



**Inspiration and Guidance
for Death and Dying**

from

**H. E. Dza Kilung Jigme Rinpoche
and
Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project**

May 2017



“Inevitably, at some point, we will die. At that time we may think, “Why am I sick and dying?” Then we must remember that birth, old age, sickness, and death are part of life and not something that we should see as our worst enemy. Everything is impermanent; nothing lasts forever. Every day we pass through many smaller journeys and in essence death is no different.”

--H.E. Dza Kilung Jigme Rinpoche

This booklet presents key points of spiritual encouragement and guidance to prepare for one's own death and the death of others. It consists of teachings by Tibetan Buddhist teacher H.E. Dza Kilung Jigme Rinpoche for the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project, together with selected teachings from the Pema Kilaya 2015 Phowa retreat, and material created by the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project under Kilung Rinpoche's direction.

Prepared originally for students of Kilung Rinpoche, this revised edition is now offered more widely.

May all beings benefit from this
"Inspiration and Guidance for Death and Dying".

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Note: text in italics and quotation marks in this booklet are the words of Kilung Rinpoche.

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“DEATH IS REALLY A PART OF LIFE...”

An Introduction from Kilung Rinpoche

“Death and dying are not so different from life. Death is really a part of life and there is no reason for us to separate them. Just as life is seen to be impermanent when we die, death too is impermanent. In Tibet, when asked, ‘Why are you practicing Dharma so diligently, going on retreat, etc.?’ most—even young people—will answer, ‘I am preparing for my death.’ Another answer commonly given is: ‘I am afraid of death and therefore would like to convert that fear into a positive attitude so that I can enjoy life while I have it.’ Tibetans, of course, have a long cultural connection with Buddhism—nearly 1,500 years’ worth—so openness about death comes more naturally to them than to westerners.

In order to be ready, willing, and well-prepared for death, you can use the Buddhist Dharma as a skillful mind-training to change your fears into positive attitudes. For those who believe in reincarnation, death is a window of opportunity for preparing fertile ground and planting positive seeds that will continue to grow in future lifetimes. In their attitude towards religion and practice, I would say that as many as ninety-five percent of Tibetans put their emphasis not on

the present life, but on the continuing journey to enlightenment. Sometimes they contemplate death through the Four Thoughts (precious human life, impermanence, karma, the suffering of samsara); sometimes they pay special attention to meditation on impermanence. Doing so causes one to focus upon that which is most important. Even with ceremonies such as long-life empowerments, the purpose there is to remove obstacles in your life, to live longer, in order that you can accomplish more spiritually and gain greater confidence before death arrives. And, of course, by living longer you can serve more sentient beings. That is the bodhisattva ideal.

But the point here is not to bring Tibetan culture into western life. Rather, it is to bring to the West the enormous amount of information and wisdom about death contained in Buddhism so that we can address this natural part of life positively, rather than doing what we normally do—placing death on the back burner of our minds. We might practice Buddhism for decades—for an entire lifetime, even—ignoring impermanence and death, only to face death as something strange and threatening. Having developed neither familiarity nor confidence, we would then be unable to take advantage of the opportunity death provides.

Confidence in the face of death comes from a deep understanding of what I mentioned in the beginning. When we reflect on the relationship between life and death, we discover that they are integrated—interdependently connected. By becoming united with such wisdom, making it part of you, when death arrives you'll feel no shock. Hope and fear have been released and one is peaceful and present as one dies. In Buddhism, that is what we call 'confidence.'"

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR DEATH

“Now you are facing death...” from Kilung Rinpoche

“Since individuals and their karma are different, it is not possible to present a single standard approach or sequence of practices for helping yourself or others to prepare for death or go through the process of dying. It all depends on the individual’s mind and heart-connections. But generally speaking, as the background and support for the end of life, we all should try hard to bring the views and experience of Buddhist practice—its energy, wisdom, methods, and skillful means—integrating that into everyday life as much as we can. If you practice in that way, this will support the end of life. But if your practice is exclusively “on the cushion”—and your practice stops when you end your session, not mixed or merged with your ordinary mind and life—then you still have a long way to go until you realize the Dharma there in your heart and mind at all times and in all situations. Once you establish an integrated connection between Dharma and your daily life, that definitely will be a strong support for both your life and death.

All of us, no matter how successful or unsuccessful we are or feel ourselves to be in life, have some degree of hope and fear. When the level of hope and fear is strong, we can see it and therefore face it, and sometimes do something about it. But there is also hope and fear on a more subconscious level that is very subtle, permeating our habitual tendencies whether or not there is any reason to react with hope and fear. It is a kind of hidden shadow that often times we are unable to see. We may think that our minds are free of hope and fear until we have a quiet moment—either in meditation practice, contemplating, looking into the nature of mind, observing our thoughts—that allows us to discover hope and fear lurking at the subconscious level. We reach a depth within that enables us to see this. Therefore, meditation and practice is important to discover our habitual tendencies. Once we discover them, we can transform them and let them go. This is a good habit we can establish now, while we are still healthy, our mind is clear and functioning well, and we are not in great suffering or pain. So if we take this opportunity to let go of our egotism and fears and open our hearts as much as possible and take this new attitude into our lives little by little—sometimes with practice on the cushion and sometimes in the reality of our daily lives—this will make a big difference.

So you shouldn't have big expectations of sudden, miraculous changes—your mind suddenly becoming free of ignorance and afflictions. It all needs to be transformed gradually. That's because we have been ruled by these afflictions for so long that we can almost call that our 'mind's nature'—'that's who I am.' Of course, this is not true. Our habits and feelings are, like everything else, impermanent. So it is important to have confidence in the conviction, 'Yes, I can do it. I can bring this open-heartedness to my everyday life.' If you have such determination, I think that is very, very powerful. Your life can be transformed by your own power and wisdom. Buddha said that we ourselves are both our own lord and protector and also our own worst enemy. Therefore we sometime make huge mistakes that only we can make. But at the same time we can make huge positive changes that no one else can make for us. We are potentially both our own lord and protector and our own enemy, capable of destroying our life and path. So develop some strong connections with open-heartedness and let go of hopes and fears. Doing this mind training while we are happy and healthy is a very good idea.

Then, by the time we are aging, sick, and dying, we will have an image and a conviction, and skills that will enable us to face the difficulties and suffering of death. And we will have an

understanding, through previous contemplation, of the meaning of death. We have a sense that death is 'nothing new.' We have developed a deeper, more profound way to open to it, although on occasion we may need reminders: 'Now you are facing death. Now is the important time for you to practice your Dharma. Remember the nature of your mind, and remember your teachers and your positive activities, your practices, and who you really are.' This is very powerful information for practicing for death."

Meditation practices to prepare for one's death

For a brief description of [Tibetan Buddhist practices in preparation for one's own death, see this link](#) prepared by the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project about the practices below. The descriptions are general. Details should be requested from your teacher.

- Basic Practices
- Shamatha (calm abiding)
- Phowa (transference of consciousness at death)
- General Amitabha Practice (Buddha of the Pure Land of Dewachen)
- Shitro (a practice of the 100 Peaceful and Wrathful Deities)
- Using the Bardo Thödol (Tibetan Book of the Dead)
- Yidam Practice (deity meditation)
- Other practices

Sudden death

(from the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project)

There are three phowa practices you can be prepared to use in case you are in a situation (such as an automobile accident, you are drowning, earthquake, etc.) where you realize you are suddenly about to die.

The First: You visualize your body with the central uma channel and your consciousness-energy moving up gradually to merge with Amitabha at the top of your head. Amitabha can be seen as the embodiment of whatever Buddha or buddhafiield (such as Tara or some other) that you are wishing to connect with. This is a slower method.

The Second: This one is derived from deity practice. Here you can visualize the syllable associated with a yidam practice you are familiar with and confident about (such as tam for Tara or hri for Amitabha, etc.) If you have practiced this well you will feel no separation between yourself and the deity and you will simply be merging with the nature of mind. This method is very fast, although you still are using a visualization of Guru Rinpoche or another Buddha or deity as a support, as a starting point.

The Third: This is a truly instantaneous method of Dzogchen where, in the “snap of a finger,” you simply merge with primordial

consciousness as “one taste”—there is no separation between life and death. This is the phowa method of open realization or connecting to the true nature of mind in a single moment.

Clearly, in all three of these methods, you need to have reached a level of familiarity and confidence with the practices whereby they will be effective. And, of course, you have to be quickly aware in these situations that you are probably about to die. For a more general approach: if your death seems to be happening suddenly, you can look upwards, think of the central channel (uma) opening at the top of your head (the tsang buk), think of Amitabha above your crown. You can prepare yourself for this with the following practice: Any time you experience some sudden, dramatic event like a loud noise (an airplane, loud car, falling object, etc.) or have a sudden shock (like airplane turbulence or suddenly having to break in your car), or you stumble, hit your head, etc., let that trigger the sense of “up.” Practice this—make it a habit.

Kilung Rinpoche answers questions about preparing for death

What are the most important daily practices for preparation for death?

“Generally speaking, just being a Buddhist practitioner is preparation, and it’s good preparation. But why? Buddhist practice teaches loving kindness, generating bodhicitta mind (aspiration to awaken for the sake of all beings), and opening the heart. It emphasizes many teachings and practices that do that. And that is definitely very effective for developing our humanity and for becoming whole beings. With that kind of instruction and the exercise of those practices, we will have less chance of harming ourselves, harming others, and through this one’s self can be fully transformed in a positive way.

We can bring benefit to all beings as a result of being involved with bodhicitta prayers and refuge prayers that we dedicate to the awakening of all beings. Then over time we may go beyond saying prayers. We become inspired and we bring bodhicitta heart-mind into our activities in everyday life. We might then begin to practice the Six Paramitas (generosity, ethics, patience, joyful exertion, meditative concentration, wisdom.)

There are also very important teachings about impermanence and emptiness and interdependent origination. There is emptiness, yet, at the same time, everything is interdependently arising. There is a connection, not everything happens in nothingness. These kinds of teachings can help you to look more deeply into your mind: Who am I? Where am I?

Remembering impermanence is important. At first we may dislike or be afraid to think of emptiness, and particularly about impermanence. But the mind has the capacity to transform that initial dislike—our perception can completely change, and then we can arrive at a place where we enjoy the contemplation of impermanence. At some point we reach an understanding of what impermanence is—we feel it fully— and we see that life is not just materialistic. We grasp a total understanding of what reality is and what impermanence means. That, then, is actually a releasing of our fears. These reflections and meditations and the understanding of impermanence are absolutely connected with the moment of death. The moment of death is the time that your awareness of impermanence arises in a bigger way. If many exercises and practices are done before and during this time, it will be less shocking to the dying person. It would be helpful to think of the many facets of

impermanence—how life is impermanent, death is going to come at any time, and the impermanence of feelings, for example.

Impermanence isn't limited to just life and the physical world. When someone has terribly hurt feelings, this too is impermanent, you know—nothing is forever. Understanding this will especially help in western society. I hear it in the West more than in Tibet—things about family members with a history of difficult relationships with their parents or some other relations. Even at the moment of the passing of a loved one, their father, or mother, they still cannot forgive. But letting go of that negative feeling—that's the practice of impermanence, that is emptiness. These are things to work on.

When there is some kind of left over business, if you can forgive, if you just take a moment to finish that, everything transforms into a reunion of happiness, family, and balance. I think that would greatly help the person who is dying to fulfill himself or herself and be able to go with happiness. If you have an understanding of emptiness and impermanence, then these feelings that someone has 'done something to you' can be forgiven—once you understand their true nature. All that the mind believes, says, and holds, keeps going until death. Now if you are taking that energy with you into death and beyond, that

seems like a sad thing. Therefore, as preparation for death, we train the mind. If there is any kind of relationship issue, the best way is to resolve it early...before early...as soon as possible...NOW!

If you are the Buddhist practitioner, you have the aspiration to forgive, because extending forgiveness is our practice. That will bring happiness to yourself and to others. If you stay in a place of judgement about who did this or that and will not budge, it is harder to forgive. Remember, the Bodhisattvas (those who have aroused bodhicitta) are never called victimized, they are called victorious – ‘victorious sons and daughters.’ Why are they called victorious? They have faced the feelings that they have to go through to arrive at forgiveness and they’ve overcome them and accomplished their aim – that is why they are victorious. Sometimes, we may think, ‘Oh if I do that I might more often be victimized by others?’ But it doesn’t really happen that way.”

How does a person know when to start Phowa for themselves?

“If you still have consciousness—not like when you die instantly in a car accident or something—then the dissolutions are really very accurate. You start from not hearing other people talking; maybe you see them moving their lips and talking to your face, but it

becomes more and more difficult to hear them. Everything seems really far away. The sound seems like it is coming from very far away. Likewise smells start to fade, and also the sense of the tongue's movements slows down and it is not easy to move it and say words. You know what you want to say but the tongue doesn't know how to form the words.

All this has to do with the stages of dissolution. You can never be sure which one will start first. Not hearing may start first, or it may be that the tongue and everything dries out first—water dissolution, or there is element dissolution. So sometimes one or the other begins first, it's not necessarily always the same. And you feel that—something is abnormal. Also vision decreases at some point—you are not seeing, it is all blurred. And then the inner states begin to shine. Now everything within is intrinsically waking. So when you pass beyond the stages of smells and touch and so forth, that is the moment for Phowa. However, when the dissolution is happening fast, then that is the time to do Phowa.”

At the moment of death is there sort of a special opportunity?

“Yes, I think so, if there is a little bit more support environmentally, like people energetically involved, giving little hints or reminders, or

hearing special mantras or music or special teachings or something like that, which reminds you. At the same time, there may be the challenge of physical pain or things like that. Yet, at that time, there is much more focus because in the Buddhist teachings of the bardos (intermediate states between death and rebirth) it says that actually with each dissolution of the elements, mind and the nature of rigpa (the innermost nature of mind) is more brilliant, more concentrated. There is less distraction with the elements, and it's almost a kind of coming into a clarity.

So in that sense, if you have more connection and familiarity with the great compassion and the awareness of rigpa, and are familiar with it, there is definitely a special opportunity. That is when most of the great practitioners are liberated, in this Dharmakaya Bardo, the Bardo of Dharmata, before intense bardo phenomena arises. There they think 'this is the place to liberate.' Yeah it's kind of like when we are outside, if it's sunny, everything feels good and warm, we are just hanging out there and not thinking of home, right? Then a storm and wind comes and suddenly we remember 'home.' You know, so that is like when in the state of bardo, that is how the mind can act in that situation."

Please talk about regrets when you are at the moment of death.

“Yes, regrets and all those kind of things are something we have at some point. Human beings are in some sense complicated. For instance, if you are looking for something and you get it, sometimes there is still regret. Like, ‘Oh it should be some other way.’ That is what the mind is caught up with. So while we are healthy and while we are in a good position, that’s the time that we should really be more satisfied and more content, training the mind in ‘OK’. Like here are some things that you wished for, here is what happened, and then if it ends up as a problem, don’t bring in blame or don’t be attached to the feeling of ‘It’s a mistake,’ where you want to throw it out and so on.

Then there is tonglen. Here you take those feelings and let them go instead of pushing them away. If you made a mistake, you aren’t stuck with it. You can make a correction there. The mind can be liberated from the feelings generated by this kind of habit or attachment.

You’re asking about the moment of death, but I prefer that we go a little bit further back—to right now. For now we have a really huge opportunity for training the mind in this way. So try not to have so

much regret in everyday life. That is something you can do, something you can be involved with. Just be satisfied, or happy. Even though we think this or that is not my ultimate desire. But we can also be happy with the 'first draft.' Even though we know this is just a draft. Say 'Ok, this is what my life is, every second it's moving. So why not enjoy this moment?' In this way I think that there is a greater chance of the mind becoming trained and familiarized with letting go of the regrets when they arise. And then at that moment before death when you might say, 'Oh, I wish I had accomplished this or that and now I'm leaving this world,' I'm sure the thought might arise, but then you have more skills and are more used to letting it liberate. So that is, I think, a good practice.

But if you have these kind of thoughts occurring very strongly and find it difficult, then sometimes we have friends and good-hearted people around to consult with. People who will be saying 'Oh, you have done well, you've done everything that you could do,' and things like this that will be encouraging and sometimes help the mind be more clear. And there are other sources of support for this, such as thinking of Amitabha and deity practice, to liberate this kind of feeling of suffering to Dewachen. So there are different ways to go about it."

What about using painkillers when dying?

“In Buddhism we have a practice called tonglen, the exchange of suffering and benefit. As sentient beings we are all sometimes afraid of pain and suffering and we try to avoid it, but that could become the basis for even more pain. The anxiety from the thought of pain comes and we suffer from that even more than if we let the actual pain manifest. With tonglen, we breathe in the suffering of sentient beings and we attach good feelings and then let the suffering go. By exchanging that energy and through this breathing exercise, we open up the mind and gain a little more experience on the physical level too, so when some challenging situations come, it helps that our minds are trained by that experience. With respect to painkillers, if a person is capable of understanding the nature of suffering and compassionately opens his or her mind, it can be useful to allow the experience of a little bit of pain. Through this we may be introduced to a deeper level of compassion.

Generally speaking in the West, the very first choice is to take painkillers. But I would say, don't rush into taking painkillers. Rather, wait and see if it is possible to go without them or to only use them at a minimum. This allows the person to retain some feeling of awareness of his or her own life and to depart in a way where there is

at least some sharpness on the physical level and an awareness of the loved ones around the dying person.”

What does “dying with confidence” mean in Buddhism?

“There are many aspects to this. Of course, no one really wishes to die. Even someone 100 years old and in good health really wishes to live a few more years. But at some point in one’s life, especially as one gets older, it becomes clear that because of mental and physical decline, it isn’t so easy to do things any more. One can therefore aspire to give up one’s previous lifestyle—so busy and engaged with thoughts of the future and the past—and focus on the present. That determination and commitment really resonates with the dying process. One develops a less-rushed, peaceful, and relaxed feeling. All regrets from the past are released. Then when death comes one feels more prepared.

In the actual process of dying, what the dying person experiences comes mainly from the more recent experiences of their life. So if one is less engaged with life and more relaxed at the end of life, the mind is more clear and prepared. That is a universal truth, not dependent on any Buddhist practice. But confidence in Buddhism goes beyond that. Buddhists reflect deeply on impermanence, bodhicitta, and so

on, and especially on the relationship between life and death, discovering that they are both integrated and interdependently connected. Therefore they have prepared their minds so that when death comes they feel no shock or anxiety. Of course there may be some sadness on leaving this life and their loved ones, but they are reminded to let go of hope and fear in the moment of death and are peaceful and present to the process. In Buddhism, that is what's called 'confidence.'"

HELPING OTHERS SPIRITUALLY

To help your loved one who is dying or dead

Kilung Rinpoche worked closely with the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project to develop this information for Sangha members to give to non-Buddhist family and friends:

-Information to Help Your Loved One Who Is Dying or Dead-

When someone is dying, it's so important to have a peaceful environment around them. Otherwise it is easy for them to become distracted from the very special spiritual opportunity that dying and after-death offers every living being. From a Tibetan Buddhist point of view, there is a journey after death. Your loved one is not just going to be nothingness after death. When surrounded by a peaceful, clean environment and energy, it is inspiring for the dying person. Then they have the potential to connect positively to the spiritual journey through their own prayers, meditation, and mental energy, and through the support of those around them.

So it is wonderful to use your heart, thoughts, and prayers anyway that you can to create a peaceful environment to support the dying person to realize their true nature. This is a very important gift for both the dying person and to yourself and the whole family. It also

could be an important experience for your children who are growing up, as part of your family's legacy.

Sometimes family members or friends who come to visit their loved one might feel much sadness and want to cry around the person who is dying or the person's body after death. But from a Buddhist point of view, expressing grief in this way is not helpful at all to the loved one. Instead you can do uplifting things: for instance, bring some beautiful flowers that this person used to love; light candles; make some heart opening commitments to do something in this world which helps others and decreases suffering; and make dedication on behalf of the person to benefit all other beings. This is a very powerful gift and a very amazing energy that lights up the path of this person in their journey after death.

It is OK to comfort a person at the time they are dying with a light touch that is not disturbing, but it is best to touch them as little as possible around the moment of death, except for a light touch on the very top (crown) of the head. It is also important not to touch the dead person's body for three days after death. This includes not rubbing or touching their hands, feet or other parts of their body. Why is this so? The Tibetan Buddhist view is that every living thing goes through a process of physical decline and dissolution of both material elements and mind itself at death, beyond the physical

reality. This mind beyond physical form is also called a consciousness. In order for the person's consciousness to leave the body properly and proceed on its spiritual journey without fear or anxiety, it is important to have the least amount of moving or touching right at death and for the next three days. Otherwise during this time their consciousness is more likely to be distracted or interrupted from focusing on the spiritual path.

It is not unusual for a person's consciousness to be drawn back to their dead body in the first few days after death because it seems safer and more familiar to them. Since the consciousness is very sensitive, there is a lot of potential to be influenced by people who are around the body at that time. So if you are around your loved one's body after death, rather than expressing sadness, it is a wonderful kind of gift to be peaceful and connect with their consciousness to encourage them to remember their spiritual journey, realize their true nature, and choose the right path that belongs to them.

Kilung Rinpoche's guidance for helping others

Prayers for others prior to death

"Prior to death, the dying person's sangha, Dharma friends, friends, and family can perform Shitro prayers, Vajrasattva practice,

Amitabha prayers and practice, Guru Rinpoche practices, and light butter lamps and raise prayer flags dedicated to the dying person. Likewise, the Diamond Sutra can be read and Diamond Sutra prayer flags raised, along with offering food to the hungry in name of the dying person and making donations to charities in their name. Here on Whidbey Island one could clean trash from the beaches in their name. All of this is effective for clearing obstacles for the dying person.”

Advice for helping non-Buddhist family and friends

“To non-Buddhist family members and friends we can offer butter lamps and flowers. We can dedicate something to someone in his or her honor—I see this in parks, sometimes there is a bench dedicated to a person. I think this is really heart-touching and beautiful. In Tibet we do that too. If a loved one dies, on behalf of them you contribute something to benefit society or give to a charity or an organization you are involved with. That offering is like drops in the ocean, it remains as long as the ocean remains, even the smallest drops. Those are things you can do, and there is no need to be a Buddhist. I think you already have similar traditions here and maybe such things have been done here for quite a long time. But when you act in these ways, do so pure-heartedly and with dedications: ‘May

this benefit all these many beings,' not only honoring the beloved one that you lost, but also with the aspiration to make a great number of people happy. This is the altruistic heart manifesting.

As I said earlier, it is really helpful to resolve unfinished business, for example with family relationships where some hatred is involved. If possible, it is so important to help out in this way where we can. To bring those people together if that is possible — that is a way to serve. I think it's important. That's a good heart.

In Tibet, if someone has died, the whole neighborhood helps. My memory is that if someone died in the neighborhood, people would bring food to the family, light butter lamps, and stay with the family for a few days if they needed any help. It is really amazing to feel that everybody is coming and helping through their heart wishes. I think this is very, very beautiful. Even though you are not Buddhists, you can still help in this way. You don't need to say, 'I am Buddhist.' You always find there is some way to be of help.

Then there are simple mantras, one, of course, being — OM MANI PADME HUM. Maybe you can recommend that to the family. If someone says, 'What should I say, in the Buddhist prayers, is there anything that you can teach me?' then teach them, OM MANI

PADME HUM. This is the mantra of loving-kindness and for generating bodhicitta.”

For someone who does not believe in reincarnation, are these practices of death and dying still helpful?

“I think so. Let’s consider a day in one’s life—twenty-four hours of life. Everything that one experiences in that time will appear later as images in the mind—a kind of documentary. All that one does in that single day influences what comes later. For instance, those things that come up as mental images we experience at night as a dream. We watch that documentary. Going through the bardo is like that. There, you pass through the same kinds of experiences you had before—all that you have been involved with in your life, mind, and actions are summarized as a documentary that appears in your consciousness. If the recording has been positive, in the bardo you will experience a nice, peaceful documentary. For non-Buddhists and/or for people who do not believe in reincarnation, the positive attitudes encouraged by the Dharma will lead to a peaceful death whether they believe in a future life or not.

Furthermore, prayers we do for the dying—Shitro, the One-Hundred-Syllable Mantra of Vajrasattva, OM MANI PADME

HUM, etc.—all of these mantras have tremendous benefit, energy, and blessings that influence the process of this journey of dying, lighting the way and helping that consciousness. It is important that those who make these prayers have bodhicitta mind, good motivation. That means a compassionate mind, a good heart, pure heart, and loving kindness. Then these prayers will heal the hopes, fears and anxieties in the dying person's mind. You can also do tonglen for someone even if that person is not a Buddhist or doesn't believe in reincarnation. Still you will inspire them to be more peaceful, focused, and less distracted. You increase the potential for them to have a peaceful journey, which in this case is the main thing."

Other skillful means:

"Also I think I heard this in our sangha: Someone was telling a person to 'go to Virgin Mary's heart,' which is familiar and they love that and have that longing feeling to go there. I think this is really the same approach, if it brings them more positive feeling and peace and comfort and makes them less afraid in finding something. You know, bringing in something like this would be good.

Also, if someone asks what Buddhists think and do, maybe if that person is new to Buddhism, maybe you can explain more about the

Dharmakaya. Explain that your consciousness is in the clear light and energy, and that it goes into highest wisdom beings, into their energy and their love, merging into the wisdom in the highest way, just merging with that light that is self-luminous mind of the non-dual state. Something like that, which is a little bit less involved with visualization and many details, would be useful."

Doing Phowa for someone else or for an animal.

"You do actually visualize that person's or being's or bird's uma. You visualize that, and also you establish the visualization of your own uma too, so you are really being a companion. You are a companion, keeping company, being connected with them, and you're supporting that other being with your confidence and prayers, leading and saying: 'Come. Let's go.' Really, this hooking connection is loving kindness with an open heart."

Helping animals

"The same practices we use for humans in the bardo can be effective for animals. Whether your animal is in the process of dying or already dead, you can treat them in a loving way at the very least by saying prayers. You and your animals may have been friends for decades—maybe for their whole lives. There is the potential for

animals to gain enlightenment in the bardo. That possibility very much depends on the prayers, who is saying them, the dedications, and who is doing them after the animal's death—on how we communicate and send the prayers afterwards.” (For more complete comments from [Kilung Rinpoche about animals and dying, click here.](#))

Practices for others

For a brief description of Tibetan Buddhist [practices to do for others when they are dying and after death, see this link](#) prepared by the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project.

About Pema Kilaya and the Death and Dying Project

Pema Kilaya is the organization that supports and coordinates the Dharma activities of Tibetan Buddhist teacher and lineage holder, H.E. Dza Kilung Jigme Rinpoche. To learn more about Kilung Rinpoche and Pema Kilaya, visit pemakilaya.org or email pemakilaya@gmail.com.

Kilung Rinpoche initiated the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project in 2015 in order to provide guidance and focus to his students regarding spiritual preparation for death. In keeping with the spiritual importance death holds in Tibetan Buddhist teachings, the project has developed resources to help prepare for dying and death in order to benefit oneself and others.

For information or questions about the Pema Kilaya Death and Dying Project, or to order this booklet in hard copy, email pkdeathanddying@gmail.com. For general updates about the project, visit [this webpage](#).

For Pema Kilaya Sangha members, more extensive resources about death and dying are available at pkdeathanddying.org.