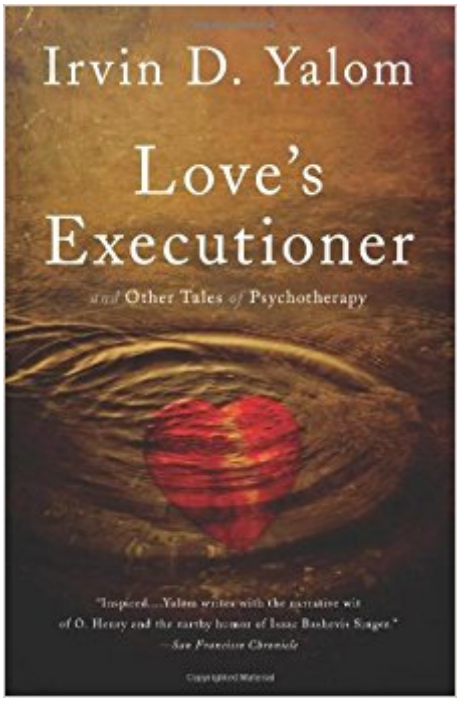
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Love's Executioner: & Other Tales Of Psychotherapy



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Synopsis

The collection of ten absorbing tales by master psychotherapist Irvin D. Yalom uncovers the mysteries, frustrations, pathos, and humor at the heart of the therapeutic encounter. In recounting his patients' dilemmas, Yalom not only gives us a rare and enthralling glimpse into their personal desires and motivations but also tells us his own story as he struggles to reconcile his all-too human responses with his sensibility as a psychiatrist. Not since Freud has an author done so much to clarify what goes on between a psychotherapist and a patient.

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Customer Reviews

Sunday Herald (Melbourne, Australia)“[Yalom's] honesty can be unnerving ... Love's Executioner offers a tragic, deeply felt vision of the human condition. In demystifying the therapist-patient encounter, Dr. Yalom brings us into broader territory: he reminds us of our need for intimacy and trust and the struggle necessary to achieve them.Ã¢â ¬Â•Arkansas Democrat-Gazette“The vicissitudes of neurosis and its treatment have always provided irresistible material for dramatic narratives. In Love's Executioner Yalom demonstrates that in the right hands, the stuff of therapy has the interest of the richest and most inventive fiction.Ã¢â ¬Â•Monterey County Herald“[I]nsightful.Ã¢â ¬Â•Existential Analysis (London)“In Love's Executioner I marvelled at Yalom's courage in writing about therapeutic relationships which had not been a great success and also at his skill in bringing these encounters to life.Ã¢â ¬Â•Rollo May“Irvin Yalom writes like an angel about the devils that

besiege us. These beautifully wrought true stories go way beyond therapy; they are incisive and moving tales of life, by a wise psychotherapist.Ã¢â ¬Â•New York Times“Dr. Yalom demonstrates once again that in the right hands, the stuff of therapy has the interest of the richest and most inventive fiction.Ã¢â ¬Â•Washington Post Book World“Like Freud, Yalom is a graceful and canny writer. The fascinating, moving, enervating, inspiring, unexpected stuff of psychotherapy is told with economy and, most surprising, with humor.Ã¢â ¬Â•Los Angeles Times“Yalom is a gifted storyteller, and from the sound of these tales, a no-less-gifted psychotherapist. He restores a sense of awe and mystery to an endeavor that all too often gets mired in the muck of jargon and categorization.... In addition to bringing the reader up close to his patients, and to a process often (necessarily) cloaked in secrecy, he gives the reader an un-airbrushed picture of the therapist, warts and all.Ã¢â ¬Â•Chicago Tribune “Here is the naked therapist, stripped of the armor of god-like omniscience, aware of his flaws.Ã¢â ¬Â•San Francisco Chronicle“Inspired.... Yalom writes with the narrative wit of O. Henry and the earthy humor of Isaac Bashevis Singer.Ã¢â ¬Â•Newsday“Love's Executioner is Yalom's wise, humane, stirring and utterly absorbing account of how 10 of his patients try to cope with what he calls ‘existence pain' Ã¢â ¬â • the knowledge that death is inevitable, that each of us is ultimately alone, that life has no clear meaning, but that we nonetheless have the freedom ‘to make our lives as we will'..... Irvin Yalom's book is charged with hope and generosity of spirit.Ã¢â ¬Â•Miami Herald“By his honesty and literary talent, Yalom convinces us that these are, in his words, ‘everyman, everywoman stories' and that in each of these ‘crazies,' in my word, is a little bit of you and me.Ã¢â ¬Â•Toronto Star“Dr. Irvin Yalom ... bravely steps into this chaotic void in Love's Executioner ... [H]e brings understanding, order, and the ‘feel' of the process of psychotherapy as few before him have done.Ã¢â ¬Â•Globe and Mail“Dr. Yalom's point is not to merely document psychological abnormality, it is to demonstrate that ‘it is possible to confront the truths of existence and harness their power in the service of personal change and growth.' Read Love's Executioner, and weep.Ã¢â ¬Â•

Irvin D. Yalom, M.D., is an emeritus professor of psychiatry at Stanford University and a psychiatrist in private practice in San Francisco. He is the author of many books, including Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy, The Gift of Therapy, and When Nietzsche Wept.

I first read Love's Executioner a few years ago and was so taken with it, I've recommended it

dozens of times. Recently, I listened to the audio versionÃ Â Love’s Executioner: & Other Tales of Psychotherapy, which was great (it also includes an interesting interview with Irvin Yalom) and I heard some things I hadn’t picked up when reading it. In fact, I realized this work has such depth, it is worth revisiting again and again. What makes it so good? It contains the wisdom of a master existential therapist, who is also a gifted storyteller (Love’s Executioner is non-fiction, based on real case histories, but it reads like fine fiction).And what is existential psychotherapy? It begins with the idea that our fundamental psychological dis-ease results from difficulties baked into human existence, such as our fear of death and our ultimate aloneness. Or as Yalom writes in Love’s Executioner prologue: There are "four givens that are particularly relevant to psychotherapy: the inevitability of death for each of us and for those we love, the freedom to make our lives as we will, our ultimate aloneness, and, finally, the absence of any obvious meaning or sense to life. However grim these givens may seem, they contain the seeds of wisdom and redemption. I hope to demonstrate, in these ten tales of psychotherapy, that it is possible to confront the truths of existence and harness their power in the service of personal change and growth." *That paragraph captures the core blueprint of the book, but if you stopped there you’d be missing out. Like all great artists, Yalom brings those essential issues to life so you feel them in your bones. He stops our breath through the stories, intimate details, and insights into the lives of some of his extraordinary patients (or sometimes "ordinary"ish, but made extraordinary in Yalom’s capable hands). The tender truth often shimmers in Love’s Executioner. We see the art of psychotherapy, and thus living, practiced by a master, both as a writer and a guide to how to midwife psychological wisdom.Other reviewers here have pointed out that Love’s Executioner is must reading for therapists and those undergoing psychotherapy. This is true, and Yalom, is understandably a rock star among therapist, not just for his skillful prose (he is also an accomplished novelist), but his textbooks that have been read by at least two generations of therapists. But it would be a shame if this masterwork--and I do believe it’s fair to call Love’s Executioner his master work--weren’t read by everyone. For it has something for everyone: whether you like fiction or non-fiction. Lovers of fiction get the storytelling and intimacy of a great novel. Readers of non-fiction know these are stories of real patients and get actionable take-aways. As noted, I plan to reread or relisten to this book periodically, knowing I’ll pick up something new each time. Books don’t get much better than this.* In Love’s Executioner, Yalom notes that he doesn’t belong to a psychological school of thought. Since I see existential psychological dilemmas as true for everyone, regardless of your philosophical or religious beliefs, I tend to agree with him. That said, I do believe this is still an outlook, and that there will be others with a different outlook that will consider existential therapy a school of thought. -I originally got a

promotional/review copy of the audiobook, but think it is so good, I got extra copies and have given copies to friends and coworkers.

Fascinating stories of therapeutic relationships. Yalom writes with refreshing honesty, revealing his own struggles with preconceptions. He provides hope for elders who are considering therapy. If you are obese, disregard the negative reviews centered on YalomÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s prejudices. Find out for yourself and donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t miss this treasure.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“If we stare too hard into the past, itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s easy to be overcome with regret. But now the important thing is to turn towards the future. WeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve got to think about change. What must not occur is that five years from now you look back with regret over the way youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve lived these coming five years.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•

Irvin Yalom never disappoints, and Love's Executioner is no exception. His tales of client and therapistare like parables really of people like us who are looking to get through that which paralyzes them. And lucky us! We get to listen in to their conversations - we become witnesses to their transformation. Sometimes it is the client who is stuck, occasionally it is the therapist. There is one story in particular that sticks with me (it was maybe 6 months ago that I read this) about a nurse who attends to a difficult in attitude patient. The nurse eventually challenges the patient and has wondered ever since if she harmed or helped the dying woman in saying what she did, in saying what must be said. She suspects she has harmed. What she finds out in talking this through with her therapist (who, in fact, knew the woman himself) ends up transforming her and us who listen in.

One chapter relating to a patient that is overweight and depressed it seemed like he didn't completely understand the complexity of weight loss, especially with women. BUT this is what is so special about this book. He knows he's prejudice and doesn't get it. Which is what most therapists probably struggle to accept. Especially in a society in which we try to all be understanding about each other, exposing therapists as people with their own delusions is an important thing to accept about psychology. We never truly isolate our nature, and history from our purpose. The subtle interactions between him and his patients shows the essence of how subconscious human interaction impacts reactions to conscious psyche.

I don't know, is this really how it works with psychotherapy? Well. But this book gives insight in some problems everybody might face to some degree, like living in the past, being delusional about

yourself (looks, importance, impact) being procrastinating or fearful and blocked.Some of the stories are strange and most of the protagonists are. But it's written with an eternal hope of betterment. Of a light at the end of any tunnel. So it's quite uplifting and I think it helps being more critical of your fears and hopes and outlook on life.And it's personal, that is great, the author does admit to being human and hating this and that, being totally averse and having problems. Perhaps he overstates his own importance for the patients but perhaps not. This aspect makes me wonder if psychotherapy is a prop for a clinging vine (the patient) that might of might not be necessary for ever.

Although I am not an existentialist at heart, I did not throw the baby out with the bath water. Yalom has a way with words and can present these insights in a cohesive manner. This was a very compelling read. I could not put it down. I read it cover to cover in a couple of days. I did not agree 100% with some of his answers to patients or some of his actions, but at least he was honest in his reactions and was not arrogant enough to say he has all the answers either. That I can respect. One of his best books, I believe.

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