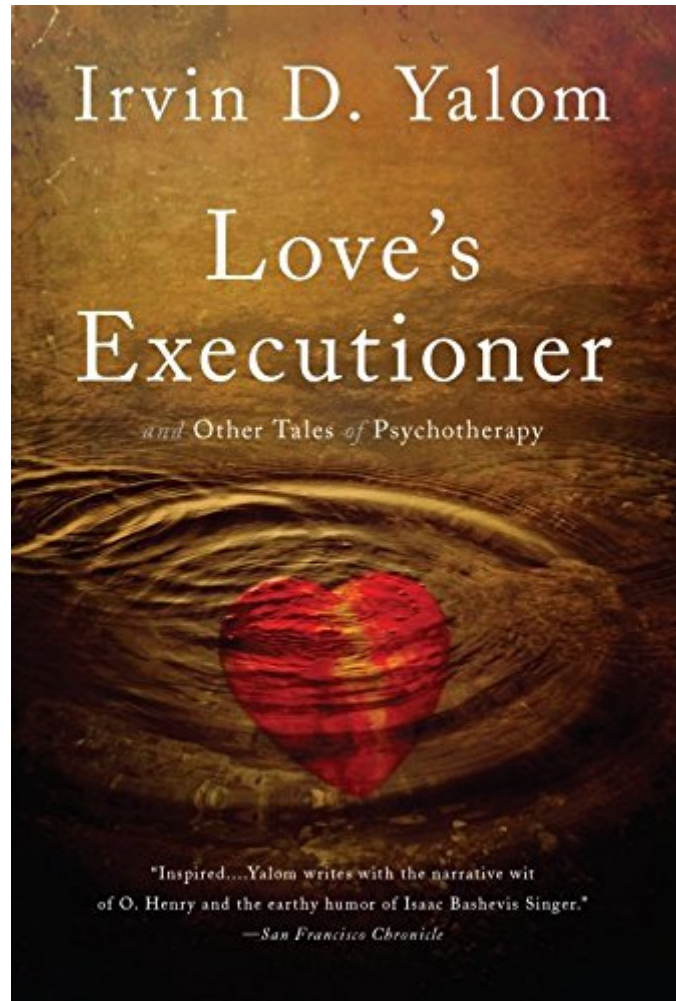




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Love's Executioner



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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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 version *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.

This book should be required reading for anybody either undergoing psychotherapy or providing it. Irvin Yalom uses his experience with ten clients to illustrate how people change in therapy. Sometimes the change comes out of brilliant insights, sometimes it comes from the therapist's mistakes. Either way, Yalom's integrity in relating these vignettes helps the reader understand the process better. If you're not in therapy, perhaps this book will help you understand yourself and your internal processes a bit better. Which of Yalom's patients do you identify with? Which to you totally reject? Either of those patients, and Yalom's treatment of them, has something to teach you. If you are in therapy, notice how Yalom treats his patients, how he thinks about them. How does this compare to your relationship with your therapist? Do you experience the same challenges, the same caring, the same dynamic? Or do you just show up and whine for an hour? As a therapist, I found Yalom's work particularly brave. Who would write a book about their mistakes? Yet, from his mistakes, I find myself learning--and also better enabled to learn from my mistakes. Reading Love's Executioner helped to keep me from sitting on that God-like Throne and remember to be a human being with my clients; a fellow sufferer, an ally in the healing process. And if the idea of therapy seems not to apply to you, then you may simply find this book a fascinating story about how a thoughtful and insightful man deals with the sorrows, wounds, and needs of other human beings. These stories impart a powerful understanding of human relationships, whether you're involved in therapy or not. Five stars for candor and courage.

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