# Workbook 14: Death Practice & Mortality

## Die Before You Die: Living From Death Awareness

**For those called to befriend death**

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## Welcome to Death Work

### Death is Your Greatest Teacher

**Not morbid.**

**Not dark.**

**But:** - The ultimate truth - The great clarifier - The doorway - The teacher

**Death shows you:** - What matters - What doesn’t - Who you are - How to live

### Why Work With Death?

**Because:** - You will die - Everyone you love will die - Avoiding this truth is suffering - Facing it is freedom - Death awareness is life awareness

**The fear of death:** - Runs your life (unconsciously) - Keeps you small - Prevents living fully - Blocks love

**Befriending death:** - Frees you - Clarifies - Deepens life - Opens love

### What This Workbook Offers

**Not:** - How to avoid death - Ways to “transcend” death - Spiritual bypassing death - Making death comfortable

**But:** - Practices for facing mortality - Tools for death contemplation - Guidance for the dying - Living from death awareness - Death as spiritual practice

## Death as Teacher

### What Death Teaches

**Death asks:**

“If you could die tomorrow, how would you live today?”

“What would matter?”

“What wouldn’t?”

“Who would you be?”

“What would you say?”

**These questions:** - Cut through bullshit - Reveal truth - Clarify values - Show what’s real

### The Three Messengers

**Buddhist teaching:**

**First messenger:** Sickness “You will get sick.”

**Second messenger:** Old age “You will grow old.”

**Third messenger:** Death “You will die.”

**These are not punishments.**

**These are truths.**

**And they set you free.**

### Death as Clarifier

**When you truly know you’ll die:**

**You stop:** - Pretending - Performing - Waiting - Hiding - Wasting time

**You start:** - Being real - Living now - Loving fully - Speaking truth - Doing what matters

**Death is the ultimate bullshit detector.**

## Mortality Contemplation Practices

### Daily Death Meditation

**Morning practice (5-10 min):**

Sit quietly.

**Contemplate:**

“I will die.”

Not as concept.

**As truth:** - This body will stop - This breath will end - This life will complete - One day, maybe soon

**Feel it:** - In your body - In your heart - In your bones

**Don’t:** - Spiral into fear - Get lost in when/how - Make it abstract

**Just:** - Feel the truth - “I will die” - Sit with it

**Then:**

“How do I want to live today?”

### The Five Remembrances

**Buddhist practice:**

**Daily, recite:**

1. I am of the nature to grow old.  
 There is no way to escape growing old.  
  
2. I am of the nature to have ill health.  
 There is no way to escape ill health.  
  
3. I am of the nature to die.  
 There is no way to escape death.  
  
4. All that is dear to me and everyone I love  
 are of the nature to change.  
 There is no way to escape being separated from them.  
  
5. My actions are my only true belongings.  
 I cannot escape the consequences of my actions.  
 My actions are the ground upon which I stand.

**Sit with each.**

**Feel each.**

**Not to depress.**

**But to clarify.**

### Deathbed Visualization

**Weekly practice (15-20 min):**

Close your eyes.

**Imagine:** - You’re on your deathbed - This is your last day - You’re looking back on your life

**From that place, ask:**

“What mattered?”

“What didn’t?”

“What do I wish I’d done?”

“What do I wish I’d said?”

“Who do I wish I’d been?”

“What do I regret?”

“What am I proud of?”

**Write these down.**

**Then:**

“How can I live today to have no regrets then?”

**This is not morbid.**

**This is wisdom.**

## Bufo as Death Practice

### Dying Before You Die

**Bufo (5-MeO-DMT) is:**

A death practice.

**You die:** - Ego dies - Identity dissolves - “You” disappears - Complete dissolution

**And return:**

Having tasted death.

**Knowing:** - Death is not the end - “You” were never solid - Death is a doorway - Fear can dissolve

### Integration as Death Work

**After Bufo:**

You’ve died.

**Now:**

How do you live?

**Questions:**

“Having died, how do I want to be alive?”

“What fears died with the ego?”

“What’s essential now?”

“How do I live from having died?”

**This is the work.**

### Living Post-Death

**After tasting death:**

**Life might:** - Feel more precious - Feel more empty (void) - Matter more - Matter less - Be clarified - Be confusing

**All normal.**

**Integration is:**

Learning to live having died.

## Preparing for Actual Death

### Your Death Will Come

**Not if.**

**When.**

**You can:** - Ignore this (most do) - Prepare (wise few)

**Preparation doesn’t:** - Make it less sad - Make it easier - Prevent grief

**But:** - Gives you agency - Reduces fear - Clarifies what matters - Helps those you leave

### Practical Preparation

**Legal:** - [ ] Will (updated) - [ ] Advanced directive - [ ] Power of attorney - [ ] Final wishes documented

**Logistical:** - [ ] Life insurance - [ ] Passwords/access shared - [ ] Important documents organized - [ ] Accounts/finances clear

**Personal:** - [ ] Letters to loved ones - [ ] Messages for after - [ ] Legacy projects complete (or released) - [ ] Forgiveness offered/received

**Spiritual:** - [ ] Completion with relationships - [ ] Peace with your life - [ ] Acceptance of death - [ ] Trust in process

### Final Wishes

**Write down:**

**For your death:** - Where you want to die (if possible) - Who you want present - What you want playing (music, readings) - Medical interventions (or not) - Spiritual support needed

**For your body:** - Burial, cremation, natural burial - Organ donation - Where remains go

**For afterward:** - Memorial or not - What kind - What should be said - What shouldn’t

**For your people:** - Final messages - Permissions - Blessings - Love

**Give these to:** - Loved ones - Attorney - Doctor

**Update yearly.**

## Grief & Death

### Death Always Brings Grief

**For the dying:** - Grief for what you’re leaving - Grief for who you’ll miss - Grief for unlived life - Grief for self

**For the bereaved:** - Grief for who’s gone - Grief for what won’t be - Grief for self without them

**Both are sacred.**

### Anticipatory Grief

**When you know death is coming:**

Grief begins before death.

**You grieve:** - In advance - Alongside the dying - For what’s ending - For what won’t be

**This is normal.**

**This is appropriate.**

**Let it come.**

### Grieving Your Own Death

**If you’re dying:**

**You might grieve:** - Your body - Your life - Your people - Your dreams - Yourself

**Let this be.**

**Find witnesses:** - Death doula - Therapist - Chaplain - Loved ones - Circle

**Grief is part of dying well.**

## Ancestral Death Practices

### How Our Ancestors Died

**For most of human history:** - Community death - Ritual - Preparation - Witnessing - Sacred passage

**Now:** - Hospital death - Isolated - Medical - Unseen - Sanitized

**We’ve lost:** - Death as sacred - Death as communal - Death as teacher

### Reclaiming Sacred Death

**Bring back:**

**Vigil:** - Sitting with the dying - Present until the end - Witnessing passage

**Preparation of body:** - Family washes body - Dress them - Sit with body - Say goodbye

**Home funeral (where legal):** - Body stays home 1-3 days - People visit - Stories shared - Presence with death

**Ritual:** - Prayer, chant, song - Sacred space created - Honoring passage - Community witness

**Not morbid.**

**Sacred.**

## Dissolving Fear of Death

### The Root Fear

**All fear is:**

Fear of death.

**Fear of:** - Loss = death of having - Rejection = social death - Failure = ego death - Change = death of known - Unknown = death of control

**When you face death:**

Other fears lose power.

### Practices for Facing Death Fear

**1. Name it**

“I’m afraid of death.”

Out loud.

Feel it.

Where in body?

**2. Explore it**

“What am I really afraid of?”

* Pain?
* Nothingness?
* Leaving loved ones?
* Not being remembered?
* Judgment?
* Unknown?

**Name the specific fear.**

**3. Sit with it**

Don’t try to dissolve fear.

**Just be with it:** - Feel it - Breathe with it - Let it be

**Often:**

Facing fear dissolves it.

**4. Contemplate the fear**

“If that happened (painful death, nothingness, etc.), then what?”

“And then what?”

**Follow it to the end.**

Often: Less scary when fully faced.

**5. Remember impermanence**

You’ve already “died” many times: - Childhood died - Identities died - Relationships died - Old selves died

**You survived.**

**Death is just another ending.**

## Living From Death Awareness

### Memento Mori: Remember You Will Die

**Ancient practice:**

Keep death in awareness.

**Not to:** - Be morbid - Induce fear - Be depressed

**But to:** - Live fully - Clarify values - Love deeply - Stop pretending

### Daily Memento Mori

**Morning:**

Upon waking: “I might die today.”

(Truth. Could happen.)

“How do I want to live this day?”

**Evening:**

Before sleep: “I might not wake up.”

(True.)

“Did I live today as I wanted?”

“What do I need to complete?”

### Urgency Without Anxiety

**Death awareness gives:**

Urgency (do what matters, now)

**Not:**

Anxiety (desperate clinging)

**The difference:**

**Anxiety:** “I have to do everything perfectly or time will run out!”

**Urgency:** “I don’t have forever. Let me do what’s true, now.”

**One is fear-based.**

**One is love-based.**

### What Death Awareness Changes

**When you truly know you’ll die:**

**Relationships:** - Say “I love you” more - Let go of grudges - Spend time with who matters - Stop tolerating toxic

**Work:** - Do what’s meaningful - Stop wasting time on bullshit - Create from soul - Serve from heart

**Daily life:** - Savor moments - Notice beauty - Feel gratitude - Be present

**Self:** - Stop performing - Be yourself - Forgive yourself - Live truthfully

## Death Doula Basics

### What is a Death Doula?

**Death doula (end-of-life doula):**

Someone who supports: - The dying - Their families - Through the death process

**Not medical.**

**But:** - Emotional support - Spiritual support - Practical help - Presence - Witnessing

### Core Practices

**1. Presence**

Be with the dying.

**Not:** - Fixing - Making it better - Spiritual bypassing

**Just:** - Being present - Witnessing - Holding space

**2. Listening**

**They might need to:** - Tell their story - Express regrets - Say what wasn’t said - Process their life

**You:** - Listen fully - Don’t interrupt - Don’t advise (unless asked) - Witness

**3. Permission**

**Help them feel:** - Permission to die - Permission to let go - Permission to be scared - Permission to be peaceful

**Sometimes say:** “It’s okay to go.” “We’ll be okay.” “You can let go when you’re ready.”

**4. Ritual**

**Create sacred space:** - Candles - Music - Prayer (if wanted) - Readings - Presence

**Honor the passage.**

**5. After-death care**

**Support family with:** - Preparation of body (if wanted) - Ritual creation - Grief witnessing - Practical support

### Supporting the Actively Dying

**When someone is close to death:**

**Physical:** - May not eat/drink (normal) - Breathing changes (normal) - Restlessness or stillness - Visions (common)

**Emotional:** - Fear - Peace - Confusion - Clarity

**Spiritual:** - Visions of deceased loved ones - Sense of presence - Spiritual experiences

**Your role:**

Be present.

Don’t panic.

Trust the process.

## Rituals for Endings

### Death is Not the Only Ending

**Many deaths in life:** - Relationships ending - Jobs ending - Identities dying - Phases completing

**All deserve ritual.**

### Ritual for Endings

**When something is ending:**

**1. Acknowledge**

“This is ending.”

Name it clearly.

**2. Honor what was**

“This gave me…” “I’m grateful for…” “This taught me…”

**3. Grieve**

Let sorrow come.

Cry for what’s ending.

**4. Release**

“I let this go.”

Symbolically: - Burn something - Bury something - Release it to water

**5. Complete**

“It is done.”

Bow.

Turn toward what’s next.

### Death Anniversary Rituals

**On the anniversary of someone’s death:**

**Create ritual:** - Light candle for them - Speak to them - Share meal in their honor - Visit grave or special place - Tell stories about them

**Keep them alive in memory.**

**Honor their death.**

**Both.**

## Memento Mori Practices

### Physical Reminders

**Keep death in awareness through:**

**Objects:** - Skull on desk - Death-themed art - Photo of someone who died - Memento from funeral

**Not morbid.**

**Reminder:**

“I will die. How do I want to live?”

**Daily practices:**

**Morning affirmation:** “Today might be my last. Let me live it fully.”

**Evening reflection:** “I’m one day closer to death. Did I live today well?”

**Birthday practice:**

Each birthday: “One year closer to death.”

**Reflect:** - How did I live this year? - What matters for next year? - What do I want to complete before I die?

## The Death That’s Not Death

### Ego Death

**Before physical death:**

Ego can die.

**Ego death:** - Loss of identity - Dissolution of self - “I” disappears

**This can happen through:** - Meditation - Plant medicine - Spiritual emergence - Life crisis - Grace

### The Terror of Ego Death

**Ego death feels like:** - Actual death - Annihilation - End of everything

**Because:**

To ego, it IS death.

**But:**

Consciousness continues.

**You don’t die.**

**The constructed “you” dies.**

### Living After Ego Death

**After ego death:**

**Life might feel:** - Empty (void) - Groundless - Meaningless - Free

**Questions:**

“Who am I without ego?”

“How do I live without identity?”

“What matters now?”

**This is:**

The work of integration.

Living from no-self.

(See Workbook 7: The Void)

## Supporting the Dying

### When Someone You Love is Dying

**What they need:**

**Presence:** - Be with them - Not fixing - Just present

**Permission:** - To die - To be scared - To let go - To be peaceful

**Love:** - Say it - Show it - Express it now

**Completion:** - Help them say what needs saying - Resolve what needs resolving - Complete what needs completing

**Witnessing:** - Their life - Their death - Their passage

### What to Say (and Not Say)

**Helpful:** - “I love you” - “It’s okay to go when you’re ready” - “We’ll be okay” - “Thank you for your life” - “I’m here with you”

**Not helpful:** - “Don’t die” (they don’t have choice) - “You have to fight” (exhausting) - “It’ll be okay” (bypassing) - “Don’t give up” (let them let go)

**Mostly:**

Be present.

Listen.

Love.

## Resources & Further Study

### Books

**Death as Teacher:** - *Being with Dying* by Joan Halifax - *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche - *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi

**Death Work:** - *The Art of Death Midwifery* by Katrina Wynne - *Final Gifts* by Maggie Callanan - *Who Dies?* by Stephen Levine

**Grief:** - See Workbook 11 resources

### Training

**Death Doula Training:** - INELDA (International End of Life Doula Association) - University of Vermont Doula Program - Death Doula Training programs

**Hospice Volunteering:** - Local hospice organizations - Training provided - Powerful practice

### Organizations

* Death Café (community death conversations)
* Order of the Good Death
* Hospice organizations
* Death Positive movement

## Final Words

### Death is Not the Enemy

**Death is:** - Truth - Teacher - Doorway - Clarifier - Freedom

**Fear of death:**

Keeps you from living.

**Befriending death:**

Frees you to live.

### Die Before You Die

**Practice death now:**

**So that:** - When it comes, you’re ready - Your life is lived fully - Nothing is left unsaid - No regrets remain - Fear has dissolved

**This is the work.**

### Remember

**You will die.**

**Everyone you love will die.**

**This is not tragedy.**

**This is:** - Truth - Invitation - Wake-up call - Permission to live

**How will you live:**

Knowing you’ll die?

**That’s the only question.**

**This workbook is part of the Astral Refined Offerings 2025 course materials.**

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**May you befriend death.** **May you live fully.** **May you die well.**

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*End of Workbook 14*