

# To hell with dying

[Life](#), [Death](#)



In "To Hell With Dying," Alice Walker writes about an old man named Mr. Sweet who occasionally falls into a deep depression and becomes so unhappy with life that he loses the desire to live. Each time this happens, a neighborhood girl would come to the rescue and shower Mr. Sweet with love by giving him hugs and kisses, as he lay on his death bed. After these "rituals," Mr. Sweet shows a miraculous recovery and has the will to live again. This goes on for many years until Mr. Sweet finally dies of old age. Walker's central idea is that while love can make life worth living for, it cannot prevent nature from taking its course. In the beginning of the story, we are introduced to a very young girl who is described as having a low hairline which made her look like "a baby monkey." This young girl is a neighbor of Mr. Sweet and is also the narrator. Mr. Sweet would "call me his princess, and I believed it" making her feel very special and happy. From age seven, she remembered participating in Mr. Sweet's "rituals" because she "had been the one chosen to kiss him and tickle him long before she knew the rite of Mr. Sweet's rehabilitation" making her his official "revivalist." At age twenty-four, while the narrator was getting her doctorate, she received notice "that Mr. Sweet was dying again and could she please drop everything and come home." Mr. Sweet is a man who had lost his true love, had to settle to be a fisherman because of his race, and was a very sad man. He lost his will to live on several occasions but did not give up because of the love he was shown from the narrator. Mr. Sweet's death at the age of ninety was also important because it showed that everyone has a time to go and nothing, even love, will change a person's destiny. The main conflict in "To Hell With Dying," is the neighborhood girl's sense of reality and her sense of

failure. Her love kept Mr. Sweet alive on multiple occasions and, as she grew up through college, that's all she knew she had to do to keep him alive. The narrator explains that she saw Mr. Sweet as another person her age and wished that she would've been the one he loved in reality. As time and Nature go by, ultimately, death cannot be prevented. Even at the age of 24 and in college, the narrator expresses shock and disbelief that her loving touch and affection did not "revive" Mr. Sweet as it had done so in the past. She genuinely felt that she had failed him since he did not open his eyes again.