

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

tuesdays with
Morrie

20TH
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

an old man, a young man,
and life's greatest lesson

Mitch Albom

With a New Afterword by the Author

Tuesdays
with Morrie



Praise for *Tuesdays with Morrie*

“A beautifully written book of great clarity and wisdom that lovingly captures the simplicity beyond life’s complexities.”

—M. Scott Peck, M.D., author of *The Road Less Traveled* and
Denial of the Soul

“This book is an incredible treasure. One’s sense of our mortality is a great teacher and source of enlightenment. I laughed, cried, and ordered five copies for our children.”

—Bernie S. Siegel, M.D., author of *Love, Medicine, and Miracles*

“Every page of this beautiful, moving little book shines with the warmth of unembarrassed love.”

—Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of
When Bad Things Happen to Good People

“This is a sweet book of a man’s love for his mentor. It has a stubborn honesty that nourishes the living.”

—Robert Bly, author of *Iron John*

“I love this book. I’ve been telling all my friends, ‘You *have* to read this.’ Mitch Albom was given a wonderful gift from his teacher Morrie Schwartz and now we have the great pleasure of auditing the same class. As coach, humanist, and ‘religious mutt,’ Morrie gives his former student a crash course on living: clear and ruthless hindsight on what matters most when your days are numbered. And Albom is perfect as the prodigal son: the successful sports journalist who wonders if the idealism of his favorite professor has kept pace with the real world. This is a true story that shines and leaves you forever warmed by its afterglow.”

—Amy Tan, author of *The Joy Luck Club*

“A deeply moving account of courage and wisdom, shared by an inveterate mentor looking into the multitextured face of his own death. There is much to be learned by sitting in on this final class.”

—Jon Kabat-Zinn, coauthor of *Everyday Blessings* and
Everywhere You Go There You Are

“I met Morrie in the last months of his life. To be with him was a gift of love and insight, courage and generosity. Mitch Albom has shared this boon with us in *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Don’t wait until Wednesday to draw this fine being into your heart.”

—Stephen Levine, author of *Who Dies?* and
Healing into Life and Death

“*Tuesdays with Morrie* is a sweet and gentle tribute to age and aging. Thanks, Mitch Albom, for introducing me to Morrie Schwartz. His dignity and frankness stirred me. His good humor and zest left me smiling.”

—Alex Kotlowitz, author of *There Are No Children Here*

“All of the saints and Buddhas have taught us that wisdom and compassion are one. Now along comes Morrie, who makes it perfectly plain. His living and dying show us the way.”

—Joanna Bull, Founder and Executive Director, Gilda’s Club

“Poignant and powerfully moving, *Tuesdays with Morrie* captures the essence and spirit of a truly gifted teacher and his unwavering belief that the most important lesson in life is connecting to one another through compassion and love. Mitch Albom gives his cherished mentor the greatest gift of passing it on to us all.”

—Dr. Jane Greer, author of *How Could You Do This to Me?*
Learning to Trust After Betrayal

“Sometimes if you take a second look around you’ll notice we are amongst angels. Only a man—no, a saint—like Morrie Schwartz could take his own impending death and teach us how to live. After reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* you’ll understand that class is never dismissed.”

—Jeff Daniels

Lives changed by *Tuesdays with Morrie*

"I am now regularly using this book in my class. It is required reading. All, and I do mean all, of my students have said that it is the best book they have ever read."

—Myra Wood Bennett, MSW, Grantsburg, Illinois

"I bookmarked pages in your book, I read parts to my children. Thank you for a story I shall carry in my heart for the rest of my life."

—Diane Gaul Coveleski, Union City, Pennsylvania

"I laughed out loud and cried unabashedly."

—John G. Carney, Chairman of the Board,
National Hospice Organization, Wichita, Kansas

"Thanks to this book and its author, Mitch Albom! The most significant lessons about the wondrous significance of life jump off each page and penetrate each reader's heart and mind. This is 'must reading' for anyone who is a seeker of truth."

—Rabbi Allen I. Freehling, Los Angeles, California

"I absolutely loved it. I have not stopped thinking about this book since I finished it."

—Nancy Duke, Washington, D.C.

"Today, I woke up, I opened Tuesdays with Morrie, and, together with a pot of coffee, read it in one sitting. Immediately after, I called my sister, told her I loved her . . . called a few friends, and told them all to read your book."

—Alan Camhi, Seattle, Washington

"After reading Tuesdays with Morrie, I understood again why I am a teacher. And I understood better that love and compassion for others is central to being human. This book has so enriched me."

—Benjamin J. Hubbard, Costa Mesa, California

"A rare and precious jewel exists in the gift of Tuesdays with Morrie. This gift is the courage of one man willing to express publicly his devotion, admiration, respect, and love for his former professor as he is dying. Told in simple words, it is rich with the complexity of human thought, wisdom, frailty, sensitivity, and compassion. And what is truly important in life."

—Katherine P. Hux, MPH, Raleigh, North Carolina

"My wife and two daughters wanted their own copies to read and reread . . . I think about Morrie's lessons often and quote him regularly."

—William M. Polk, Groton, Massachusetts

"A wonderfully honest exchange between a terminally ill professor and his 'successful' student. They both gave and both received wonderful gifts of love and friendship."

—Joie Glenn, RN, MBA, CAE, Albuquerque, New Mexico

"One of the most profound and beautiful books that I have ever read. A treasure!"

—Virginia S. Humphrey, Cheshire, Connecticut

"This book is a gem, and should be read by everybody! I felt like I was right there with Mitch when he was having his Tuesdays with Morrie, and found myself reflecting on what is really important in life."

—Rev. David L. Klingensmith, Hospital Chaplain,
Fresno, California

"A wise and loving story that teaches us those things we ought to know already, but have somehow forgotten."

—Rev. L. Annie Forester, Minister Emerita,
St. John's Unitarian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio

Also by Mitch Albom

Bo

Fab Five

Live Albom

Live Albom II

Live Albom III

Live Albom IV

The Five People You Meet in Heaven

For One More Day

Have a Little Faith

The Time Keeper

The First Phone Call from Heaven

The Magic Strings of Frankie Presto



B\D\W\Y

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Tuesdays with Morrie



An old man, a young man,
and
life's greatest lesson

Mitch Albom

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO MY BROTHER, PETER,
THE BRAVEST PERSON I KNOW.

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Mostly, my thanks to Morrie, for wanting to do this last thesis together. Have you ever had a teacher like this?

The Curriculum

~ The last class of my old professor's life took place once a week in his house, by a window in the study where he could watch a small hibiscus plant shed its pink leaves. The class met on Tuesdays. It began after breakfast. The subject was *The Meaning of Life*. It was taught from experience.

No grades were given, but there were oral exams each week. You were expected to respond to questions, and you were expected to pose questions of your own. You were also required to perform physical tasks now and then, such as lifting the professor's head to a comfortable spot on the pillow or placing his glasses on the bridge of his nose. Kissing him good-bye earned you extra credit.

No books were required, yet many topics were covered, including love, work, community, family, aging, forgiveness, and, finally, death. The last lecture was brief, only a few words.

A funeral was held in lieu of graduation.

Although no final exam was given, you were ex-

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pected to produce one long paper on what was learned.
That paper is presented here.

The last class of my old professor's life had only one student.

I was the student.



It is the late spring of 1979, a hot, sticky Saturday afternoon. Hundreds of us sit together, side by side, in rows of wooden folding chairs on the main campus lawn. We wear blue nylon robes. We listen impatiently to long speeches. When the ceremony is over, we throw our caps in the air, and we are officially graduated from college, the senior class of Brandeis University in the city of Waltham, Massachusetts. For many of us, the curtain has just come down on childhood.

Afterward, I find Morrie Schwartz, my favorite professor, and introduce him to my parents. He is a small man who takes small steps, as if a strong wind could, at any time, whisk him up into the clouds. In his graduation day robe, he looks like a cross between a biblical prophet and a Christmas elf. He has sparkling blue-green eyes, thinning silver hair that spills onto his forehead, big ears, a triangular nose, and tufts of graying eyebrows. Al-

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though his teeth are crooked and his lower ones are slanted back—as if someone had once punched them in—when he smiles it’s as if you’d just told him the first joke on earth.

He tells my parents how I took every class he taught. He tells them, “You have a special boy here.” Embarrassed, I look at my feet. Before we leave, I hand my professor a present, a tan briefcase with his initials on the front. I bought this the day before at a shopping mall. I didn’t want to forget him. Maybe I didn’t want him to forget me.

“Mitch, you are one of the good ones,” he says, admiring the briefcase. Then he hugs me. I feel his thin arms around my back. I am taller than he is, and when he holds me, I feel awkward, older, as if I were the parent and he were the child.

He asks if I will stay in touch, and without hesitation I say, “Of course.”

When he steps back, I see that he is crying.

The Syllabus

His death sentence came in the summer of 1994. Looking back, Morrie knew something bad was coming long before that. He knew it the day he gave up dancing.

He had always been a dancer, my old professor. The music didn't matter. Rock and roll, big band, the blues. He loved them all. He would close his eyes and with a blissful smile begin to move to his own sense of rhythm. It wasn't always pretty. But then, he didn't worry about a partner. Morrie danced by himself.

He used to go to this church in Harvard Square every Wednesday night for something called "Dance Free." They had flashing lights and booming speakers and Morrie would wander in among the mostly student crowd, wearing a white T-shirt and black sweatpants and a towel around his neck, and whatever music was playing, that's the music to which he danced. He'd do the lindy to Jimi Hendrix. He twisted and twirled, he waved his arms like a conductor on amphetamines, until sweat was dripping down the middle of his back. No one there knew he was a prominent doctor of sociology, with years of experience

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as a college professor and several well-respected books. They just thought he was some old nut.

Once, he brought a tango tape and got them to play it over the speakers. Then he commandeered the floor, shooting back and forth like some hot Latin lover. When he finished, everyone applauded. He could have stayed in that moment forever.

But then the dancing stopped.

He developed asthma in his sixties. His breathing became labored. One day he was walking along the Charles River, and a cold burst of wind left him choking for air. He was rushed to the hospital and injected with Adrenalin.

A few years later, he began to have trouble walking. At a birthday party for a friend, he stumbled inexplicably. Another night, he fell down the steps of a theater, startling a small crowd of people.

“Give him air!” someone yelled.

He was in his seventies by this point, so they whispered “old age” and helped him to his feet. But Morrie, who was always more in touch with his insides than the rest of us, knew something else was wrong. This was more than old age. He was weary all the time. He had trouble sleeping. He dreamt he was dying.

He began to see doctors. Lots of them. They tested his blood. They tested his urine. They put a scope up his rear end and looked inside his intestines. Finally, when

The Syllabus

nothing could be found, one doctor ordered a muscle biopsy, taking a small piece out of Morrie's calf. The lab report came back suggesting a neurological problem, and Morrie was brought in for yet another series of tests. In one of those tests, he sat in a special seat as they zapped him with electrical current—an electric chair, of sorts—and studied his neurological responses.

"We need to check this further," the doctors said, looking over his results.

"Why?" Morrie asked. "What is it?"

"We're not sure. Your times are slow."

His times were slow? What did that mean?

Finally, on a hot, humid day in August 1994, Morrie and his wife, Charlotte, went to the neurologist's office, and he asked them to sit before he broke the news: Morrie had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Lou Gehrig's disease, a brutal, unforgiving illness of the neurological system.

There was no known cure.

"How did I get it?" Morrie asked.

Nobody knew.

"Is it terminal?"

Yes.

"So I'm going to die?"

Yes, you are, the doctor said. I'm very sorry.

He sat with Morrie and Charlotte for nearly two hours, patiently answering their questions. When they

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE

left, the doctor gave them some information on ALS, little pamphlets, as if they were opening a bank account. Outside, the sun was shining and people were going about their business. A woman ran to put money in the parking meter. Another carried groceries. Charlotte had a million thoughts running through her mind: *How much time do we have left? How will we manage? How will we pay the bills?*

My old professor, meanwhile, was stunned by the normalcy of the day around him. *Shouldn't the world stop? Don't they know what has happened to me?*

But the world did not stop, it took no notice at all, and as Morrie pulled weakly on the car door, he felt as if he were dropping into a hole.

Now what? he thought.

As my old professor searched for answers, the disease took him over, day by day, week by week. He backed the car out of the garage one morning and could barely push the brakes. That was the end of his driving.

He kept tripping, so he purchased a cane. That was the end of his walking free.

He went for his regular swim at the YMCA, but found he could no longer undress himself. So he hired his first home care worker—a theology student named Tony—who helped him in and out of the pool, and in

The Syllabus

and out of his bathing suit. In the locker room, the other swimmers pretended not to stare. They stared anyhow. That was the end of his privacy.

In the fall of 1994, Morrie came to the hilly Brandeis campus to teach his final college course. He could have skipped this, of course. The university would have understood. Why suffer in front of so many people? Stay at home. Get your affairs in order. But the idea of quitting did not occur to Morrie.


Instead, he hobbled into the classroom, his home for more than thirty years. Because of the cane, he took a while to reach the chair. Finally, he sat down, dropped his glasses off his nose, and looked out at the young faces who stared back in silence.

“My friends, I assume you are all here for the Social Psychology class. I have been teaching this course for twenty years, and this is the first time I can say there is a risk in taking it, because I have a fatal illness. I may not live to finish the semester.

“If you feel this is a problem, I understand if you wish to drop the course.”

He smiled.

And that was the end of his secret.

 ALS is like a lit candle: it melts your nerves and leaves your body a pile of wax. Often, it begins with the

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE

legs and works its way up. You lose control of your thigh muscles, so that you cannot support yourself standing. You lose control of your trunk muscles, so that you cannot sit up straight. By the end, if you are still alive, you are breathing through a tube in a hole in your throat, while your soul, perfectly awake, is imprisoned inside a limp husk, perhaps able to blink, or cluck a tongue, like something from a science fiction movie, the man frozen inside his own flesh. This takes no more than five years from the day you contract the disease.

Morrie's doctors guessed he had two years left.

Morrie knew it was less.

But my old professor had made a profound decision, one he began to construct the day he came out of the doctor's office with a sword hanging over his head. *Do I wither up and disappear, or do I make the best of my time left?* he had asked himself.

He would not wither. He would not be ashamed of dying.

Instead, he would make death his final project, the center point of his days. Since everyone was going to die, he could be of great value, right? He could be research. A human textbook. *Study me in my slow and patient demise. Watch what happens to me. Learn with me.*

Morrie would walk that final bridge between life and death, and narrate the trip.

PRAISE FOR THE RUNAWAY BESTSELLER
THAT CHANGED MILLIONS OF LIVES

"Mitch Albom's book is a gift to mankind."

—*PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER*

"A wonderful book, a story of the heart told by a writer with soul."

—*LOS ANGELES TIMES*

"An extraordinary contribution to the literature of death."

—*BOSTON GLOBE*

"One of those books that kind of sneaked up and grabbed people's hearts over time."

—*MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL*

"An elegantly simple story about a writer getting a second chance to discover life through the death of a friend."

—*TAMPA TRIBUNE*

"As sweet and nourishing as fresh summer corn . . . the book begs to be read aloud."

—*USA TODAY*

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