



A Good Death

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Why Talk about Death?

1. Main goal is to allay the fear of death
 2. To change attitude towards death
 - A. Death is not a failure
 - B. Death can be a beautiful experience
 - C. A good death does honour to a whole life
 3. To live well, one must know how to die well
 - A. We die every moment / everyday
- Provide accurate information to dispel myths, mysteries and misinformation about death

What is a Good Death?

NEEDS	CONCERNS	CAUSES	IDEALS
Physical	Pain & Discomfort	Progression of disease	Pain-free & comfortable
Psychological	Fears, Anxieties	Disinformation	Informed, Fearless, Acceptance, Peaceful
Social/Emotional	Relationships issues	Unresolved relationships	Reconciliation Closure
Spiritual	Doubts	Fear of death	Assurance, Clarity

If you let go a little,
you will have a
little peace.

If you let go a lot,
you will have a
lot of peace.

If you let go completely,
you will have
complete peace.

Ajahn Chah

- If you reduce a little fear, you can manage your death a little better.
- If you reduce a lot of fear, you can manage your death a lot better.
- If you have no fear, you will have mastery over your death.

How to achieve a good death?

PHYSICAL CARE:

1. **Understand the dying process**
 - Comparing a good birth with a good death

EMOTIONAL CARE

1. Grieving process
2. Guilt, Remorse, Reconciliation
3. Forgiveness

PSYCHOLOGICAL & SPIRITUAL CARE:

1. **Acceptance, Peace**
2. **Preparation of the mind**
 - A. When to start preparation?
 - Analogy of planting a tree
 - B. How to prepare?
 - Proper mental state (tranquility)
 - Skillful mental habits (acceptance, letting go)

Physical Changes in the Dying

Basically, all physical systems in the body are gradually shutting down. The goal of body care is to provide comfort & ease pain.

SYSTEM	CHANGES
Cardiovascular	Weaken heart beats, low BP, cold peripheries, mottled skin
Respiratory	Laboured breathing, congested lungs, Cheyne-Stokes breathing
Gastrointestinal	Poor appetite, reduced drinking, nausea, loss of weight
Renal	Reduced urine output, incontinence
Musculoskeletal	Weaken muscles, prolonged stay in bed, unsteady in walking
Nervous	Tired, Sleepy, forgetful, restless, confused

Body Care for the Dying

1. Hygiene

- Urine - diapers, bedpan, urine catheter
- Stools - diapers, wipes - cotton balls, cloths, towels

2. Comfort

- Food - soft diet
- Dryness of mouth - sips of water, wet wipes on lips
- Congestion in throat - remove phlegm - suction pump
- Temperature
 - Warm - fan, air-cond
 - Cold - blankets, warm clothing

3. Pain

- Bed sore - 2 hourly turning of body, ripple mattress
- Pain from disease - analgesic tablets, morphine solution, patches

Psychological Changes in the Dying

STATE	CONSEQUENCES	WHAT CAN BE DONE
Denial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient • Relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppression of fear • Isolation of issues • Sapping of energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid validating denials • Gently probe at denials
Anger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inward at Self • Outward at Others, God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling hurt • Hurting others intentionally or non-intentionally • Arguments & conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience • Tolerance • Mindful with words
Bargaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually done quietly/privately 	
Depression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grieving for what is already lost • Grieving for losses to come 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mourning for the losses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen non-judgmentally
Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of detachment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our own acceptance

More Psychological Changes

EMOTIONS	CAUSES	WHAT CAN BE DONE
Frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of control over own life• sense of helplessness	Give back control and choices
Resentment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At wellness of others	Identify actual causes, addresss issues, discuss
Fears	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain in the dying body• Uncertainty about death/unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discusssion with doctor• Discussion with religious leader
Guilt, Remorse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unresolved relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconciliation• Forgiveness

The dying may think that you do not care if...

1. You do not say anything
2. Your conversation is too casual (not touching on things that matter)
3. You casually brush off his/her concerns, fears, feelings

Breaking the Ice:

1. Can you tell me what's happening to you?
2. How are you feeling today?

Don't force the topic (about death), but don't shy away from it either.

Social Changes in the Dying

1. Withdrawal from others
2. Giving away things
3. Making funeral arrangement
4. Specific Communication
5. Reconciliation & Closure

Spiritual Changes in the Dying

1. Deathbed Visions
2. Altered Reality
3. Preparation for a Journey
4. Terminal Lucidity
5. Deathbed Coincidences
6. After Death Communication

Listen Carefully. I am telling you...

1. What I am experiencing
2. What I need to die peacefully
3. When I will die
4. What is holding me back

What I will need to die peacefully

1. Reconciliation
2. Closure
3. Specific person
4. Specific place
5. Specific time
6. Specific condition