



*Frank Ostaseski, Former Director of the Zen Hospice Project has developed 5 precepts as companions that we may use while accompanying the dying on their journey. He reminds us that it is not enough to take these as theories, or concepts—that to be understood or realized they have to be **communicated through our actions.***

## Find a Place of Rest in the Middle of things

We often think of resting as something we'll do when everything else is over. Like when we go on a holiday, or when our work is done. We imagine that we can only find rest, by changing the conditions of our life. But in accompanying people who are dying we have to find this place of rest, sometimes right in the middle of chaos. This rest—it's experienced when we bring our full attention, without distraction, to this moment, to this activity.

Frank relates a story of a 86 year old Russian Jewish woman, named Adele who was dying. He observed that she was breathing with great difficulty—*every in-breath—struggle—every out-breath—struggle*. He watched her for a while and eventually noticed that although she had received medication for pain, there was still struggle, which was manifesting in the breath. So Frank asked her if she would like to struggle a little bit less—Adele agreed. Frank then told her that he noticed that when she exhaled, there was a little pause. He asked her if she could put her attention on the little pause for a while. As Adele was highly motivated to be relieved of suffering she was able to place her attention in the small pause—the gap between the inhale and the exhale. They breathed together, and Frank observed that as she was able to place her attention on the small gap between inhaling and exhaling, the fear eventually drained away from her face. After a while, breathing in this manner, Adele died quite peacefully.

This place of rest is always there for us. Adele found it. And even though the conditions of her life remained the same, her breathing hadn't changed, she was still dying, and yet she found this place of rest. This place of rest is always available. We need only turn toward it. With sincere practice, after some time, we can know this spaciousness regularly in our life. It's an aspect of us that's never sick, is not born, and does not die.

Find a place of rest in the middle of things.

*Excerpt from CD Being a Compassionate Companion: The Fourth Precept: Find a Place of Rest in the Middle of things. Frank Ostaseski. Zen Hospice.*