

How to Guide Someone through the Death Process using Mindfulness ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

00:00:00 Nunca hubiera creído que fuera tan dulce el morir.

00:00:21 Nunca, never hubiera, would I have creído, believed, que fuera that it would turn out to be tan dulce, so sweet, el morir, to die.

00:00:46 Have you heard that quote? Probably not.

00:00:52 Who said it? Someone you've probably never heard of, but is worthy to be remembered.

00:01:01 His name was Francisco Suárez, and if you were living in 16th century Catholic Europe, you would probably know his name.

00:01:14 He was one of the most respected philosophers and intellectuals of his time in terms of scholastic philosophy. In fact, he's sometimes referred to as the last of the scholastic philosophers.

00:01:33 That whole mode of philosophy that characterized Europe in the Middle Ages and sort of reached its epitome in the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas.

00:01:51 Why Suárez is worthy to be remembered historically is two things related. Besides that quote, which we'll go into in a minute, he invented the concept of international law.

00:02:15 He was probably the first person in Europe, and this is way back, this is the 1500s, early 1600s, the first person in Europe to state that tribal peoples,

00:02:32 who were of course being completely enslaved and exploited to the max by Europe at that time, to state that tribal people actually had legal rights that should be honored by the Christian nations

00:02:52 and that it was wrong to exploit and enslave them, which is pretty good for a 16th century Spaniard, considering all things.

00:03:02 So that was what he had to say while he was dying. Nunca hubiera creído que fuera dado ser a morir. Who would have ever thought that this was going to be such a good trip,

00:03:23 if I were to make it into very colloquial modern English. So can this happen? Can it be a sweet thing, potentially? Yes.

00:03:44 And I'd like to talk a little bit about that, both in terms of how we would make it that way for ourselves and in terms of how we can help it be that way for others.

00:04:09 There is an art moriente, an art, a technique of dying. This is, they used to have in Europe manuals on this. I've never seen those European middle ages manuals.

00:04:31 I don't know what's in them, but I know what's in my manual. And of course there is the famous Pardo Tujhe, the Tibetan work.

00:04:45 Pardo, B-A-R-D-O, means in between. So there's many in between states. And one of them is, one of those many in between states is the in between, the state in between death and your next reincarnation.

00:05:07 And that view that we have multiple lives and that there's an interval between dying and the next birth is shared by certainly the Theravada world in Buddhism and very much the Vajrayana world.

00:05:32 And in general Mahayana, but there is a very conspicuous silence about reincarnation from the world of the Zen masters.

00:05:46 And they don't seem to make much of this, which I find, since they're very adamant, this is in general, there are

exceptions, but as a general rule.

00:06:03 And since the Zen masters tend to be pretty adamant about what they want you to believe, I find their silence on this issue to be quite informative.

00:06:26 So in any event, but taken as a whole, certainly the Buddhist tradition believes in reincarnation.

00:06:35 So in Tibet there's this famous manual, Tö means to hear, Dö means to be set free.

00:06:42 So the idea is that these would be things that you would say to people that would set them free while they're going through the dying process, beginning to enter the death bardo.

00:07:01 It's called, usually translated, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which was the reason they chose that title, because there was a famous work translated, I guess in the 19th century, from Egyptian that was somewhat of a similar idea.

00:07:28 And that was known as the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

00:07:32 So anyway, there are these books and instructions and so forth from different cultures.

00:07:42 But my approach is pretty simple, actually.

00:07:47 So, a number of years ago my mother fell, which does happen for people that are in their 90s.

00:08:06 And she broke some things and she was in the hospital and they messed up on her treatment with her electrolytes.

00:08:20 And it caused them to think that, or it produced a situation where she was going to die.

00:08:37 And so it's like, okay, it's the end.

00:08:40 Later on, the mistake was noticed and with just basically just the right salts, potassium and so forth, she didn't die.

00:08:52 But there was a time when that issue had to be brought up.

00:08:59 It's like, okay, are you ready to go, mom, and et cetera, et cetera.

00:09:05 So we talked about that.

00:09:07 And I'm thinking, how many people I have guided through the dying process over the years, lots.

00:09:28 And the thought that comes to my mind is, I know how to do this. It's not going to be any different for her.

00:09:38 I'll just guide her through the way that I've done so many times before with so many people.

00:09:46 At least in my experience, it's always worked.

00:09:50 And so, okay, do you want me to guide you through this process?

00:09:59 And yes. So it was just like, okay, I know what to do.

00:10:03 Of course I had my emotions because it's very different when it's someone that close to you

00:10:09 versus a stranger that someone has referred over the phone that I've never met

00:10:15 that has asked to be helped in this regard.

00:10:21 But still, I sort of, I know the steps. I know the procedure. I know what to do.

00:10:28 So, in this regard, I think of myself in the role of death coach, so to speak.

00:10:43 As sort of ghoulish as that sounds, okay, it is, you know, it's a job.

00:10:54 And it can be a very satisfying job.

00:10:58 I look upon it as being a reverse midwife.

00:11:06 So, a midwife doesn't create life.

00:11:14 A midwife understands how nature brings a baby from a human from the unborn into the born.

00:11:27 And knows how to help nature along in that regard.

00:11:31 So, a reverse midwife understands how nature takes people from alive, already born,

00:11:43 and takes them back into the unborn.

00:11:47 Understands that process and helps it along.

00:11:51 That's the conceptual framework that I use.

00:11:54 And of course, there's an intimate link between one's ability to guide others through this process

00:12:07 and one's ability to go through the process yourself.

00:12:11 But he was 95, right? That's a lot older than I am.

00:12:27 So, it's like, oh, it's okay. It's like this is what it is.

00:12:33 And it's more like, okay, there's this one's funeral and there's this one that's, you know, sick.

00:12:43 And this, like, okay, that's sort of what's dominating the scene.

00:12:48 Now, what I find helpful for myself is two things.

00:12:55 One is sort of philosophical.

00:12:58 And I don't, as you know, I don't try to convince people of philosophical positions.

00:13:05 I sort of have a philosophy about things.

00:13:08 It works for me. I don't make it central to what I teach people.

00:13:16 I only teach things that I have absolute confidence are correct and practical.

00:13:23 Philosophy, well, that's sort of has speculative things to it.

00:13:30 So, but I do have a sort of general philosophy of things, which I inherited from Sasaki Roshi.

00:13:39 Now, part of that philosophy of things, I have absolute confidence is correct.

00:13:46 The part that is used to model sensory experience in terms of expansion and contraction.

00:13:55 Because that we can see. We can directly experience that in our senses.

00:14:05 So, to me, that's not speculative.

00:14:06 But Sasaki Roshi takes the expansion-contraction thing way beyond a description of sensory experience.

00:14:19 He builds an entire philosophical apparatus that he claims is the grand theory of everything.

00:14:28 And that I would never foist on anyone, because that's philosophy and that's speculation.

00:14:39 But I think he could be right.

00:14:44 To me, there's some evidence, but I'm not rock solid sure of it.

00:14:53 So, I wouldn't ask any person to believe that.

00:14:55 So, his idea is that the principles of expansion and contraction are behind everything.

00:15:05 Behind how the real world really works, all aspects thereof.

00:15:10 So that, our basic problem is that we are one-sided.

00:15:28 In general, people are one-sided.

00:15:30 They prefer the expansive side of things and they have an aversion to the contractive side of things.

00:15:37 So, he says, people, everyone loves to be...

00:15:42 Expansion means affirmation.

00:15:45 It means the principle of life.

00:15:49 It's eros.

00:15:52 Contraction is negation.

00:15:55 It's the principle of death.

00:15:58 It's thanatos in the Greek.

00:16:00 Freud, towards the end of his life, said, there's nothing but thanatos and eros.

00:16:10 There's nothing but affirmation and negation, life and death.

00:16:15 So, Sasaki Roshi says, the problem is people like being affirmed, but they dislike being negated.

00:16:26 And that lack of balance is what causes our suffering.

00:16:34 So, looking at the world that way, year after year after year, hearing his talks,

00:16:46 I guess I start to sort of see things that way.

00:16:50 And therefore, just philosophically speaking, it makes sense that you can't ask...

00:17:00 that dying is as much a part of nature as living is.

00:17:07 And the experience of being negated should be, philosophically speaking, okay.

00:17:26 It should be as okay as the experience of being affirmed.

00:17:32 So, from this point of view, you can talk about life in terms of success and failure.

00:17:43 That's one legitimate point of view.

00:17:46 Or you can look upon success, praise and so forth as merely the space of yourself being expanded.

00:17:56 And you can look upon blame and failure and so forth as just impersonal.

00:18:05 It's just the space of yourself is being contracted.

00:18:10 So, this is a sort of conceptual and philosophical framework about things.

00:18:19 But as I say, I sort of find helpful in making the contractive side of...

00:18:33 the fact that it's sort of downhill, okay, and more and more I'm going to be negated physically, psychologically, mentally and so forth.

00:18:42 It's sort of this philosophy makes that a little bit more palatable.

00:18:52 But that's just philosophy.

00:18:56 In terms of practicality, from a practical point of view,

00:19:05 what would tend to make one's own dying process, and not just...

00:19:13 You know, it's not just death, okay, and it's even not just dying, it's the whole decline, okay.

00:19:20 And, you know, there's the decline and then the sort of extreme part of the decline is the dying process, however long or short that is.

00:19:29 And then, you know, the ultimate of it is the passing out of existence itself, the actual death.

00:19:42 So, you know, for me, if I think in terms of expansion and contraction,

00:19:49 and that nature seems to need two sides in order to be nature,

00:19:55 then, like I say, philosophically, I find that helpful.

00:20:01 Why I think that Sasaki Roshi might be on to something in terms of this philosophy

00:20:10 is because we actually do see the notion of mutually cancelling polarities,

00:20:19 the expansion and contraction, they polarize and then they neutralize into zero, which is the gone, the source.

00:20:30 We see the notion of mutually cancelling polarities is very widely present

00:20:41 in the main tool that scientists use to model the natural world.

00:20:54 The main tool that scientists use to model the natural world is something called the complex number field.

00:21:04 You can just think of it as numbers.

00:21:07 And I won't go into details, it's actually in the manual, but the complex number field is built on three kinds of contrast,

00:21:26 each of which has a zero point or a neutralization.

00:21:31 There's one kind of contrast, which is move forward, move backwards,

00:21:39 and that's reflected in the addition-subtraction operation.

00:21:50 Then there's another contrast, so you can move backwards, you can move forwards, or you can not move.

00:21:57 And if you move forwards and move equally backwards, that's the same as not moving, so they cancel out.

00:22:04 Then there's a stretch out and pull in.

00:22:08 And then you can just not stretch or pull.

00:22:13 And that is the real multiplicative group within the complex field,

00:22:21 is that contrast of stretching versus squeezing.

00:22:27 And then the imaginary multiplicative group, which is like a subgroup within this field,

00:22:36 is turn clockwise, turn counterclockwise.

00:22:40 And it took centuries, millennia, for scientists and mathematicians to realize that you needed three different flavors of mutually canceling polarities,

00:23:01 woven together through certain distributive laws and so forth, into a single mathematical structure called the complex number field.

00:23:16 It took centuries and centuries to develop that, but that is now the premier tool that is used to model, quote, reality.

00:23:28 And the fact that the main mathematics that is used to model reality is based on mutually canceling polarities

00:23:45 gives me some basis for thinking that, well, maybe he's onto something.

00:23:53 As I say, I know it's useful with regards to studying consciousness.

00:24:01 That I have no doubt about. But is this really the grand theory of everything?

00:24:06 I don't know. But it's reflected in the math, and not just in the complex number field.

00:24:15 There are numerous other algebraic, abstract algebraic systems.

00:24:21 But, not all of them, but many of the most important abstract algebraic systems involve invertible elements.

00:24:41 You do it this way, you do it the opposite way, and when you bring those two together, you don't do anything.

00:24:51 So, because that structure is so widely prevalent in mathematics, and because mathematics is what modern science uses to model and predict,

00:25:05 and even in some ways explain the real world, well, if what underlies math seems to sort of agree with Sasaki Roshi's grand philosophy,

00:25:20 well, maybe he's onto something.

00:25:22 So, of course, when I go to him and tell him things like this, he's completely blasé, doesn't care.

00:25:35 I went up once after one of his talks, he gave this talk where he absolutely described the set-theoretic construction of the natural numbers.

00:25:50 I mean, he described it. That was like the most innovative thing that happened in mathematics in the 19th and 20th century, was Cantorian set theory.

00:26:08 That's the basis of new math, okay?

00:26:10 And Cantor's formulation of the natural numbers built on the notion of set was a revolution in mathematics.

00:26:23 Absolute revolution.

00:26:26 And one day in one of his case shows, he described that.

00:26:31 He described that. Of course, he didn't know that that's what he was describing. He was describing consciousness.

00:26:40 So I go up to him and I say, you know, Roshi, your talk about what zero is and what one is and the number two is, you know, etc.

00:26:51 So he was saying zero, one, two. He was describing how each moment of consciousness contains the previous moment, okay?

00:27:02 And he gave this very detailed thing about expansion, contraction, come apart, come together, come apart, come together.

00:27:08 And each time they come back together, it's a larger zero, okay?

00:27:13 But the way that he described it was virtually isomorphic to some of the set theoretic formulations.

00:27:23 So I go up to him and I say, you know, Roshi, you just described some pretty advanced mathematics.

00:27:34 And he goes, ah, soka. Sugakusha wa soko made miteru no kana?

00:27:45 Oh, is that so? So the mathematicians have seen that far, huh?

00:27:52 That was the last time I went up to him and said, hey, Roshi, you've rediscovered science.

00:27:58 Now, what kind of ether does he pull this out of? He doesn't know anything about math and science.

00:28:07 But he knows consciousness. And he knows a very deep view of consciousness.

00:28:14 So, in his view of consciousness, there's life and there's death.

00:28:23 And there is that which is beyond life and death.

00:28:29 That which comes about when you completely give yourself to life and completely give yourself to death at the same time.

00:28:38 So, being steeped in this philosophy, I find that, okay, that's somewhat helpful.

00:28:46 So this is just half of nature, what I'm going through, and, oh, it's part of the deal.

00:28:55 But then, as I say, that's philosophy and that's cognitive reframing.

00:29:01 Now let's talk practical.

00:29:05 Practically, how do you die in a good way?

00:29:10 And how do you guide another person to die in a good way?

00:29:16 Well, first thing I do if I'm sort of called on a case, okay, typically I get called in, okay?

00:29:28 Either a student is facing death, they've gotten like, okay, you know, I've got this terminal diagnosis kind of thing.

00:29:36 Or it's an acquaintance of a student.

00:29:44 You have a friend who is facing death and you would like me to work with him.

00:29:52 So, the first thing is, the first issue is this awkward thing that's interesting, you know, between life and death, right?

00:30:10 The awkward intermediate zone.

00:30:12 There's this awkward thing of, to what extent is this person still fighting to survive?

00:30:22 Which is desirable and admirable.

00:30:27 And to what extent are they saying, well, you know, okay, it's the end.

00:30:32 And I'm pretty much allocating my resources to having euthanasia.

00:30:42 The original meaning of euthanasia is not mercy killing.

00:30:46 It is literally in Greek, euthanatos, a good experience of dying.

00:30:53 Okay?

00:30:54 So, how do you sort of bring this up? Because you don't want to say, like, remember that Simpsons thing where Homer Simpson eats improperly prepared fugu?

00:31:15 The puffer fish in the sushi place, right?

00:31:20 And he's convinced he's going to die.

00:31:22 And so they give him a book to read.

00:31:26 And the name of the book is, So You're Gonna Die.

00:31:31 Okay.

00:31:39 I think it was an audio tape.

00:31:41 And, you know, you can't just, in the role of the death coach, I almost would like to go there and say, okay, so you're gonna die.

00:31:55 Here's what we're gonna do.

00:31:57 But that would really be ghoulish.

00:32:01 And besides, there's, like, people aren't necessarily ready to say, okay, I'm gonna die now, that's where my resources are going.

00:32:11 So the first thing I have to find out is, have they sort of crossed that threshold where, you know, basically they are thinking, this is it, and I'm not, like, we're not doing any hail Mary heroic things here to try to survive.

00:32:33 It's like, okay, you know, their mental set is oriented towards the dying process. Or is it still oriented towards recovery or at least something, surviving a little longer, what have you.

00:32:47 So the way I bring it up is, instead of saying, so you're gonna die, I say, okay, sooner or later everyone's going to die.

00:33:09 Right now, the one thing we can say for sure is that you're in a life-threatening situation.

00:33:20 And therefore, that's going to bring up for you, in a very tangible way, the reality of whether it's now or whether it's way in the future, you know, sooner or later we have to face this.

00:33:35 And I'm going to give you some ideas about how to face it. Okay? So that way I'm not constraining, I'm not, like, consigning them to, you know, you're already dead kind of thing.

00:33:51 So that's sort of how I deal with that. Usually in my situation, by the time I've been called in, they're pretty much, they know they're going to die and that's what they're doing.

00:34:06 But in those cases where that's not the case, there's a very subtle way of getting them to buy into the notion of, okay, let's consider how to die, our smoriendi.

00:34:22 Let's consider that, even though they might not be resigned to their own imminent death at this time. So there's sort of that.

00:34:33 Then, that's what I do to get, so that I can get a sense of, that they're on board with the things that I'm going to guide and suggest and so forth.

00:34:49 Then there's another thing that I learned early on, which is when people do die, they tend to get very wiped out and not be able to talk very much, and also very often they're medicated.

00:35:08 So there comes a time when there can't be much back and forth, and you know that my whole way of working is real-time interactivity.

00:35:19 So what do you do when that's sort of cut off? So what I do beforehand is I ask them, I say, you know, there may come a time when you really can't talk much or give me any feedback.

00:35:35 If that happens, is it okay if I give you guidances, even though you're not giving me feedback, if I just speak and say certain things?

00:35:51 And they almost always say yes. But I do that because I feel that you need an informed consent in this regard, that you don't want, I don't want to feel like I'm invading someone's space, especially in the last days of their life.

00:36:09 So if they say, yeah, it's okay, you know, towards the end, you can say some things. Then they've told me that it's okay and they know what to expect, and I don't have hesitation about doing this at that point.

00:36:31 So then the next thing that I do is I start, I query, I'm looking for certain things. So what is the dulce part of el morir?

00:36:54 Okay. Well, actually, it's right on the basic mindfulness grid. As people become more worn out by the process, there can often be a natural tendency to be drawn to restful states.

00:37:24 If you look at the body language of dying people, okay, it can be very, already sort of corpse-like. It's like the yoga corpse posture kind of thing.

00:37:38 Because it's just, they're just too exhausted to want to move at all, even microscopically. You can see it, that the body is starting to, is wanting to relax.

00:37:49 So I query if they can relate to the relaxation of the body. It's a way of putting a positive spin on the exhaustion, actually.

00:38:01 So can they or can they not relate to, okay, well, you're really exhausted, so how about just being like perfectly still and totally relaxing the body? Does that work for you?

00:38:18 And so I query that restful state. I also query if they're either experiencing or can relate to the possibility that the mental talk may somewhat turn off.

00:38:37 That can be caused by various causes. Of course, it may not happen, so there may be a lot of spinning there. But

there is a natural tendency for the mental, for the, to sort of disengage from sound and for the mental talk to turn off.

00:38:57 I query. I don't say it has to be, but I ask, okay, is there any of that tendency or can you relate to that notion of here rest?

00:39:09 And then, you know, the classic thing that is talked about in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, that people see this bright light, well, of course, that's just an example of sea rest, right?

00:39:23 Or as you look at dying people, you see that their eyes defocus, okay, well, that's another sea rest. Or there's blackness, you know, people sometimes, like, there's this darkness coming over me, etc. That's another flavor of sea rest.

00:39:38 So I query whether they are experiencing or can relate to the restful states. If the answer is yes, that's where we start. And often that's about, that's all I do.

00:39:52 Because it's simple, they find one or a combination of the restful states that they can relate to, they can do it, and the dying process seems to be pushing them that way. And usually that's where it ends.

00:40:09 I just keep reinforcing the notion of rest. When I had the discussion with my mother about dying, I couldn't BS her and say, hey, I know what's going to happen to a person after they're dead and you're going to go to heaven and whatever, you know.

00:40:29 But what I could tell her with confidence is, what I said is that it's natural for the dying process to be a sequence of deeper and deeper restful experiences, like the ones that you've had when you meditate.

00:40:52 Because one of her favorite meditation techniques is focus on rest. So she was familiar with that. And her exact words were, that sounds wonderful.

00:41:03 So that of course produced a lot of pleasant feeling in me. It's like, okay, I've prepared her by being her meditation teacher that she can say, that sounds wonderful, as opposed to all the other freak outs that people could have when they're facing the end.

00:41:26 That sounds wonderful, it's pretty good. So often that's what I do. Typically that's what it is. It's the restful states.

00:41:42 And it's a way of thinking about dying. It's like, well, I'm just going deeper and deeper into rest. It can happen though that a couple other themes come up.

00:41:58 One is flow. If you look at people as they're dying, I know it sounds weird and I don't know how to put it into words, but you can actually see the subtle vibratory flow that's filling their consciousness.

00:42:18 I know it sounds weird and I don't know how to put it into words, but you can actually see it. It's like a scintillating mist over their whole being.

00:42:32 So you can see that, ah, that's what's happening there. It's like there's a somethingness of self and world. It's like this Alka-Seltzer tablet that's been dropped in this water and it's just all this fizz.

00:42:49 So I will sometimes query if they're detecting any flow states. Either in the undulatory, the vibratory, or the expansive-contractive, because when you come into this world, you come in born in between expansive-contractive flow.

00:43:13 That's also how I guide the birth process. And when you go out of this world, you are torn apart, literally, by the forces of expansion-contraction.

00:43:34 Which sounds horrible, but need not be. Because if you give yourself completely to those forces, to the infinite and the infinitesimal, you allow yourself to be literally stretched and literally blown away and crushed.

00:44:00 Crucifixion, okay? Stretched and nailed. If you don't fight those forces of life and death, then you become those forces of life and death. And you become free from the bondage of life and death.

00:44:19 Because you become life and death itself. So I'll sometimes query flow if it's present or not, or if they can relate to it.

00:44:31 Now, the other thing that comes up is gone. There's the micro-gones that you may experience in meditation.

00:44:57 And to the extent that you have become intimate with those micro-gones, those moment-by-moment sensory gods,

to the extent that you are intimate with that, to the extent that you have learned to associate safety, fulfillment,
00:45:24 and tranquility with those gods, those sensory gods, to that extent, the gone of your existence
00:45:49 has a very, very different meaning for you. Because it's just a big version of all those little gods. It's just a big version of that.

00:46:05 So the bottom line for meditators is to the extent that you have become intimate with the restful states, to that extent there's a very high probability that your dying process will be that, naturally.

00:46:28 To the extent that you have become intimate with flow, and particularly, well, any of the flavors of flow, including the expansion-contraction flavors,

00:46:45 there's a pretty good probability that your dying experience will be informed by that. To the extent to which you've come to really know God as it is,

00:47:06 to that extent you won't actually notice the difference between being alive and being dead.

00:47:26 There's a finger-ground reversal that takes place at the beginning of your practice. You don't detect many vanishings at all.

00:47:41 Then, as things progress, that theme often becomes prominent. They talk about the stage where you're aware of rising, passing.

00:47:56 It's like, wells up, here subsides. Wells up, here subsides. Wells up, here subsides. Wells up, here subsides. Rising, passing. Udaya, vyaya. Udaya means going up. Vyaya means going away.

00:48:16 When you put them together in Pali, it becomes Udaya, vyaya. It's a stage described in the classic manuals from Southeast Asia.

00:48:26 What tends to lead to that experience of rising, passing, knowledge of Udaya, vyaya, jnana, dasana, I guess is the actual phrase in Pali, the knowledge of rising, falling.

00:48:46 What tends to lead to that clear experience of rising, falling is your equanimity, your ability to completely open to each new arising, to just say yes.

00:49:05 That ability at the very inception of a sensory event to affirm, totally affirm.

00:49:20 The more you affirm quickly a given sensory event, the more you'll get this rising, passing thing.

00:49:34 So it's how quick and how complete the saying of yes is to the arising of a given event that will allow you to see the pattern of yes, no. Yes, no.

00:49:53 The big yes allows you to see the no, the passing. But then the next stage, after Udaya, vyaya, is described as you're only aware of the passing, but actually not quite.

00:50:10 What it actually says is, no sooner is it arising, but it's already passing. And so that's a spatial, that is a temporal description.

00:50:27 In my beginning is my end. East Coker, a poem by T.S. Eliot, begins that way. In my beginning is my end.

00:50:41 No sooner does a sensory event, a thought, an external sound, a body sensation, arise that you're already aware it's dying as it's arising.

00:50:51 It's coming up, it's dying away. And the dying away is very significant.

00:50:59 Now, in the classic manuals of Theravada Buddhism, which is where the mindfulness or vipassana that we do comes from,

00:51:12 they use this temporal metaphor. As soon as it's arising, it's already passing.

00:51:17 What Sasaki Roshi has done is he's taken that stage of practice, but he gives it a spatial metaphor.

00:51:27 Because every sensory event exists in three-dimensional space. It has width, depth, and height.

00:51:37 Even mental talk has some spatiality to it. Certainly the body, the visual, sound, right, left, and so forth.

00:51:45 So, temporally speaking, that stage of insight, you could be described as, no sooner is it arising, it's already passing.

00:51:59 But spatially speaking, the exact same thing could be described this way. No sooner is it expanding, but it's already contracting.

00:52:11 So, Sasaki Roshi's discovery of expansion-contraction is merely a spatial reworking of the temporal description that exists in Theravada literature.

00:52:26 He says, adamantly, there's no such thing as flat Zen. Zen is a ball. You must become a ball.

00:52:38 A ball, okay, that simultaneously expands and contracts. In other words, I'm not here observing rising and passing over here.

00:52:50 Me and the world are arising and passing in this three-dimensional fountain that is simultaneously gushing and gathering, always.

00:53:05 It's a fountain of pure doing. So, that's a spatial way of talking about the same thing.

00:53:14 That gets us away from the notion of a fixated meditator observing things.

00:53:20 The observer, him or herself, arises in between the spread and collapse of space.

00:53:29 So, sometimes people say, hey, Shifzin, you've got a label for the moment of vanishing, gone.

00:53:41 What's wrong? Why don't you have a label for the moment of arising?

00:53:44 I do. I absolutely have a label for the moment of arising that we use when we do the expansion-contraction flow.

00:54:01 The moment of arising at a very deep, deep level of understanding. The moment of arising is the moment when the space of that experience simultaneously comes into existence and begins going out of existence.

00:54:20 My label for that is both. Both expansion and contraction, they've pulled apart and they are molding the present moment.

00:54:32 Both gone, both gone, both gone, both gone.

00:54:35 You sum up all those boths and gons and you have a giant eternal fountain of youth that is always simultaneously spreading and collapsing and pervaded with the absolute tranquility of a trillion vanishings.

00:54:56 To the extent that you have become that, that there's been a figure of ground reversal. That instead of thinking about that or observing that, you actually participate in that.

00:55:09 Well, that's an eternal fountain of youth. So, to that extent, you become that and your personal death is much less of an issue.

00:55:26 Because by personal death you mean the death of a mind and body. But to the extent that you've re-identified with the flow of the source, that's not going to go away.

00:55:41 So, you will never go away. To that extent. And to the extent that there's been a figure of ground reversal and instead of observing gone, there's just gone and things come and go from it.

00:56:07 Well, to that extent, you won't actually notice the difference between being alive and being dead.

00:56:17 And as strange as that sounds, that means that you won't have to die.

00:56:26 Your body and mind will have to pass away, but you won't have to die.

00:56:34 Thank you.