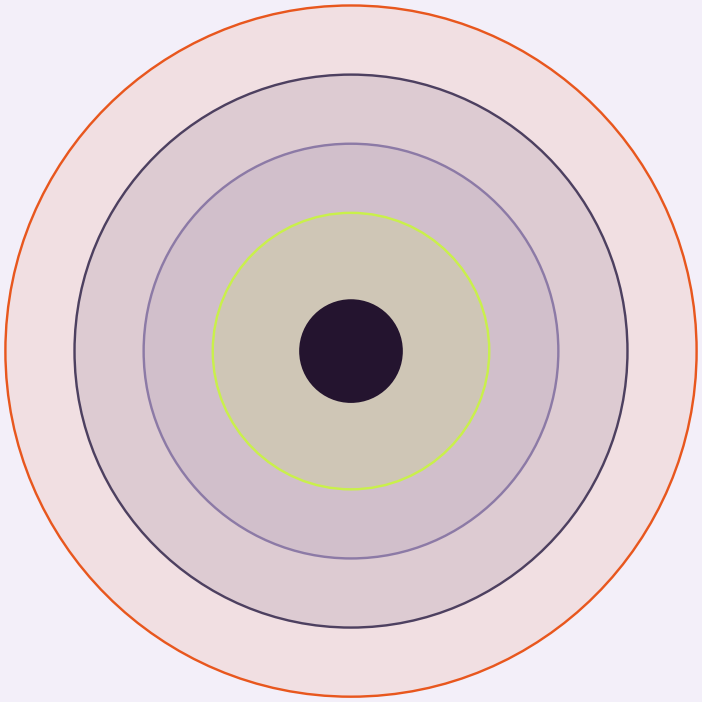
NOVEMBER 6, 2026



Ahead of All Parting: On Learning to Live with an Open Heart

A reading of the book by Barry Michels (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

Inside this edition

The book in a minute 3

The takeaways 4

Your action book 6

Before you go 7

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

The setup checklist 9

Practise Outflow once a day 10

Name one small parting each night 11

Drop one mask a week 12

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Ahead of All Parting: On Learning to Live with an Open Heart, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Barry Michels is a psychotherapist who wrote The Tools and Coming Alive with the psychiatrist Phil Stutz. This short memoir tells what happened after he was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia in 2023, the same disease that killed his father. After a first stretch of despair, Stutz pushed him to write, to study his own psyche and to ask what the illness had come to change in him. Michels chose to tell his patients, friends and family instead of hiding the news, and found that saying it aloud brought people closer. The book moves between plain prose and his own poems, uses the language of the Tools, such as Outflow, to meet fear day by day, and follows a lifelong atheist into a felt relationship with a higher force. Its title comes from a Rilke poem about meeting each parting before it arrives.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Say the hard thing out loud, and it loosens its grip on you.

Michels was a famously private therapist, yet he chose to tell his patients, friends and family about his diagnosis. He saw saying it aloud as the only way he knew to face it with courage. The telling drew people in rather than pushing them away.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A diagnosis can be a question as well as a verdict.

Phil Stutz did not lead with comfort. He pushed Michels to study his own psyche and to ask what the illness had come to change in him. The book treats that question, not the prognosis, as the part he could work with.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The people who love you often want your fear more than your strength.

Michels had spent years trying to look solid for his family. What they wanted was the honest, frightened version of him. Letting them see it became a turning point, and he came to see vulnerability as the best part of himself.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Outflow, giving without keeping score, pulls you out of a stuck place.

Outflow is part of the Tools vocabulary Michels leans on: sending love, gratitude or generosity outward with no thought of a return. He uses it to break the loop of dread that the diagnosis set off, and to rejoin the wider current of life around him.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Practise the small partings so the large one is not a stranger.

The title comes from a Rilke poem. Michels reads it as a reminder that endings run through every life, and that meeting small losses and surrenders on purpose prepares you for the final one.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Creative life can start late, and it can start from the hard place.

After the diagnosis Michels began writing poetry, and it kept coming. The book sets his poems between its prose sections. Writing became a way to turn pain into something he could use and share.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The capacity to love may outlast the capacity to remember.

Michels holds that his ability to love is not shrinking, even as the disease threatens memory and thought. He also argues that moments of tenderness, humour and recognition still get through, even late in dementia.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Faith can arrive as a demand rather than a comfort.

A lifelong atheist, Michels describes a growing sense of a conscious higher force at work in his life. Reviewers note that he does not present it as soft consolation. He experiences it as something that asks more of him.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You cannot always change what is happening, but you can choose how you meet it.

The book does not promise recovery. Its argument is about stance: turning toward people, toward the work you can still do and toward the time you have, instead of closing down.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Tell one person what you are carrying
- [ ] Write the question behind your setback
- [ ] List your small partings
- [ ] Make a playlist for hard days
- [ ] Write one honest poem

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Practise Outflow once a day
- ◯ Name one small parting each night
- ◯ Drop one mask a week

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Tell one person what you are carrying

Pick one person you trust and say, out loud, the news or fear you have kept to yourself.

Keep it to two or three plain sentences.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Write the question behind your setback

Take one difficulty you are facing and write: if this had come to change something in me, what would it be?

Leave the answer rough.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

List your small partings

Write down five endings in your life right now, large or small: a season, a role, a body that does less, a child leaving home.

You cannot meet what you have not named.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Make a playlist for hard days

Gather a short list of music that steadies you, the way favourite music eased things for Michels.

Keep it one tap away on your phone.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Write one honest poem

Set a ten-minute timer and write a short poem about something you are losing or afraid to lose.

It does not need to be good. It needs to be true.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Practise Outflow once a day

Each day, picture one person and send them goodwill or thanks without expecting anything back.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Name one small parting each night

Before bed, name one thing that ended today, however small: a conversation, a light, a plan.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Drop one mask a week

Once a week, when someone you trust asks how you are, answer truthfully instead of saying fine.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

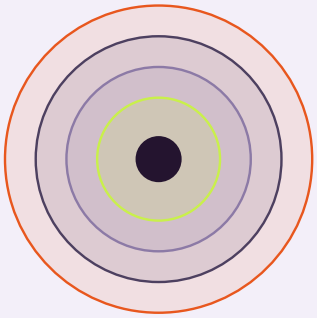
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Meet each small goodbye with an open hand, and the last one will not find you closed.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER BARRY MICHELS