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## *Personal Approaches to Dying*

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When we begin the gradual dying process our personality doesn't change, it intensifies. If we are an angry person we will get angrier. If we are a gentle personality we will become even softer. You would think we would become more thoughtful about life and its meaning and more religious or spiritual but generally we don't. We just continue down life's path in the same direction we always have, a bit more frightened, a bit more nervous maybe but basically just a sicker version of who we have always been. If I have been active all of my life I will push myself to keep going. If I have been passive I will succumb to the temptation to be a couch potato, a complainer will get out the microphone, a loner will withdraw even more.

Learn about how a person has lived their life and you will better understand how they will approach their death.

## *Window of Control*

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If you are with someone at the moment they take their last breath you are with them because they want you there. If you are not with someone at the moment they died, and you tried very hard to be with them, then they showed their love for you by protecting you from that moment. It sounds strange, but the person who is dying is the one who has a limited amount of control over the moment that they die—not the loved one who is attending to them.

We die a gradual death according to our personality and if that personality is protective then we may protect a person we care about by dying when they are not in the room. We tend to believe that death just happens but, as I have said, gradual death has recognizable dynamics with a process to it. Part of that process is a small window of control over the time that we actually die.

We have enough control to wait until a child, even an adult child, leaves the room. We have enough control to wait until a special person arrives to be with us. I know this seems foreign but there is self-determination over the time that we die, limited, but more than most of us assume. We can take comfort in this knowledge. We can let go of guilty feelings and accept the gift our loved one has given us: presence at the moment of death or protection from it--whichever the dying person thought best.