

Here are the Nine Contemplations of Atisha, an 11th century Tibetan scholar, for our consideration:

The First Contemplation

Death is inevitable, no one is exempt.
holding this thought in mind, I abide in the breath.

The Second Contemplation

Our life span is decreasing continuously, every breath brings us closer to death.
holding this thought in mind, I delve deeply into truth.

The Third Contemplation

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

The Fourth Contemplation

human life expectancy is uncertain, death can come at any time.
holding this thought in mind, I listen with utmost care to every sound

The Fifth Contemplation

There are many causes of death— habits, desires, accidents can be precipitants.
holding this thought in mind, I consider the myriad possibilities.

The Sixth Contemplation

The human body is fragile and vulnerable, our life hangs by a breath.
holding this thought in mind, I attend to each inhalation-exhalation.

The Seventh Contemplation

At the time of death, our material resources are of no use to us.
holding this thought in mind, I invest wholeheartedly in the practice.

The Eight Contemplation

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

The Ninth Contemplation

Our body cannot help us at the time of death, it too will be lost at that moment.
holding this thought in mind, I strengthen my capacity for release'.