

## **Preparation for Dying – a Checklist**

The following checklist presents matters to consider in preparation for dying – and would be most helpful if considered before a sudden, totally unexpected death.

Since each life and death are unique, the points presented will need to be applied in the best way for each person.

The points are written in first person to help create a mindset for more earnestly applying them:

1. Contact one (or more) of my dear spiritual friends to let them know what is happening and that my end of life may be near.
2. Reflect on the environment in which I would like to die:
  - a. Make a list of who I would like to be with me as I die.
  - b. Accept that it might be better for certain people to not be present, since they may disturb my dying – exclude them without any feelings of hatred, anger, or resentment.
  - c. Request a quiet space in which I can read, pray, and meditate – and not have a lot of people coming through.
  - d. Request, if possible, that the space have a window to feel uplifted in being able to look outside.
  - e. Have an iPhone, iPad or MacBook at hand to be able to listen to recordings of spiritual teachings.
  - f. Request strongly that the TV not be on, if I need to die in a hospital or hospice.
3. Create a file for my family (and/or designated others if needed), with all the information that they will need about me upon my dying. Include:
  - a. Bank account details (plus PIN numbers or passwords)
  - b. Birth certificate
  - c. Credit cards
  - d. Enduring power of attorney
  - e. Insurance policies
  - f. Investment details
  - g. Key to safe deposit box, and location of box
  - h. List (or photos) of valuables and their worth

## *Checklist for Before Time of Dying*

- i. Living will
  - j. Medical directives
  - k. Passport details
  - l. People to be notified
  - m. Pre-paid funeral plan
  - n. Property deeds
  - o. Specific requests not in will
  - p. Will
4. Write letters of forgiveness, and saying goodbye.
    - a. Contact people, if needed, with whom I have unfinished emotional business.
    - b. Realize that unresolved issues may drag me down during my dying, or distract me in the form of regret.
    - c. Write to someone, if I don't feel comfortable talking to them. Do so without expectation. For example, don't expect to heal deep emotional wounds before dying. Nevertheless, realize that I may need to seek forgiveness and have complete peace from my end.
    - d. Let me express my feelings in a spirit of reconciliation, and then let any matter go. Remember that I cannot be responsible for what other people do. The idea is to lighten my own load.
  5. Consider sending appreciation letters to those who have touched my life.
    - a. Let them know how they helped me.
    - b. If someone I know is seriously ill or dying, sharing my heart can benefit both them and me.
  6. Realize that writing either letters of forgiveness, or letters of appreciation, is not always easy.
    - a. If it is difficult, write the letter, then send it when it feels right.
    - b. Sometimes, just writing the letter helps, even if it is never sent.
    - c. Don't focus too much on myself – think about others.

*Checklist for Before Time of Dying*

7. Understand an additional deeper purpose of writing these letters – they can teach me how to live without painful emotional suffering now.
  - a. I may now find myself better relating to people every day as if this was my last day, treating them with more kindness and respect.
  - b. It can help me to live in a reconciliatory way so that I can die feeling reconciled with life.
  - c. Remember that writing these letters doesn't mean that I have to make everyone like me.
  - d. It means that I can free myself of emotional baggage before I die, and ease my journey into the beyond.
8. Write my own eulogy and obituary.
  - a. Ponder the idea that writing my own eulogy and obituary can be a powerful contemplation to remind me of impermanence.
  - b. As with many death-related exercises, realize that this one can bring me more fully to life – it will help me appreciate the preciousness of what I have.
  - c. Leave my eulogy and obituary in my special file for the family.
  - d. Realize that what I write could help others in writing my official obituary, or their own eulogies to commemorate my life.
9. Include the following details in my obituary:
  - a. Age
  - b. Place of birth
  - c. Cause of death (if it is known or suspected beforehand)
  - d. Occupation
  - e. Education degree(s)
  - f. Organizational membership(s)
  - g. Any outstanding accomplishments
  - h. Names of survivor(s) in the immediate family
  - i. Names of any memorials set up in lieu of flowers

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10. Contemplate the following questions for my eulogy:
  - a. How would I like to be remembered?
  - b. What life experiences will I always treasure?
  - c. What am I proud of?
11. Now write my eulogy with these guidelines:
  - a. I will be remembered for . . .
  - b. What do I value about myself?
  - c. How have I impacted the world?
  - d. Who has been the closest to me?
  - e. What adjectives best describe me?
  - f. What has been most worthwhile in my life?
  - g. What has given me purpose and meaning?
  - h. My treasured life experiences are . . .
12. Consider using my obituary and eulogy, before I die, as follows:
  - a. Read my obituary and eulogy every year.
  - b. Notice how things shift in my life, which is another reflection on impermanence.
  - c. Place my obituary in a drawer frequently opened, and use it as a reminder of my inevitable death.

Source: Holecek, Andrew. *Preparing to Die: Practical Advice and Spiritual Wisdom from the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition*. Boston: Shambhala, 2013.

The above information is mainly based on and was drawn from the Appendixes in *Preparing to Die* (pages 311-326).