



Critical Review



By:

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Arantes ACQ. *Pra vida toda valer a pena viver: pequeno manual para envelhecer com alegria*. 1st ed. Rio de Janeiro: Sextante; 2021.

Have you ever stopped to reflect on how you are preparing your luggage for the presumed journey of old age? Long journeys require systematization, as does our uncertain and probable future as human beings. The book *Pra Vida Toda Valer a Pena Viver* leads us to reflect on what we have put in our suitcases to use during what could be our only and last journey: old age.

Dr. Ana Cláudia de Lima Quintana Arantes is a doctor who graduated from the University of São Paulo (USP) in 1993 and has a Residency in Geriatrics at the Hospital das Clínicas of the Faculty of Medicine of USP (1997). She has a Postgraduate degree in Psychology – Grief Interventions from the *4 Estações Instituto de Psicologia* and a specialization in palliative care from the University of Oxford and the Pallium Institute (2008). In addition, she is a founding member of the *Casa do Cuidar - Prática e Ensino em Cuidados Paliativos*, where she coordinates training courses in palliative care. As a writer, she has released books, such as *A Morte é Um Dia Que Vale a Pena Viver* (2016), *Histórias Lindas de Morrer* (2020), and *Pra Vida Toda Valer a Pena Viver* (2021), among others. Since 2015, she has taught classes, lectures, and workshops on aging, compassionate communication, and conversations about death.

Pra Vida Toda Valer a Pena Viver is divided into nine parts that present different segments, such as embracing aging, mourning, losses, family relationships, and death. The metaphor of the Sahara desert

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guides the discourse of the book: an analogy created by the author to symbolize our old age. In this allegory, the author and the reader conduct the following imagery exercise: initially, they assume that they are 40 years old and that they will definitively move to the Sahara in 30 years, and the only way not to embark on this journey is to die before the stipulated deadline. When the day of the expected trip arrives, both embark on their destination. A few hours after disembarking in the desert, several difficulties are experienced by various complaints, such as unbearable morning heat and nighttime cold, thirst, winds, sandstorms, and sunstroke. The reader may even want or think about going back, realizing that living like this until their last breath will make this journey very painful. However, as previously agreed, the trip does not have a return ticket, forcing travelers to deal with all the difficulties imposed by the desert.

From this perspective, Dr. Ana Cláudia explains to readers that the trip to the desert must be pragmatically organized, bearing in mind that we, readers and future travelers, must use the decades of preparation to pack our bags and take the needed luggage to live with our old age. Using experiences, narratives, paraphrases, and studies, she manages to impact her readers on the importance of health promotion and care in line with the social and family support network as a way of guaranteeing, or at least slowing down, an aging experience with sufficient physical and emotional health for the stay in the desert. The author skillfully uses accessible and, at the same time, striking rhetoric to evidence the multiple possibilities of aging.

If we do not die in a way that does not respect the life expectancy stipulated in our country (76.2 years [IBGE 2023]), we will certainly grow old. Considering this information, how can we not prepare for this occasion? For Ana Cláudia, it is unacceptable to arrive in the desert without sunscreen, clothing, food, water, and equipment. The hardships that old age has the potential to bring do not care about social class or race; therefore, difficult times await you if you lack planning. In this way, the author proposes some pillars to start building a good, happy old age full of desire and courage to live. According to her, old age is a process that has the potential to limit physical health and involves losses of people, movement, and freedoms. Thus, active participation in the process and decisions is needed, as well as avoiding behaving passively and waiting to be a victim of time.

In this sense, embracing aging, taking care of the body and mind, polishing relationships, learning to lose, living with grief, cultivating good memories, recognizing and treating pain, finding meaning in existence, and making peace with the time of dying after getting older are chapters that Ana Cláudia brings together “to raise awareness about the finiteness of life so that all people have the right to a dignified death” and tries to “shed light on the happy period”, making it possible to enjoy existence, not just survive. Despite everything, she brings hope of a phase of life full of encouragement, with perspectives and big and small happiness. All of this is possible as long as we start our preparation now without wasting a single minute. *Pra Vida Toda Valer a Pena Viver* brings, besides the daily guidelines, such as regular physical exercise and good nutrition, the

value of our long-term relationships, strengthening bonds, and memory exercises, among other activities that help us overcome illnesses of the body, mind, and soul.

The book is full of important reflections that expand the mentality about aging, a topic that is relegated, sometimes even untouched, by a considerable portion of the population. The ideas and insights that appear can be applied to different audiences, regardless of age group. Therefore, it is possible, plausible, and needed to build old age from youth without denying the transformations inherent to aging and fruits of time without giving up well-being and joy, with independence and vitality, even with the experiences of losses, whatever they may be because life is worth living after all.

Despite not being a strictly theoretical book, *Pra Vida Toda Valer a Pena Viver: Pequeno Manual para Envelhecer com Alegria* offers excellent practical and reflective contributions on aging. Ana Cláudia de Lima Quintana Arantes, with her professional background in geriatrics and palliative care, presents valuable perspectives and advice, making the work an enriching source for those seeking concrete and meaningful guidance for the journey of old age.