

**Preparation**  
**Rev. Master Basil Singer**  
**Seattle Dharma Refuge**

I heard Rev. Master Jiyu say on different occasions that “meditation and our daily practice is an excellent way to prepare for our end of life.” My personal experience, as well as my experience training with the very sick and dying, has shown me how right Rev. Master is. I would like to also add that meditation and daily practice are of great help with serious illness and injuries.

It is quite understandable that many people have difficulties at the end of their lives. Most folks live their entire lives as if the passing experiences of their body and mind are their sole refuges. When these start to unravel at the end of life, and these refuges no longer bind together their sense of self any more, different unhelpful states magnify. Fear is usually behind these states.

One of these states is extreme anger. Anger towards everything, including oneself (guilt). People start to relive mistakes they made and feel terrible about them and angry at themselves. This self-condemnation leads many times into a state of deep regret and dark despair. Another state I see is nonacceptance, where someone desperately tries to do many things that they cannot really do any more, as if to ward off the inevitable ceasing of physical activity. Their distress and fear compel them to act in strange ways and do strange things.

When these states of desperation and fear arise, what brings true comfort and solace are meditation, stillness and acceptance. These offer refuge in the pure love, compassion, and nonjudgmental acceptance of the Eternal. This refuge is *always* available to us throughout our lives, and opening up to It through training helps us turn to It at the end of life. It is like a healing medicine that works for us at this time.

Even if someone has been meditating and training for awhile the anxiety of approaching death, or its very real possibility, is a very difficult time. This happened to me the night before a major surgery to remove a big tumor. I was overwhelmed with fear and sadness and really regretted some things I did in my life. Then I said to myself, “Why have I been training all these years?? I have to meditate *now!*” After quite awhile I began to be still and at peace. It was a really difficult time, and remembering and applying my training really helped.

When I write about these times in my life, or I give a talk about how meditation and training have helped me, gratitude always wells up (like now). This is why I like to show how folks can be really helped by the magnificent refuge of the Eternal in all situations.