

Dying for Beginners

A film by Kurt Langbein

Faced with a diagnosis of “terminal cancer,” science journalist Kurt Langbein embarks on a personal and global investigation into the process of dying—and, amid intensive care units, palliative care, spiritual traditions, and near-death experiences, discovers a surprising truth: dying is something that can be learned.

When renowned science journalist Kurt Langbein is diagnosed with “terminal cancer,” a professional topic becomes an existential question: How do we die—and what does it actually mean to die?

In his deeply personal documentary **DYING FOR BEGINNERS**, Langbein sets out on a journey to the boundary between life and death. With the curiosity of a researcher and the vulnerability of a patient, he explores what awaits us all—and what we so rarely discuss.

The film takes viewers into intensive care units and palliative care wards, meeting doctors, scientists, philosophers, and end-of-life caregivers. It shows how modern medicine can prolong life—while simultaneously raising new ethical questions. What does it mean when more and more people are dying in intensive care units? When is a person truly dead? And who decides when treatment becomes a burden?

At the same time, Langbein meets people who have very different attitudes toward dying: the seriously ill who are preparing to say goodbye; an end-of-life doula who accompanies people at the end of their lives; medical professionals who try to alleviate suffering and preserve dignity; and people who, after near-death experiences, describe a moment when fear suddenly gives way to a deep sense of peace.

The film also looks beyond the boundaries of Western medicine. From psycho-oncological research and traditional healing methods to philosophical and spiritual perspectives, it paints a multifaceted picture of what health, illness, and consciousness can mean.

Throughout, **DYING FOR BEGINNERS** remains closely attuned to its protagonist’s personal journey. Langbein speaks openly about his own illness, about hopes, setbacks, and the question of how to live with one’s own mortality. His encounters with patients, doctors, and researchers thus become milestones on a journey that intertwines scientific insight with personal experience.

The film does not offer simple answers. Instead, it invites us to reconsider one of humanity’s greatest certainties: that life is finite. And that it is precisely this finiteness that can give life its depth.

DYING FOR BEGINNERS is a moving, intelligent, and surprisingly life-affirming exploration of our society’s greatest taboo—and an invitation to talk about dying before it is too late.