

THIRD
MESSIAH

DEATH AND DYING

INNER JOURNAL

JOURNALING / MEDITATIONS
ON DEATH AND ITS PRESENCE



A QUICK USERS GUIDE FOR THIS JOURNAL JOURNEY

My Journey in to Dying An introduction to this resource – A small essay on how we feed our stories regarding dying and on the use of this material as relates to our personal storytelling and the art of journaling .

The Nine Contemplations A beautiful rich text as an exercise that guides us in exploring inner aspects of the layers embodied consciously and unconsciously around our being with dying.

Next Being at Home in the Infinite A further inquiry to deepen our relationship to states of being and is a variation on the theme of the teaching called the Four Noble Truths and are reflections on our bodies and their relationship to our being and to living and dying.

Journaling and Active Imagination We are given some reminders from James Hillman's writings here as a compass into the territory of a deep psychic alchemical component. Active imagination is a crucible and creative imagination a wand on how to integrate these alchemical components.

Stepping on the Inside Out An exercise that acts as a personal catalyst as well as for a small group for revisiting our own myths and for witnessing beliefs as pointers for a universal collective story and weaving them into a new narrative – a new well spring for our writing.

Core Material Is the heart of this material and begins by asking “how do we want to die ?”. It is an exercise in two parts and has two corresponding images as a trigger for active imagination and reflection.

Finding the Space Between two Arrows Is the final destination of this journaling exploration. We are guided to the gate of the compassionate heart and the delicate balance between pain and suffering. We are given precious beads of contemplations for expanding tenderness and spaciousness and for entering into that space in-between compassion and equanimity.



ONCE UPON A TIME

The intention for creating this travel guide for our journey is to open us to the rich territory which we inhabit and all too often fear – dying. To bring forward a tapestry of small yet precious inquiries and images that engage into actively traversing our deepest active imagination, and to explore these inner scapes through reflection and journaling as a practice. Paradoxically, unknowing slams the door of inquiry when this territory is held as a fearful void and yet within the shadow is light, that fruitful darkness where that clarity of being often awaits when we open to the darkness, to dying.

How do we learn to "feed" the stories that heal the fear of dying? How do we put together the pieces of the past? How can we rewrite our life story so that pain becomes meaningful and actually promotes growth and transformation? How do we see that which can't be seen or can it? Indeed, our mortality teaches us a lot about life, if we let it. Being with dying is not a philosophical or metaphysical matter detached from the reality of life; it is rather a practice of profound and pragmatic significance. This material is meant as a stained glass window that fills the temple of your being of practical guidance for affirming being with dying and being in living, with being with pain and seeing suffering. The writing / journaling exercises engage and deepen our relationship with dying that we may best practice living. This is a partial remix of a work and many passages are borrowed with minor tinkering from the book **Being with Dying: cultivating compassion and fearlessness in the presence of death** by Joan Halifax.

Our stories reveal or conceal! Our relationship to death comes usually from the stories we tell ourselves – good death, death with dignity – can conceal, be unfortunate fabrications that were used to try to protect ourselves against a somewhat raw and sometimes wondrous truths of dying.

Our inner journals and stories can also reveal, creating passages as bridges. There are many powerful stories around dying and of "enlightened deaths" that leave us with renewed inspiration and determination. Stories can be important life-giving legacies. Stories can give our suffering meaning, our dying depth, our grieving perspective. They can open a door or reveal the past. Having stories revealed long before active dying can be liberating. Then letting go of these narratives we experience what really unfolds. So let us all become aware of our stories around death – the stories we are telling ourselves, the stories our culture tells us, the stories that our healthcare institutions have created. Direct our awareness toward what we might be telling ourselves about dying and death. Become familiar with how we might shield ourselves from the truth of death with certain ideas for how we can let the story be a raft taking us to that other shore or the wave that is the drop, the drop that is the ocean.

Let us learn to be spacious to access that still inner space where wisdom rests, the wisdom that allows us to question, see, and learn from everything within and around us. This wisdom embraces the story, can inform the story, and is not the story yet paradoxically becomes a window from which we see and become more fully human.

This accessing of the story this practice of journaling, even when done in imagination only – or deeper in active imagination – can be powerful training for which ever role we identify with from being present as a caregiver without trying to console, relieve, or save the suffering one, but simply bearing witness to whatever arises. Or for our presence for own journey into dying.

It is the intention when seeing or hearing through an event to its image, its imaginal source within an imaginal reality. "There is always a poem in the heart of things" -

Wallace Stevens

"Stay at your table and listen. Don't even listen, just wait, be completely quiet and alone. The world (body) will offer itself to you to be unmasked." *Kafka*

CONSIDERATIONS

NINE CONTEMPLATIONS *

We now can enjoy in the richness of the nine contemplations, they offer a way to explore our vulnerability and the inevitability of death. They are perspectives on living and dying that were explored by the great 11th century monk and scholar Atisha Shrijnana on presence.

Our first exercise: Breathe and sit with each contemplation as a bead from a rosary. Then spend a few minutes to explore what is being called forth in one of these nine contemplations. Think of these as a mantra that is spiraling on the breath. If you choose, allow one contemplation to guide in a journal process by writing what comes through.

❖ First contemplation

All of us will die sooner or later.
Death is inevitable: no one is exempt.
Holding this thought in mind, I abide in the breath.

❖ Second contemplation

My lifespan is ever – decreasing.
The human lifespan is ever – decreasing;
each breath brings us closer to death.
Holding this thought in mind, I delve deeply into this truth.

❖ Third contemplation

Death comes whether or not I am prepared
death will indeed come, whether or not we are prepared.
Holding this thought in mind, I enter fully into the body of life.

❖ Fourth contemplation

My lifespan is not fixed.
Human life expectancy is uncertain; death can come at any time.
Holding this thought in mind, I am attentive to each moment.



❖ Fifth contemplation

Death has many causes.

There are many causes of death – even habits and desires are precipitants.

Holding this thought in mind, I consider the endless possibilities.

❖ Sixth contemplation

My body is fragile and vulnerable.

The human body is fragile and vulnerable; my life hangs by a breath.

Holding this thought in mind, I attend as I inhale and exhale.

❖ Seventh contemplation

Material resources will be of no use to me.

At the time of death, material resources are of no use.

Holding this thought in mind, I invest whole heartedly in practice.

❖ Eighth contemplation

My loved ones cannot save me

Our loved ones cannot keep us from death; there is no delaying its advent. Holding this thought in mind I exercise non- grasping.

❖ Ninth contemplation

My own body cannot help me when death comes.

The body cannot help us at this; it, too, will be lost at that moment.

Holding this thought in mind, I learned to let go.

* *Borrowed from Joan Halifax from Being with Death*



I moved across a frontier, a secret territory of the unfamiliar

- ❖ ABODE OF LOVING-KINDNESS
- ❖ ABODE OF COMPASSION
- ❖ ABODE OF JOY
- ❖ ABODE OF EQUANIMITY



NEXT BEING AT HOME IN THE INFINITE DWELLING IN THE BOUNDLESS ABODES

Practice: Energizing each of these four abodes is the ultimate buddhist practice for expanding self-care. Each abode is our home, that unconditional space / treasure always available to us. By cultivating them we can strengthen their power within us. Each a passage a threshold into gates of presence.

Exercise: Breathe and sit with each abode then spend a few minutes to explore what is being called forth in one of these four abodes. Again a bead of a very deep rosary a mantra that is calling on the breath. Allow one ABODE to guide in a journal process by writing what comes through.

Phrases that support loving kindness

May loving kindness flow boundlessly

- ◆ May loving kindness fill and heal your body
- ◆ May the power of loving kindness sustain you

Phrases that nourish compassion

- ◆ May you and all beings be free from pain and sorrow
- ◆ May you take care of yourself
- ◆ May all beings be free from the causes of suffering

Phrases that engender sympathetic joy

- ◆ May all beings be happy
- ◆ May joy fill and sustain you
- ◆ May your well being continue

Phrases that foster equanimity

- ◆ Everyone must face her own situation
- ◆ Your happiness or unhappiness depends upon your actions, not my wishes for you
- ◆ May you accept things as they are

JOURNALING AND ACTIVE IMAGINATION

Let us seek to integrate as the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the roots of the soul governing the perspective we have of ourselves and the world; for Matter, God, Energy, Life, Health, Society, or Art – All are fundamental metaphors, archetypes perhaps themselves which hold old worlds together and yet can never be pointed to, accounted for or even adequately circumscribed.

A few basic reminders regarding active imagination and journal process:

- ❖ Active imagination is not a spiritual discipline for there are no prescribed or proscribed fantasies. One works with the images that arise, not special ones chosen by a master or a code.
- ❖ Active imagination is not an artistic endeavor, not a creative production of paintings and poems. One may aesthetically give form to the images—indeed one should try as best one can aesthetically—though this is for the sake of the figures, in dedication to them and to realize their beauty, and not for the sake of art. The aesthetic work of active imagination is therefore not to be confused with art for exhibition or publication.
- ❖ Active imagination aims not at silence but that of speech, not at stillness but that of story/ narrative or conversation. It emphasizes the importance of the word, not the cancellation of the word. The word becomes a way of relating, in instrument as tool.
- ❖ Active imagination is not a mystical activity, performed for the sake of illumination, for reaching select states of consciousness. That would be imposing a spiritual intention upon the psychological activity that would be domination of, or even a repression of, soul by spirit.
- ❖ Active imagination is not a psychological activity in the transpersonal sense of the attempt to work with images by and for the human will.
- ❖ Active imagination as a method of interior imaging is not a spiritual discipline, artistic creativity, transcendence of the worldly, mystical vision or union, personal betterment or magical effect. Its intention is Know Thyself, self—understanding in a paradoxical communion. Self understanding is necessarily uroboric (en-circlement), an interminable turning in a great swirl, vortex committed in its scenes, its visions and voices...

To see the archetypal in an image is an imagistic move. We amplify image by means of myth in order not to find its archetypal meaning but in order to feed it with further images that increase its volume and depth and release its fecundity. *from James Hillman*

GROUP EXERCISE

TEMPORAL GEOGRAPHY WALK OF PARADOX AND CLARITY

CHAOS FOG LIGHT



The Path



Paradox of Chaos



Transition



Subtle path



Fog



Light

STEPPING ON THE INSIDE OUT

A cathartic exercise is in creating a written woven tapestry as a collective story shared as small fragments of private experiences and then woven together to create a stronger version that can then be written into this template so our collective myth can emerge. Our intention is to create the space for us to find resonances within our narratives and so create something from this which represented a combined view, weaving these disparate threads into a common story.

This template is designed specifically for our individual and collective journaling story telling. Its simple format allows for a sharing circle for everyone to ask questions of the teller whose answers can then be condensed to fit the format. Our final story becomes the container of traces of memories from all group members. Our template:

TITLE:

LANDSCAPE (description of time and space)

DWELLING PLACE (location of the action)

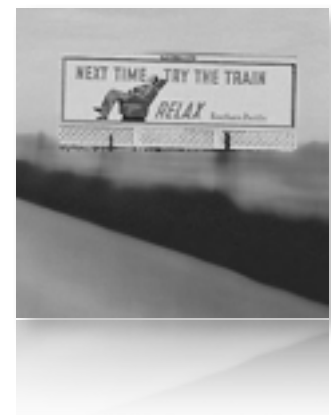
CHARACTERS (including their attributes)

OBJECTS (the VISUAL HOOKS, *BE GRANULAR*, TEXTURES, PATTERNS)

TRAVAILS AND TESTS (which leads to...)

ACTION (that includes obstacles, helpers and a turning point)

REFLECTIONS (including INNER / OUTER)



CORE MATERIAL FOR OUR WRITING / JOURNAL

Journaling exercises INSPIRED by Joan Halifax and Sharon Salzberg



How do you want to die?

“ In teaching care of the dying, I often begin by asking questions that explore our stories around death, including the legacies we may have inherited from culture and family. Looking at our stories may help us to be taught by what we believe what happened when we are dying, and open new possibilities for us”. We begin with a very direct inquiry:

Exercise reflection, WHAT is your worst case scenario of how you will die?"

I ask you to write it all down, freely and in detail (telling how, when, of what, with whom, and where), about the worst or best you can imagine for yourself. Right from your most uncensored, uncorrected state of mind, and let all the fun prescribed elements of your psyche emerge as you write. Take about five minutes for this.

Exercise 2ND reflection, Ask yourself how you feel, how your body feels, and what is coming up for you – and write down these responses as well. It is crucial at this point to practice honest self – observations. What is your body telling you? Give yourself a few minutes to write down how imagining this worst-case death makes you feel.



2nd question: How do you really want to die?

Again, please write about this in as much detail as possible. What is your ideal time, place, and kind of death? Who will be with you? Now again take time for reflection give some attention to what is happening in your body and your mind writing these reflections down as well think of this as fine tuning reflection.

3rd question: "What are you willing to do to die the way you want to die?"

We go through a lot to educate and train ourselves for a vocation; most of us invest a great deal of time and taking care of our bodies, and we usually devote energy to carry forth all relationships. So now please ask yourself what you're doing to prepare for the possibility of the sane and gentle death. And how you can open up the possibility for the experience of deathless enlightenment both at this moment and when you die?

From Being with Dying Joan Halifax "meditation on How do you want to die"

FINDING THE SPACE BETWEEN TWO ARROWS

We also have stories around pain. Our lives include both pain and suffering. Pain is physical discomfort, suffering is our story around pain. The Buddha said, "when touched by feeling of pain, the ordinary uninstructed person sorrows, grieves, and laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical and mental, just as if he was shot with an arrow and, right afterwards, was shot with another one, so that he felt the pain of two arrows. We all feel the shots of two arrows the arrow of pain with the arrow of suffering. The first arrow, the sensation of pain, is bad enough. But it's the second arrow" – the story we tell ourselves about our pain – that's the real trouble.

This final exercise can tip our being into a delicate balance as we passed through the gates of living and dying as we offer our lives to the well-being of others. In the experience of giving care, there is this delicate balance between opening our hearts endlessly [compassion] and accepting the limits of what we can do and how we and others feel [equanimity]. Most of us need to cultivate this balance between compassion – the tenderness of the heart in response to suffering – and equanimity – the spacious stillness that accept things as they are. The balance of compassion and equanimity allows us to care without becoming overwhelmed and unable to cope because of that caring.

The phrases we use reflect this balance. Find that which speaks to you within these phrases. Bring your attention to your breath and silently repeat your chosen phrase.

- ❖ May my love for others flow boundlessly
- ❖ May the power of loving kindness sustain me
- ❖ May I find the inner resources to truly be able to give
- ❖ May I remain in peace and let go of expectations
- ❖ May I offer my care and presence unconditionally, knowing it may be met by gratitude, indifference, anger, or anguish
- ❖ May I offer love, knowing that I cannot control the course of life, suffering, or death
- ❖ May I see my limits compassionately, just as I view the suffering of others
- ❖ May I accept things as they are





B R O K E N A R R O W S

We arrive at our final closing reflection on our exercise the Second Broken Arrow of suffering. It can enfold our being, retrieve our compassion, in that suffering usually pushes us onto the spiritual path. Open into body awareness and see.

"Often it takes an accident, a catastrophic diagnosis, a disaster, or even great loss for us to break open. Then, when we begin to explore the truth of suffering, we often find within each poison the nectar of wisdom, kindness, and love. But we must first discard the belief that we can make our suffering go away. Instead, we learn to stay with it. Then we become curious about it. This is a fundamental change of attitude. We accept our suffering and are determined to help ourselves by investigating its cause. This is where most of us begin our journey home " *Halifax*

"I turn towards my suffering with kindness"



In the autumn I gathered all my sorrows and buried them in my garden. And when April returned and spring came to wed the earth, there grew in my garden beautiful flowers unlike all other flowers. And my neighbors came to behold them, and they all said to me, "When autumn comes again, at seeding time, will you not give us of the seeds of these flowers that we may have them in our gardens?" —Khalil Gibran

a third messenger offering

The Third Messenger is taken from the informational flow of energy as in biological packets relaying intelligence to living systems. Third Messenger is a metaphor for creative intelligence found in deep guided imagery and inner journaling as a means to cross the territory of the unfamiliar landscapes into one's healing journeys. The third messenger shares the messages of compassionate service brought forth from the great wisdom teachings and teachers .

*Content a remix of passages from the major work Being with Dying by Joan Halifax
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