

Juniper

Tending to the Dying

We at Juniper are sometimes called upon to tend to a person who is dying, a service that Juniper's Segyu Rinpoche has been providing for more than twenty-five years. Although death and dying is a topic many prefer to avoid, it plays an important role in Buddhist training.

The time of dying can be very profound—challenging in some respects, meaningful and even beautiful in others. When we are asked to be involved, our goal is to be present for the dying person and his or her family. Each situation is unique, and our goal is to provide comfort and support that is suited to each person's needs during the transition.

Although the dying process is an end in some ways, in other ways it can create openings for unexpressed feelings, for healing old wounds, for reconciliation, and for appreciation. Acting on these emotions can be highly cathartic. We facilitate this process the best we can, helping both the dying and those who remain behind to healthily integrate what is happening.

Above all, we tend to the needs of the dying person. Is there something that would make him more comfortable; does she have any unmet wishes; are the individuals he or she wishes to see present? Sometimes he or she is unable to communicate, so we do our best to intuit what might be helpful. At the right moments, we perform practices drawn from the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The function of these practices is to remove tension, instill a peaceful and calm mind, and facilitate the transition.

Although we employ practices that are directed at a good transition, we do not dwell on what happens after death. Our goal is to do everything we can to bring clarity and harmony to the process of dying, so that each person can pass on with dignity and in the best possible state for where his or her journey may lead.

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