

# Why Thinking About Dying Makes Us More Generous

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## *Huffington Post:*

You're visiting a friend who lives on the 20th floor of an old, inner city block of apartments. It's the middle of the night when you are suddenly awakened from a deep sleep by the sound of screams and the choking smell of smoke.

You are shocked to find the room filling fast with thick clouds of smoke. Grabbing a blanket off the bed and using it as protection, you manage to turn the handle and open the door.

Almost immediately, a huge wave of flame and smoke roars into the room, knocking you back and literally off your feet. There is no way to leave the room. Panicked, you scramble to the only window in the room and try to open it.

As you struggle, you realize the old window is virtually painted shut around all the edges. It doesn't budge. You drop to the floor hoping to escape the rising smoke, but it is too late.

The room is filled top to bottom with thick fumes and is nearly entirely in flames. With your heart pounding, it suddenly hits you, as time seems to stand still, that you are literally moments away from dying.

Yikes. What an excruciating and terrifying way to go. If you're like me, you experienced a moment of panic reading that passage, but relax — you're okay. The above scenario is just an experimental manipulation, one meant to jump-start your existential mind.

Or, one of your two existential minds — if an emerging theory is correct. Psychological scientists Laura Blackie and Philip Cozzolino of the University of Essex, UK, have been exploring the idea that we are all governed by two distinct existential systems, with distinct ways of processing the idea of death. Both have the power to change our attitudes and actions in important ways, but they work in very different — almost opposite — ways.

Read the whole story: [Huffington Post](#)