

Allison's Book Corner

May 2025

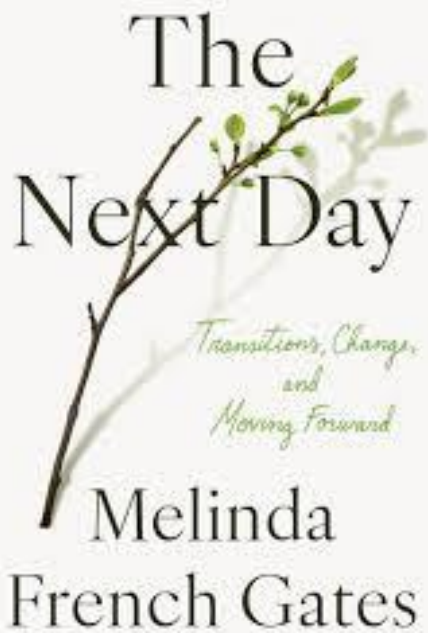
The Next Day: Transitions, Changes, and Moving Forward

by Melinda French Gates

(Flatiron Books, 2025)

"....I believe that there are many aspects of the human experience that are universal. All of us want to feel a sense of ownership over our lives and stories. All of us want to make meaning of the events we live through—the bitter and the sweet. All of us long for connection and the chance to be fully known."

– Melinda French Gates



At first glance it might not seem like we have a lot in common with Melinda French Gates. We recognize the familiar name as wife, mother, and philanthropist. Her former husband Bill Gates has single-handedly changed all of our lives with his company's software.

Do not be fooled by the brevity of this slim 162-page memoir. There's a lot here beyond the gossip surrounding Melinda and Bill's divorce. Let's talk about that first. I was quite surprised by Melinda's faith and spiritual life, which led to her seeking a divorce. One of the most enjoyable parts of the book is reading about Melinda's childhood and her innocent Catholic school days with the nuns. The rest is for you, dear readers, to discover.

I love when I read a book and the author leads you to other books. Melinda finds inspiration in the poet David Whyte, in the spiritual teachers Ram Dass and Jon Kabat-Zinn, and in the author Ziauddin Yousafzai (Malala's

Dad). There's even a shout-out to the Edith Wharton classic, *The Custom of the Country*. (Melinda spends time reading Wharton while pacing in the maternity ward, waiting for the real labor pains to begin.)

Melinda writes to us not as the wealthy lady from some high ivory tower, but as a fellow human being. As a working mother she experienced the familiar "Mom guilt." She writes as one who has sought answers not only from her faith but also from therapy. She is honest about her panic attacks. Like so many of us, she lived through the dark tunnel of divorce and has come out the other side.

Our author recognizes her privilege. It has been widely reported that Melinda and her former husband Bill Gates plan to give away most of their respective fortunes before they die. One of the most painful things she had to do was separate from the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation and form her own foundation, Pivotal Ventures. With it, Melinda is focused on advancing social progress in areas where it has stalled. Her goal is to expand women's power and influence.

It is hard to do this little book justice, because when you are done you realize it packs a punch. I have read it twice. Melinda's words are powerful on every page. Her life story leaves the reader thinking about how one person can change the world and about how each one of us can make a positive difference in our own space.