

Is death a singular event or a process?

We are here until, suddenly, like a light switched off, we are gone.

But while this idea of death is pervasive, evidence is building that it is an outdated social construct, not really grounded in biology. Dying is in fact a process—one with no clear point demarcating the threshold across which someone cannot come back.

Scientists and many doctors have already embraced this more nuanced understanding of death. As society catches up, the implications for the living could be profound. “There is potential for many people to be revived again,” says Sam Parnia, director of critical care and resuscitation research at NYU Langone Health.

Neuroscientists, for example, are learning that the brain can survive surprising levels of oxygen deprivation. This means the window of time that doctors have to reverse the death process could someday be extended.

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“What these studies have shown is that the line between life and death isn’t as clear as we once thought,” says Nenad Sestan, a neuroscientist at the Yale School of Medicine and senior author of both pig studies. Death “takes longer than we thought, and at least some of the processes can be stopped and reversed.”

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full article here**](#)