

# BEING MORTAL

1 X 53 HD



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## CONTACT

Tom Koch, Vice President  
PBS International  
10 Guest Street  
Boston, MA 02135 USA

TEL: 617-300-3893  
FAX: 617-779-7900

jtkoch@pbs.org  
pbsinternational.org

Death is something we will all one day face. So why is it so hard for doctors to talk with their patients about dying? How can the medical profession better help people navigate the final chapters of their lives with confidence, direction, and purpose?

Renowned surgeon and *New Yorker* writer Atul Gawande explored those questions in his best-selling book, *Being Mortal*. Now, Gawande teams with FRONTLINE on a documentary that brings his personal journey—and the stories of his patients and their families—to life and challenges us all to reexamine how we think about death and dying.

“You don’t have to spend much time with the elderly or those with terminal illness to see, over and over and over again, how medicine fails the people it is supposed to help,” says Gawande, who practices at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

“Hope is not a plan,” Gawande adds. “We find from our trials that we are literally inflicting therapies on people that shorten their lives and increase their suffering, due to an inability to come to good decisions.”

Three years in the making, the film explores the relationships between doctors and patients nearing the end of life, and shows how many doctors—including Gawande—struggle to talk honestly and openly with their patients who are dying. From the Indian hometown of Gawande’s father, whose prolonged dying process catalyzed Gawande’s quest to better understand end-of-life care, to the bedsides of patients in Boston who are navigating the ends of their lives, *Being Mortal* is an intimate and revealing journey with relevance to all of us.

The film—directed by Tom Jennings, who previously teamed with Gawande on the 2011 FRONTLINE film *Dr. Hotspot*—also explores the burgeoning art and science of palliative care and the ways in which having a conversation around the question, “What are your priorities if your time is limited?” can empower patients to live their lives fully.

*Being Mortal* will shine an unprecedented spotlight on how patients, families, and doctors all experience the end stages of life. The ultimate goal, after all, is not a good death, but a good life—all the way to the very end.

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## CREDITS

*Writer, Producer, Director:* Tom Jennings

*Co-producer:* Lauren Mucciolo

*Writer, Correspondent:* Atul Gawande

*Deputy Executive Producer for FRONTLINE:* Raney Aronson-Rath

*Executive Producer for FRONTLINE:* David Fanning

*Photo:* Courtesy of FRONTLINE



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