

Dialogue for Clearing Unfinished Business

- First sit quietly, and see if you can find a willingness to communicate your problem one last time, with the intention of letting it go. Find a willingness to really feel heard, and to listen to the other person's perspective as well.
- Visualize the person with whom you have unfinished business. Imagine that this person is sitting in front of you looking exactly the way you remember; but with one very important difference: ***consider that he or she is more open and receptive, and can really hear everything you have to say.***
- Reflect on what has been the main difficulty, without rekindling strong emotions. Imagine now that you are telling this problem to the person in front of you, remembering that he or she is very receptive and genuinely able to listen.
- Imagine that this person, who has really heard you, is expressing his or her perspective on the problem.
- Take a pen and paper and write down what you have just considered saying. Write out the problem, in a responsible way, without attacking the person. Remember that you are speaking to the other person's open heart, and that he or she is receptive and can truly hear you.
- Allow the other person to express his or her side of the problem; just begin writing and see what happens. Since you have been speaking to their "best side" and your feelings have been heard, their response probably won't be what you expect.
- **Next, write down any other difficult feelings you may still have—**

fears, hurts, anger, regrets, sadness, expectations, or attachments

After you express each difficulty, invite the other person to express their perspective.

- Continue writing both parts of this dialogue, including all the layers of your difficulties, until you feel you are no longer harboring anything negative in your heart.

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- If the person had previously hurt you, see if you can now extend forgiveness to him or her. If you hurt the other person, ask their forgiveness. Perhaps in previous contacts the person refused to forgive you, but now, realize that *the best part of the other person* would hear and understand your regret, and not hesitate to forgive you. Allow yourself to receive the healing love of this forgiveness, and let go of any feelings of guilt or self-condemnation.
- Look into your heart and see if there are any positive feelings, such as appreciation and love for the other person, that you've been holding back. Communicate your love and appreciation in writing, and allow the other person to write their positive feelings for you as well.
- To conclude, you can thank each other, and say good-bye.
- Imagine now that the person is turning and leaving. As he or she leaves, ask yourself: *Am I really letting go now, can I wish him or her well?*

Optional:

- If you wish, you can conclude the dialogue with: *And I would like to hear from you.*
- You might find it effective to read this dialogue out loud to a therapist, trusted friend, or in front of a photo of the person.
- *Please do not mail this dialogue to the other person!* If you feel ready to communicate, perhaps write a letter, arrange a meeting or a phone call.
- If it's difficult to imagine the person 'open and receptive', imagine them at a much younger age, or, that you're communicating when their defenses are softening, such as when they're within a week of dying.
- Certain practices can be a support for forgiveness, including: Tonglen or Self-Tonglen, or Loving Kindness, Forgiveness practice, or Seeing the other as another you and Putting yourself in their place. As a support, you may find it helpful to invoke a divine or Loving Presence in the space above you both.
- As Sogyal Rinpoche wrote, you may find it helpful to:

'Visualize that all the buddhas and enlightened beings are in the sky above and around you, shining down their rays of compassionate light and giving you their

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support and blessing. In their presence, grieve and say what you have to say, what is really in your heart and mind, to your loved one who has died.

'Visualize that the person who is dead is looking at you with a greater love and understanding than he or she ever had while alive. Know that the dead person wants you to understand that he or she loves you and forgives you for whatever you may have done, and wants to ask for and receive your forgiveness.'

- *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, p.317

- If you are dialoging with a person who has died, you can conclude this healing with a practice of spiritual purification such as the Essential Phowa, or any prayer or method you know that brings spiritual support to the deceased.