

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. In his foreword, Bill Bryson writes, “Rikke has done the impossible of putting into words an experience that would seem to be beyond expressing,” and many of the critical reviews echo that amazement of her calm, even humorous, yet terrifyingly detailed account of her illness (xi). Have you ever experienced that sense of composure during traumatic events, or known people who did?
2. Rikke is able to recall events from when she was dead and in a coma because of Peter’s detailed journals. “Writing kept him sane,” she states, but it also was key to her recovery, physiologically and psycho-emotionally (13). Discuss how this remove from her own experiences affects her outlook while in the hospital and rehab, as well as the tone of her writing.
3. Rikke’s children are deeply impacted by their mother’s ordeal, especially eight-year-old Daniel. How does he inspire Rikke to be “fearless” in her recovery and life post-hospital (144)?
4. There are many moments when Rikke’s progress seems to be derailed—by the amputation of her fingers, the infection in her sinuses, the watery eye that the doctor misdiagnoses as depression, etc. What motivated her to not lose faith in these moments, but rather to push through and get well?
5. *Foreword Reviews* claims that “this sharp and unselfpitying account has important information for medical professionals and loved ones about how to care for and support postcoma patients.” How is the doctors’ care for Rikke described? Have you ever experienced insensitivity from doctors, and what was your response? And on the other hand, have you ever received extraordinary care from a doctor, and, if so, to what do you attribute that extraordinary care?
6. In her *Wall Street Journal* essay, Rikke writes: “I owe my recovery to the non-medical professional who was my proxy: my husband ... Every patient deserves and needs that kind of voice.” How has she used this book, the “Caregiver’s Checklist” at the end, and her company, Graphicure, to provide a voice for patients like herself? Have you ever been in a situation where you needed someone else to speak for you?