President and Chief Executive Officer of Associated Banc-Corp Robert C. Gallagher once said, “Change is inevitable — except from a vending machine.” Although this quotation is silly, it highlights a reality we don’t often think about: bodily change. If we are in our 50s, we somehow still imagine we are in our 30s. If we are in our 60s, we still push our bodies and expect that they will act as they did when we were in our 40s. No matter what age we are, we have a hard time accepting the changes that happen to us as we age.

Aging brings chances of stroke, heart attack and other medical emergencies that can render individuals unable to make decisions for themselves. What plans have you made should a life-changing event happen to you or your loved ones? Have you expressed your wishes to others? Would you know how to make the right decisions for someone if you were designated to do so?

So very appropriately titled, the book *The Caregiver’s Path to Compassionate Decision Making* not only answers these questions but also gently guides the reader through the entire process of decision-making in nearly any medical or end-of-life situation. Viki Kind accomplishes a remarkable task by presenting both sensitive and clinical material in an accessible way. She describes use of strategies, tools and questions to determine how to make the right decisions for someone if you were designated to do so.

The “End of Life” section provides specific medical information concerning the process of dying. Kind explains in detail the difference between palliative care, comfort care and hospice care as well as medical decisions related to cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and Do Not Resuscitate (DNR). These are especially helpful to those outside of the clinical field. The vocabulary involved at the end of life alone can be overwhelming.

“Did I Matter?” explores a univer-
The author guides the reader through a step-by-step process of decision-making for those who can’t.

A salient question that people ask when they are dying. Kind beautifully describes an extraordinary ritual that caregivers can perform for the person who is dying that brings comforting closure.

The only caveat I have is in regard to one opinion Kind expresses. She states that more and more people are being abandoned in long-term care facilities, thus “nobody takes the time to make sure good decisions are being made.” My experience is that even if families can’t or won’t advocate for the resident, our facility social workers, nurses and chaplains as well as the state ombudsman all work very hard to speak for them and to protect them.

As a registered nurse with 32 years of acute care and long-term care experience, I have never come across a book that incorporates all the questions that need to be contemplated by caregivers. Kind includes “tool-box resources” as well as other guides, excellent resources for anyone faced with difficult medical decisions.

JANICE FISHER is administrator at Namaste Alzheimer Center, Colorado Springs, Colo.