



After

Nikki Gemmell

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Australia's bravest and most honest writer explores the devastating aftermath of her elderly mother's decision to end her own life.

Nikki Gemmell's world changed forever in October 2015 when the body of her elderly mother was found and it became clear she had decided to end her own life. After the immediate shock and devastation came the guilt and the horror, for Nikki, her family, relatives and friends. No note was left, so the questions that Elayn's death raised were endless. Was the decision an act of independence or the very opposite? Was it a desperate act driven by hopelessness and anger, or was her euthanasia a reasoned act of empowerment?

After is the story of Elayn Gemmell - and the often difficult, prickly relationship between mothers and daughters, and how that changes over time. As anguished as it truthful, as powerful as it is profound, *After* is about life, death, elderly parents, mothers and daughters, hurt and healing, and about how little, sometimes, we know the ones we love the most.

A deeply intimate, fiercely beautiful, blazingly bold and important book.

After Details

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Author : Nikki Gemmell

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From Reader Review After for online ebook

Nicole Foster says

Nikki Gemmel shares with the reader the horrific process of hearing your mother has taken her own life all alone due to mismanaged chronic pain.

This book, I found to have two main points 1. mismanaged chronic pain with opioid use & 2. Assisted dying/euthanasia.

Nikki explores the barriers her mother faced in accessing appropriate health care for her chronic pain. knowledge gaps from general practitioners; lack of referral to pain management specialists & allied health & lack of treatment options lead to opioid addiction & suffering.

Because of the suffering Nikki's mother was undergoing she decided to take her own life, all alone, a lonely death because current Australian laws prohibit anyone being present or enabling a suicide. Someone had to find her, her corpse needed to be identified, a police investigation followed, adding extra stressors to an already stressful situation.

Since Nikki made her mother's story & her own experience public, Nikki has received numerous feedback of similar stories from other sufferers looking to take their own lives, stories from other families who have experienced the same trauma & from medical professionals.

Nikki is an advocate for assisted dying.

Melinda Crumblin says

I've struggled to read Gemmel's fiction on more than one occasion, but much like with Bryce Courtenay, I find the non fiction easier to read and interesting. This was more about euthanasia and elder suicide with some grief and mother-daughter relationship thrown in. Sometimes it read just like a stream of consciousness, but I found the euthanasia issues truly gripping. Our country definitely needs to make progress in this area. Thank you Nikki for sharing your story and Elayn's.

Sherry Mackay says

This book was interesting to me. A couple of my family members have killed themselves so I can understand how this author felt about her mother. The annoying thing about this story was that it is mostly about the writer rather than her mother. I never felt I had much of an inkling about how her mother had lived her life. It was all me me me. She kept whingeing about how the suicide affected her and her life. She never seems to come to grips with the fact that her mother was in pain and felt there was no answer but death. I kept waiting for some resolution at the end where this writer comes to grips with it all but it never happens. She still seems very self-centred at the end. I was glad to see that she understood a little more about why people kill

themselves. I don't know why she would expect a person about to kill themselves to have rational thoughts. this book is interesting if you are interested in the issue of euthanasia but the writer is quite self-indulgent which annoyed me.

Girlwithapen93 says

I have been following Nikki Gemmell and the interesting things she has to say for a while now, so when I saw that she has a new book coming out about herself and her mother, I knew I wanted to read it. The book is about Gemmell and her mother's relationship and the untimely demise of her mother's end of life. This book is essentially a heartbreaking letter to Gemmell's now deceased mother and their life together. It is also about the important and often not spoken enough issue of euthanasia. There are a lot of facts and statistic in the book, opinions and options on the issue and the way that Gemmell has delivered it, is heartbreaking, raw and much needed in our world today.

The book is not necessarily a story but rather a collection of thoughts and feelings that Gemmell had when her mother passed away. It talks about Gemmell's mother life from beginning and end, Gemmell's own life and the strained relationship they have always had. Gemmell's reaction of the death and how it impacted her and her young children's life. More importantly though, Gemmell doesn't dwell on the fact that it has happened to her mother, but rather that it happens all the time and something about the euthanasia laws have to be changed.

The writing in the book is special. Like I said, it is not a story but rather a collection of thoughts, and the writing reflects that. It is slow and static, fast and rolling. It is a collection of put together thoughts and feelings and sometimes the sentences don't end or are just one word. But this is what makes the book. Because of the way it has been written, it hits you right in the heart and makes it hurt that much more worse. "What is lost: the complexity of Elayn. She wasn't evil, or bad, or wicked. She was just a woman. A contradictory, wounded, thinking, empowered, impetuous, exhausted, mighty women. She chose, most often, a fighter's path. No female had a stronger presence. It was never indifferent" page 282.

This book is going to make you think and feel and make you probably cry, but is a must read if you know someone who has taken their own life or are interested in the euthanasia debate.

Michele Harrod says

I chose to read this exact book right now for so many reasons I can't really elaborate here, but I can confirm that I found this deeply cathartic on so many levels. The exploration of the mother/daughter relationship Nikki had with Elayne was both insightful and liberating. That her mother chose euthanasia and all of the probable reasons behind that, have served to reinforce my absolute conviction that the legal means and processes available to people overseas (at establishments such as Dignitas) is a right we must surely fight to allow everyone access to, should they be in a position to truly require (and deserve) a dignified, assisted departure, surrounded by those they love. To use the threat of 'suicide' as a means of manipulating others in your life, on the other hand, is a crime so terrible, it allows me to put this book down in complete conviction, that those who do so, do not deserve to share another moment of what remains of mine.

Lisa Pigna says

This literary tragedy chronicles the story of a mother daughter relationship into adulthood and confronting the choice of her mother to take her own life as she cannot live with chronic illness and pain. Nikki's pain comes off the pages as she analyses her relationship that many times see sawed guilt and failure in not seeing her mothers needs and a lack of knowledge of her ultimate choice. The busyness of her life as a mother herself and her own journey overlays the decision to move back to Australia to be home and closer to her mother who has been an enigma in her own life. The sadness of Nikki wanting to be accepted and validated by her mother is forever trapped in an unresolved decision. The law dictates the isolation necessary to take your own life and puts families in a permanent void of sorrow and guilt as it was in this book. Writing this has put the authors feelings and experience into a place that others may have to experience if laws do not accomodate those that want and need to make that decision in Australia.

Jodie Gale says

Nikki Gemmell started writing *After*, the day she found out that her mother had ended her own life.

Many of the reviews focus on the obvious topics of death and dying – but for me, this book was more about the complexities of the mother-daughter relationship , early childhood emotional neglect, emotional abuse and trauma, and the struggle to separate and individuate from early childhood wounding.

Working with women in therapy, and with a wide range of concerns, exploring and healing the mother-daughter relationship is always part of our work together. Narcissistic wounding is often at the core. By this I mean, the daughter is not seen in her own light and her emotional, psychological and spiritual needs were not met, often because the mother's needs were also not met.

Nikki Gemmell does a wonderful job of writing about these issues and I love that she has found a creative space to 'see' herself. It takes guts, authenticity, vulnerability and courage to write a book like this!

This memoir is a must for anyone interested in delving deeper into the psyche of the mother-daughter relationship.

Review also here with link to Australian Story: <http://jodiegale.com/after-by-nikki-g...>

Rosalie says

'After' is about the painful necessity of coming to terms with living after the unexpected death of a parent. It is a tribute to Nikki Gemmel's mother, Elayn who committed suicide alone, most likely because it is illegal in Australia to take your own life or assist someone to do so. It is however, Nikki's love, hate, admiration for and desire to understand her mother that compelled her to write the memoir of her mother's life. Elayn was a woman whose beauty had enabled her to escape from the usual community and societal expectations but who had finally acquiesced and reluctantly gave up her career to become a wife and mother.

Elayn seemed to have put all of her thwarted ambition onto her only daughter Nikki "she wanted the perfect

daughter. Beautiful, quiet, talented, successful, pliant. The daughter wanted the perfect mother. Loving generous, nurturing, understanding and forgiving.” However, this intense relationship based on the “pursuit of perfection” and control was toxic. As adults we are always going to be in a state of powerlessness and imperfection when we have children, but if we try to live through our children neither parent or child will be true to themselves.

As a writer and a weekly columnist Gemmel had the opportunity to receive many positive (and some negative) communications with people who had lost loved-ones but also enabled her to meet one amazing woman who was able (financially) to plan her own death in Switzerland. These communications and comments on euthanasia in Australia and elsewhere are very enlightening and make the book so much more readable.

MagicParadox says

'After' is a soul-searching, passionate, heartfelt account of the suicide of Nikki's mother, Elayn. I found myself aching for Nikki's regret and self-reflection on her lack of presence, as well as for Elayn's disenfranchisement, increasing debilitation and chronic pain, and disconnection.

The rawness and authenticity of 'After' drew me in deeply. Nikki is eloquent in her writing, and chronicles the unintentional self-absorption we all get caught up in, inadvertently fracturing and disconnecting from family relationships.

The book covers suicide, grief and bereavement, euthanasia, self-learning, mother/daughter challenges, chronic pain, life-changing devastation, and the stark realities of the less-than-perfect families most of live in.

Alongside a call to debate euthanasia honestly, Nikki's agonising journey is a call for us to act on the bitter rift of familial silence: “...for with those great familial silences, surely the most bitterest rifts of all, can come a sapping of the spirit, a corrosive bewilderment, a heaviness that's carried through life. You can't be hurt by someone you don't care about” (Gemmell, 2017, p.151).

Carmel Demery says

I'm on a roll reading really good thought provoking books. This is the true story of the death of a mother. Nikki and Elayn have a wretched prickly mother/daughter relationship. There is much love and respect but also a lot of critical judgement that exists. Elayn has always shocked and done things uniquely as a mother and she does that in death also by choosing euthanasia. The anger and grief that Nikki feels is raw yet over the course of the book she learns so much more about her mothers choice through the voice of others and by examining her mother more thoroughly. Without a doubt her mother endured chronic pain - apparently the main reason why the elderly choose death by euthanasia. A wonderful book about fraught mother/daughter relationships and how death can set us on a course of how to live and love.

Di says

A stream of consciousness memoir from Nikki Gemmell, following the death of her mother Elayn. Elayn suffered from chronic pain for many years, prior to taking her own life. In this book, Nikki reflects on the pain and shock for herself and her family, and her brothers and on her prickly relationship with her mother. She also tries to understand the issues around euthanasia raised by her mother's death - an act of fear or of independence. This leads to her to meet "Helena" a doctor suffering from long term chronic pain who has decided to end her life in one year hence with Dignitas and to correspond with Dr Nitschke of Exit International.

Gemmell is, as always, a beautiful writer and has linked the narrative with the concept of Kintsugi - a Japanese method of repairing broken ceramics with resin and gold creating a new object that bears the scars of existence. "The love demonstrated in the Kintsugi object should encourage us to respect what is damaged and find beauty in it."

Robin says

This is a moving and frank account of the author and her family, in journal format, as they try to come to terms with her mother's suicide. She gives an honest, warts and all account of her often fraught relationship with her mother, and while chronicling her mother's frequent coldness and disapproval, is willing to accept the part she plays in their difficult relationship. It's also a story full of sadness and poignancy, as it's not till after her mother's death that she realises how much pain she was in.

There are also so many things she didn't find out about her mother's life till after her death - but isn't that so often the way? We often don't take the time to really get to know our parents as people. The book also explores the contentious issue of euthanasia, as her mother had been a member of Exit International for some time before her death.

The writing is descriptive and lyrical; however the author repeats herself often throughout the book, which became annoying, and because of this I gave it 4 stars instead of 5.

K says

Interesting but a little repetitive.

Jan Miller says

This was a book that Nikki Gemmell needed to write in order to move on with unfinished business between her and a very difficult mother. I think if their relationship had been more straight forward, her mother's choice to die alone and in her own way would have been easier. But it unleashed so much grief for her and by writing it out, speaking to others and getting facts about chronic pain, euthanasia etc she has come though with an ability to put things at rest. Very frank and exposing for both her and her mother- I wonder how her mother's friends dealt with it. At times I felt it could have been shorter. But reinforces the power of writing to

explore deep issues.

Kolumbina says

Wow!!! What a fantastic book. Could easily give 6 or 7 stars or even more.

When I bought this book was worried that it will be too depressing read, but it is not. I think it is one of the books that everyone should read. And I believe that a lot of people will find themselves in various parts of Nikki Gemmell's life story. The book is actually celebration of life, love, motherhood, friendship and all the relationships we make in our lives.

A very honest book and non-judgemental. Loved the part where she described the difficult relationship with her mother, her childhood and her mother's opinions on everything and anything she was doing with her life (work, clothes...).

"I loved my mother but I didn't like her" Nikki Gemmell said in her book. How many of us can say the same thing, easily.

It is also a very personal story, Nikki Gemmell is a brave woman with a great talent for writing.

Well done!!!

The part on "Euthanasia" was also excellent!!!

Mentioning Queen Elizabeth, Virginia Woolf..., really great.

And the letters from other people who suffer and plan Euthanasia shows how people are great and together with similar problems. No we are not society of ignorant people!

Loved it, loved it.

Will continue buying "The Weekend Australian" and reading Nikki Gemmell's column which never disappoints.
