

'By your side...'

A selection of poetry, prose and prayers

Vol 6: Buddhism

What to do when someone is dying

Generally speaking, just having good thoughts and memories of your loved one will be helpful both to you and your loved one(s). Getting upset, crying or getting angry, will only serve to make things worse. A person's state of mind at the time of death is important for a good rebirth. Therefore it is best to help the dying person remain calm and happy. Reminding them of events that will only cause problems is not a skilful action. So try to avoid this as much as possible. If you feel so inclined, you and if possible, the dying person can meditate on compassion and loving-kindness for all sentient beings.

Start off the meditation by not focusing on a friend, as this can cause people to get upset and attachment to arise. Think about someone like a work friend or someone similar. Someone that you know and care for but, who is not too close that attachment will arise. Then as the meditation continues, add more and more people into the scope of your attention. In the end add all beings, even your enemies if you can without causing issues.

Then this is the important part, try and develop a feeling that all the beings in the scope of your meditation are of equal importance to you. Why? Because all beings want happiness and do not want suffering. No one wants to die. But, we all have to leave our bodies behind. We all come into the world naked and all we leave naked. In this regard we are all the same, we are all equal. Try and develop a sense of equanimity towards all beings. This will remove attachment for friends and family and anger for people you feel have done you wrong. Buddhist's assert that someone who dies with this type of mind is very likely to have a good rebirth.

'By your side...'

A selection of poetry, prose and prayers

Vol 6: Buddhism

In terms of a Buddhist prayer for the dying you and if possible the dying person can recite the following prayer:

**By this virtue (reciting this prayer),
at the instant of death, may you take
rebirth in Tushita (a heavenly realm).
May you meet the limitless
Bodhisattvas and be cared for by
Maitreya, our supreme refuge.
Through the fire of great love, the
wood of hatred is burnt.
Through the light of pristine
awareness, the darkness of ignorance is
dispelled. To the Regent of the Dharma
(Maitreya Buddha) abiding in
Tushita, I prostrate.**

If the dying person is a Buddhist and they want to hear it, read to them the explanation of the death process. This will also be useful for when we are dying.

Explanation of the Death Process

Death is a progressive process of the dissolution of body and mind that can be divided into eight main stages. As the body deteriorates, the energy required to sustain sense consciousness such as our eye awareness, then coarse conceptual consciousness - thoughts and emotions - and finally subtle consciousness is lost. At the same time there are specific signs or appearances to mind that mark these eight stages. The last stage being called the Clear Light of death or Mother Clear Light.

The point at which this Clear Light of death becomes manifest is of vital importance in a meditators life, as it is at this stage that one's meditation can herald deep realisations into the nature of reality and propel a yogi along the path to enlightenment in very short period of time. Also from an ordinary point of view, when death comes to an ordinary human it comes in a series of dissolutions. Since we will all face this process at some point, it is seen as important to understand the death process, if only to not let oneself fall subject to fear and so forth.