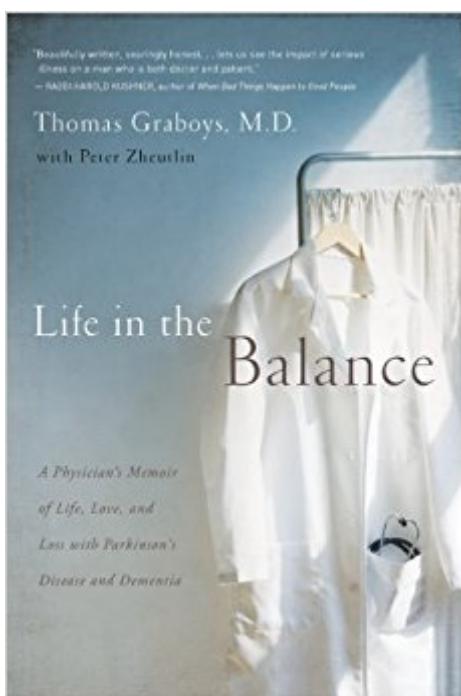


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# Life In The Balance: A Physician's Memoir Of Life, Love, And Loss With Parkinson's Disease And Dementia



## Synopsis

At the age of 49, Dr. Thomas Graboys had reached the pinnacle of his career and was leading a charmed life. A nationally renowned Boston cardiologist popular for his attention to the hearts and souls of his patients, Graboys was part of "The Cardiology Dream Team" summoned to treat Boston Celtics star Reggie Lewis after he collapsed on the court in 1993. He had a beautiful wife, two wonderful daughters, positions on both the faculty of Harvard Medical School and the staff of Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, and a thriving private practice. Today, Graboys is battling a particularly aggressive form of Parkinson's disease and progressive dementia, and can no longer see patients or give rounds. He is stooped, and shuffles when he walks, the gait of a man much older than his 63 years. Despite the physical, mental and emotional toll he battles daily, Graboys continues his life-long mission of caring for the world one human being at a time by telling his story so that others may find comfort, inspiration, or validation in their own struggles. This is an unflinching memoir of a devastating illness as only a consummate physician could write it. One can't help but imagine what Dr. Graboys, the healer, would say to Tom Graboys, the patient; a face-to-face scene imagined in this inspiring book. In his joint roles, Thomas Graboys finds a way to convey hope, optimism and an appreciation of what it means to be truly alive.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At the top of his professional game at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital

and on the Harvard Medical School faculty but at a personal nadir after the death of his wife, cardiologist Graboys began presenting physical and mental signs he at first wrote off as after-effects of prolonged stress and exhaustion. Despite his best efforts to control the situation, first through denial, then by reducing his private-practice patient load, the symptoms doggedly progressed. In the meantime, he remarried. But when he passed out on the wedding day, he knew his problems were more serious than he wanted to admit. Before long, he was diagnosed with the double whammy of Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia, an associated degenerative disease. In this stirring and chilling memoir, he takes an unblinking look at himself as his mind and body suffer unrelenting hits from those progressive illnesses. An unforgettable doctor-as-patient account, including reflections by Graboys's daughters, sons-in-law, and members of the families blended by his marriage. --Donna Chavez

Beautifully written, searingly honest . . . lets us see the impact of serious illness on a man who is both doctor and patient. --Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* "[A] stirring and chilling memoir...an unforgettable doctor-as-patient account." --Booklist "Doctors get seriously ill just like ordinary people, and some of them never recover from the shock. If of a literary bent, they are often moved to reflect for posterity on this disruption of the natural order, detailing their former hubris and the enlightening misery of health care experienced from the other side of the bed. Against this generally lackluster collection of memoirs, Dr. Thomas Graboys's stands out as a small wonder. Unsentimental and unpretentious, it manages to hit all its marks effortlessly, creating a version of the old fable as touching, educational and inspiring as if it had never been told before."- Abigail Zuger, *The New York Times* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

While I did find parts of this book enlightening as to the various aspects of what the disease does to the patient, in my opinion, far too much of it was highly repetitive. Now we know Dr. Graboys has impeccable credentials, but the dialogue relative to that topic was a bit overdone. I did like the parts where the family dynamics were mentioned, especially from his children and stepchildren, and the intricacies of the disease. I was hoping more were written by the author about the dementia facet of his illness. I also liked the psychological aspects of his mourning his first wife, and the intertwining of that event to his current losses as far as his physical health. However, I do feel that there are better books written on the topic, and while I finished it, I can't say it really held my interest.

By now what might be called the deadly-disease memoir is a standard literary genre: the successful, happy man or woman laid low by a fatal ailment, soldiering on against all odds. Thomas Graboy's new book about living with Parkinson's disease silences cynicism about yet another entry into the sweepstakes. Besides being a man of much more than average gifts, material wealth, looks and success, he writes from the perspective of someone whose entire identity was shaped by being a medical doctor, a brilliant cardiologist, someone whose life's work was to take care of others. All this is now lost to him and he admits, with frequently bruising candor, the emotional cost to him and his family. Dr. Graboy's particular case of Parkinson's, as he explains, involves actual dementia, and although the book was written with the aid of a co-author, nevertheless the signs of mental difficulty are evident in the short-windedness and occasional repetitiveness of the writing. Several dozen pages are devoted not to Graboy's own writing but to passages contributed by his siblings, his children and their in-laws, passages the author did not screen in advance of their inclusion. What would be defects in another book here are in themselves touching, clear evidence of the author's ongoing struggle to maintain some sense of self-worth and productivity. He does not spare himself, dissecting in painful detail the ravages his progressive disease, and his occasional denial of its seriousness, has inflicted on his second marriage. (He did not reveal to his spouse at the time of his wedding that he was already suffering from Parkinson's, and it is perhaps significant that his wife does not contribute any writing of her own.) By the end of this volume the reader is shattered, drained, but also moved and uplifted by Dr. Graboy's resilience and optimism in the face of the darkest odds.

I bought this book to better understand what a relative - who also happens to be a highly accomplished physician - was going through as he struggles with Parkinson's. The book was very helpful in this respect, especially as Graboy's admitted to having narcissistic tendencies (which said relative also has) as I could get clear insights into how staggeringly humiliating it was for him to be so dependent on others and to lose his mental acuity. The most poignant section of the book were the pieces written by his children and sons-in-law about how their relationship with their father had changed. It seems a bit churlish to criticize the book on its literary merit, but that's why it gets four instead of five stars - it is a bit repetitive, it begins to get a bit flabby in the last third, and I wish he'd clarified which of his symptoms were from Lewes dementia and which from Parkinson's. It is, above all, a brave and honest book.

Excellent, thought-provoking read. I was required to read it for a class, but I enjoyed it so thoroughly

that I may actually read other memoirs now. Thank you, Dr. Graboys

This book is one health care professionals should have to read. The author struggles so with his loss. He also talks about a truly wonderful healthcare practice philosophy. He's a little whiny, but who in his position wouldn't be? The book gets a little repetitive. That's about it.

I really was hoping for more on how he was dealing with the Parkinson's and dementia than his life before. It was interesting but I really was hoping for more on his present life.

Well written book, engaging. But this is an egotistical author who could not put himself in human shoes. I am in the medical profession and am continually offended by the god complex of physicians. Read the book and learn about the dementia associated with Parkinson's

It brought you face to face with the agony of watching your life change when you are diagnosed with PD. It was very real and revealing of a person's daily walk with PD. It also showed how it affects the whole family. Also, deals with the fear of what the future will bring. How much of your control over your body will you lose down the road?

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