

Enriching Our Cultural Experience of Dying - Open Center

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By Ruby Parker



In modern society, death is often a source of fear and anxiety. The dying may be afraid of the great unknown they are about to face—what will it be like, will they be aware of what’s happening, will it hurt? If they are in a nursing home or hospitalized, they may also feel isolated and apprehensive about their care.

Family and friends of the dying frequently experience similar feelings. Some people would rather be anywhere else than in the presence of death and dying—they worry about what to say and how to behave, many have an intense fear of death—and so they stay away.

Others are plagued with unresolved issues and have mixed feelings about this final opportunity to say, “I’m sorry,” “I forgive you,” or “I love you.” As a result, countless people die alone and afraid, in emotional distress—and their loved ones fight feelings of remorse for years to come.

There is a better way. It is possible to enter death with serenity and anticipation of the great journey ahead, and families can learn to celebrate their loved one’s life even as they grieve their loss. The native medicine men and women of the Americas understand that on the other side of life, there is only life. That death is simply a transition to a different plane of existence.

During my training in shamanic energy medicine with the Four Winds Society, I took a class on death rites practiced in traditional societies, which I now teach. “Dying Consciously: The Greatest Journey” is designed to help all involved navigate the death process with grace and dignity, allowing the dying person to effortlessly make their way back to the world of spirit.

The beauty of this program is that it also prepares attendees to freely share the knowledge

within their families and community with the goal of enriching our cultural experience of dying, bringing beauty and light those who are transitioning beyond this physical life.

The two-day course consists of seven sections covering dozens of topics. Students learn what happens when someone takes their last breath, how to alleviate fear of death, support the dying and their loved ones, encourage reconciliation and forgiveness, eliminate any toxic energy that might be present at the end of life, promote a peaceful death, and much more.

To understand the process of dying, attendees must first understand the function of the *luminous energy field* (LEF)—the matrix that surrounds and informs our physical body. The LEF can be thought of as the software that instructs our DNA—the hardware—to repair our body. It does this through our brain, nervous system, and energy centers (or chakras).

Also known as a halo or aura, the LEF is a biomagnetic field which does not end where our skin ends but rather extends to the farthest reaches of the universe, diminishing in intensity, yet never vanishing altogether. It is our gateway to the invisible matrix of wisdom where everything is intertwined, where every thought we have impacts every cell in our body and every molecule in the cosmos.

The LEF stays connected to the body by two binding forces: the electromagnetic field and the body's energy centers. Over the course of our lifetime it becomes clouded with pools of toxic energy from unprocessed negative emotions. During the death rites we cleanse the chakras and the LEF so it does not carry heavy energy with it when the brain shuts down, the electromagnetic field dissolves, and the LEF disengages from the body to become one with Spirit again.

Chakra cleansing helps set the energetic body free by removing toxic energy accumulated throughout a lifetime as a result of trauma. Each of the body's chakras (energy centers) is linked to our psycho-neuro-endocrine-immune system. The cleansing process combusts the toxic energy and erases imprints from the luminous energy field.

Part of chakra cleansing involves *decoupling*—resetting the fight-or-flight response to help the dying person feel safe and calm. The fight-or-flight system is activated when the brain responds to real and imagined stressors. Our sympathetic nervous system kicks in, triggering the release of adrenaline, cortisol, and sugar into the bloodstream, which prepares us to do battle or run for our lives.

But unlike other species that inhabit our planet, once the threat has disappeared, our relaxation response does not automatically follow. We can't just shake off the sense of danger, and thus remain in a state of alert—sometimes for years. Decoupling disengages this system, allowing the body and mind to relax.

The final step in the death rites is *sealing the chakras* by making the sign of a cross over each energy center with the thumb. This keeps the luminous body from returning to a lifeless physical form. The sign of a cross—a symbol more ancient than Christianity—represents the sealing of a doorway into a physical body that will never be used again. In the Christian traditions one finds a similar practice associated with the last rites, except that the meaning of these rites has largely been forgotten.

While the chakra rites are often done as death nears, there are other rites that can be done at

any time. We can help our loved ones prepare for their great journey by giving them the opportunity to tell their story, a step in the death rites known as *recapitulation* (life review) and forgiveness. All it takes is a sympathetic listener to bear sacred witness and encourage them to forgive themselves compassionately and without judgment.

A post-death ritual that friends and family often find healing is the *Aya despacho* and *fire ceremony*, which honors the loved one's life and lets them go. One of the most gratifying things about teaching this program is introducing participants to new concepts such as this one, and then hearing about their experiences implementing the rites—they never fail to touch me deeply.

Ruby Parker's extensive healing career spans over 20 years and includes work as a massage therapist, Reiki master, personal counselor, and Energy Medicine practitioner. She is a graduate of the Four Winds Society Light Body School and Masters Certification program in Energy Medicine; is a member of the teaching staff at Four Winds, and currently works as Assistant Director of Alternative and Complementary Health and Counselor at the Sanctuary, Sedona.

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