

Aphorisms in
tuesdays with morrie
by mitch albom



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Tuesdays With Morrie is a novel based on a true story about a professor named Morrie Schwartz and the memorable lessons he taught to the people around him, specifically his student, Mitch Albom. Morrie taught Sociology at Brandeis University. His earnestness towards teaching and the way he lived his life with care and compassion towards others allows him to be a mentor and teacher to all his students, specifically in the lessons he teaches Mitch every Tuesday. Mitch is one of Morrie's former students who comes to visit Morrie every Tuesday after learning about his illness. Along with his passion for teaching, Morrie also has a heart for dancing and music, and rather than getting caught in worldly affairs and the materialistic aspects of life, he spends his time enjoying life and creating meaningful memories and bonds with those around him. Ending his career as a professor, Morrie was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or ALS. This is a disease with quickly deteriorative and degenerative effects on the muscles and is demonstrated by progressive muscle weakness. Although this ended his career as a university professor, Morrie did not put an end to his love for teaching in general. He did not let his condition take control of him and managed to remain positive through it, however he does take some time to mourn for himself in the mornings. As Morrie had always had the heart and joy of being a teacher, he taught continuously throughout his life, as well as the end of it. Morrie used the platform of Ted Koppel interviews as well as giving weekly lessons to Mitch to teach him the meaning of life, and how to accept death and live a life with meaning. Towards the end of his life, Morrie taught everyone, including family, friends, and journalists the meaning of life using his powerful words. His words have importance due to the lessons and insights that Morrie had to offer. Morrie focused on the true meaning of life,

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leading up to death, rather than on what we possess and are surrounded by around us.

One of the major aphorisms in Tuesdays with Morrie that Morrie seeks to teach throughout his lessons is that “ Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live.” Morrie says this during the fourth Tuesday when he and Mitch talk about death. Mitch asks how a person can prepare for death, and Morrie responds with a Buddhist philosophy that every day, a person should ask the bird on his shoulder if it is the day that he will die. This is a symbol of how Morrie is inching closer towards his death by the day. Morrie feels that people refuse to believe that they will one day die, and therefore, do not live their lives as fully as they feel they could have and also have many regrets as they become older and their death becomes closer. He feels that once we learn and accept that we are one day going to die, we learn to live our lives fully and without any regrets. Morrie repeats this quote frequently throughout the chapter to emphasize how important and helpful it is to accept death, and what a benefit it would be to live the remainder of our lives. Morrie also wants Mitch to see how he is able to appreciate the smaller, more genuine things in life, knowing that his death is approaching, and we will all die in the end, so it is best to live our lives now. The main lesson of this aphorism is that one must accept the possibility of one’s own death before he can truly appreciate what he has on Earth. This aphorism has had an impact on my life because it opened my eyes to the possibility that I should live everyday while doing what I enjoy most, due to the fact that we will leave all of these worldly desires and passions when we die. For instance, I am in the stage of my life where I am deciding what major I want to pursue.

If I were to choose a major I was discontent with, I would be living in sorrow and unhappiness until I were to change it. Studying something I am interested in would lead to happiness and appreciation of what I have, so as I would live everyday studying something I would not regret before I died. This is the reason why we should appreciate what we have on Earth because it is precious and it will all end one day.

Another major aphorism in Tuesdays with Morrie that Morrie seeks to teach throughout his lessons is that “ Don’t let go too soon, but don’t hang on too long.” Morrie says this on the twelfth Tuesday during one of his interviews with Ted Koppel, as he is speaking of his experiences and his oncoming death. He is admitting that he has come to terms with his illness and that he is going to die. He wants to die with peace rather than harm. Morrie’s idea of slowly ‘ letting go’ of the outside world correlates with the idea he told Mitch earlier about the Buddhist belief in detachment. Gradually, as he grows closer to death by the day, Morrie is detaching himself from his life, and engaging himself in acceptance and faith that death will only bring new life. The main concept of this aphorism is that when we have important times and experiences, we should take time to experience them, and not to move on immediately, but also do not spend time lingering on that experience. This aphorism can be seen in my life in terms of losing friendships and people. Instead of feeling the intense emotions while continuing to live in a person’s life, a person simply stays around in their emotions. In the lesson of this aphorism, Morrie is telling us to do the former rather than the latter. This aphorism has added to my perspective on life because it allows me to see

that it is harmful for us to overthink rather than moving on with our lives, because dwelling on our emotions only takes away from us and harms us.

A final aphorism in Tuesdays with Morrie that Morrie seeks to teach throughout his lessons is to “Forgive yourself before you die. Then forgive others.” On the twelfth Tuesday, Morrie and Mitch discuss forgiveness. Morrie sees no point in holding any kind of vengeance or stubbornness; he then admits that he has had some pride in his life and regrets it. He recalled a story about his old friend Norman with whom he used to spend much time. After Norman and his wife moved to Chicago, Morrie’s wife, Charlotte, had to undergo a serious operation. Norman never contacted Morrie or Charlotte even though they knew about the operation. This hurt Morrie and Charlotte so much that they decided to drop their relationship with Norman. Norman tried to apologize and reconcile but Morrie never accepted his apology. After Norman died, Morrie regretted how he never forgave him. Morrie therefore, feels that we need to also forgive ourselves for the things we should have done. He explains that we can’t get stuck on regrets of what should have happened. He advises to make peace with yourself and those around you. The main lesson of this aphorism is that you have to be at peace with yourself because sometimes you cannot fix things and be at peace with other people. The best thing is not to be too late to forgive yourself. This aphorism and life lesson has added a perspective to my life because it led me to believe that you should always try to reconcile and fix relations with others, but if it is too late, you need to learn to forgive yourself for what it may be in order to live life and die in peace.

Tuesdays with Morrie was an extremely moving and inspiring novel about Morrie Schwartz, who was a caring and compassionate person and his main passion and desire was teaching, and continued to be until he passed away. He continued to teach the meaning of life and how important it is to live in the present to the people around him so they could, as he tried to, live their life to its fullest potential. Morrie taught many valuable life lessons and they can be seen through his aphorisms and the lessons he teaches. One of the main lessons he aims to teach is that “ Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live”. This is to show that a person should live their lives with no remorse and as well as they can because in the end it will all be left behind.