



# Dealing with Death and Loss

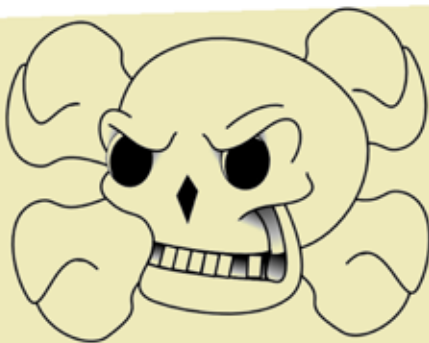
## Buddhist view on death

All of us will pass away eventually as a part of the natural process of birth, old-age and death.

Buddhists do not believe in the idea of a permanent soul. Instead, they subscribe to the notion of a constant changing stream of consciousness. Thus, death is merely a transmutation of this stream of consciousness from one body to another form. Due to craving for existence, we will undergo rebirth which is dictated by our kamma.



"YOU'RE GOING BACK AS A MAYFLY  
"HAVE A NICE DAY!"



## How do we overcome the fear of death?

Generally, people fear death as they are unable to cope with the idea that they will cease to exist. Everyday, we experience a myriad of "mini-deaths" of all kinds. We lose our hair, our loved ones, our strength, our vitality, our money, etc. A careful look shows that 'death' or impermanence is prevalent in our daily lives. By accepting the impermanence of life, we will be able to accept the eventuality of death with greater ease.

## On dealing with loss

It is natural to grieve over the loss of family members and friends. This is part of the process where we adjust to missing them and living without their presence in our lives. The death of a loved one, or even someone we were not close to, is a terribly painful event. Upon recognising impermanence as an irrefutable characteristic of existence, we should not be too attached to our deceased loved ones. The story of Kisa Gotami illustrates this idea.

## The story of Kisa Gotami

When Kisa Gotami's only son was about a year old, he fell ill and suddenly died. Overcome with grief, Kisa Gotami took the dead child in her arms and went around asking people if they knew of a medicine that would restore her child to life. No one could help her and she was advised by a follower of the Buddha to see him. When she carried the dead child to the Buddha and told him about her story, the Buddha asked her to get four or five mustard seeds from any family in which there had never been any death. Kisa Gotami set off to look for such a household but without success. Every family she visited had experienced the death of someone. At last, she understood that death is inevitable to all and she no longer grieve. This story portrays the universality of death and how we should not grieve excessively for our loved ones.

