchell set out to understand the complex moral, philosophical, religious and legal issues surrounding assisted suicide. This excellent book is a roadmap to that journey. Does our culture subscribe to the notion of the absolute sanctity of life? Does Western religion plainly forbid suicide, and thus assisted suicide? If you accept the idea that a particular suicide might be justified, would condoning it nonetheless be harmful to society? Would permitting physician-assisted suicide establish a "slippery slope" that would end in the involuntary deaths of our most vulnerable? What about the principle of "autonomy" - shouldn't we have the right to make the fundamental choices about our lives? Or is the decision to take one's own life evidence itself that one who reaches that conclusion is neither rational nor competent to do so? The author, who is a Professor of Law at Seattle University School of Law, also looks at the legal issues surrounding assisted suicide. Does every U.S. citizen have a constitutional right to make this decision? Is it a fundamental right implicit in our right to liberty? Or is it covered by the equal protection clause of the Constitution, on the grounds that to prohibit assisted suicide in one case (a son helping to administer a lethal injection) and yet to allow it in others (discontinuing life support or using clearly dangerous levels of morphine) is a dubious and potentially arbitrary distinction. What happens when we decriminalize assisted suicide, as the Netherlands and the State of Oregon have sought to do? These and other arguments for and against the rights of individuals to take their lives and to ask (and get) assistance from others are closely examined by Mitchell and tested against both the rigor of his intellectual analysis and the touchstone of his own personal experience. With its wide-ranging review of the focal issues of the assisted suicide debate and extensive notes on sources, this well-written book will be a valuable resource for professionals and scholars in a wide variety of

disciplines. Grounded in the author's own struggle to come to grips with a complex and emotionally charged passage in his life, it will challenge and engage the general reader as well.

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