

The Tao of Dying Well

Reading Group Discussion Guide

How to get started

Gather a few friends, invite your existing book club, or use these questions on your own. This guide offers two ways to talk about the book and reflect on what matters in your own life.

Option 1 · Meet Once

Set aside about an hour. Invite everyone to bring a passage they'd like to talk about. Begin by sharing a few passages, choose two or three questions below, and close by inviting each person to name one idea they want to carry with them.

- Which passage stayed with you, and what made it stand out?
- What did the book's idea of completing life bring up for you?
- Did the book change how you think about living fully? What might that look like in an ordinary week?
- What conversation or small action would you like to make time for?

Option 2 · Read Together Over Six Weeks

Use the chapter assignments on the following pages. Each week, start with a passage someone marked and choose two or three questions that fit your group. Make time for the optional reflection if you'd like. An hour is a good starting point.

Reading alone? Choose one question each week and write for five minutes.

Reading plan

WEEK	THEME	READING
1	**Seeing death differently**	Author's Preface and Chapters 1–3
2	**Living fully to the very end**	Chapters 4–6
3	**Designing your own ending**	Chapters 7–8
4	**Expressing wishes and honoring life**	Chapters 9–10
5	**Being present at the end of life**	Chapter 11 and A Companion's Guide
6	**What we leave behind**	Chapters 12–14 and the Epilogue

Make Room For Each Other

Welcome different beliefs and speak from your own experience. Anyone can pass, listen quietly, or keep their writing private. Keep personal stories within the group and listen without offering advice.

A NOTE ON CARE

If the reading stirs up strong feelings, pause and talk with someone you trust. This guide is not medical or legal advice. Laws and forms about advance directives vary by location.

About The Book

The Tao of Dying Well: How to Live Fully, Love Deeply, and Leave Peacefully, by Ilchi Lee. First paperback edition, October 2026.

Week 1 Seeing death differently

Read the Author's Preface and Chapters 1–3

1. What drew you to this book, and what do you hope to explore over these six weeks?
2. When you think about death, which concern feels most immediate: pain, separation, uncertainty, unfinished life, or something else?
3. What does Ilchi Lee mean by completing a life? How does that idea sit with you?
4. In Korean, people say someone who has died has 'returned' rather than 'gone.' How does that way of speaking change the way you picture death?

Optional reflection: Finish this sentence in a few lines: 'If I saw my life as something I'm completing, not something that simply ends, I would…'

Week 2 Living fully to the very end

Read Chapters 4–6

1. The author says the life of your 70s arises from the choices of your 60s. What habit would your future self thank you for starting now?
2. What would it mean to lighten the weight of your heart? Which knot would you want to loosen first?
3. The author suggests that while the brain may age, consciousness need not. What have you seen in older people you admire that supports or challenges this?
4. Which practice from this week's reading would fit into your life right now? What would make it easy to try?

Optional reflection: Choose one small practice, such as a moment of gratitude or an evening reflection, and decide when you'd like to try it.

Week 3 Designing your own ending

Read Chapters 7–8

1. What do these chapters suggest we can prepare for? What remains outside our control?
2. In Chapter 7, imagining his ideal last day helps a man see what matters in his life now. If you imagined yours, who and what would be part of it?
3. Chapter 8 describes forgiveness as releasing the hold of a painful experience. What might help someone begin that process when an apology or reconciliation never comes?
4. The book explores apology, forgiveness, gratitude, and love. Is there something you'd like to express, even if you write it just for yourself?

Optional reflection: Choose one person you'd like to thank. Write three or four sentences you could say to them, and decide whether you want to say them. You never have to share what you write.

Week 4 Expressing wishes and honoring life

Read Chapters 9–10

1. Have you discussed your wishes or written an advance directive? What would help you begin or revisit that conversation this month?
2. If someone were making decisions on your behalf, what would you want them to understand about what matters to you?
3. What is your reaction to having a life completion ceremony while you are alive? Is it something you would consider?
4. What experience taught you a value you'd like to pass on? How would you tell that story?

Optional reflection: Begin a values will, a personal note about what matters to you. Write a few lines about one value, where it came from, and how you try to live it.

Week 5 Being present at the end of life

Read Chapter 11 and A Companion's Guide (at the back of the book)

1. Chapter 11 describes how the body gradually changes as death nears. Did learning this change how you imagine sitting at a bedside?
2. Chapter 11 invites us to see death as a return to the source of life. What feels comforting, unfamiliar, or difficult about that idea?
3. The chapter suggests choosing an image, sound, or words that bring a sense of peace. What would you choose for yourself, and what would you want loved ones to know about it?
4. If someone who was dying said, "I'm afraid," how would you respond? Did A Companion's Guide change your thinking about what to say or do in that moment?

Optional discussion: If you've spent time with someone who was dying, what did that experience teach you about being there for them? Share only what feels comfortable.

Week 6 What we leave behind

Read Chapters 12–14 and the Epilogue

1. What value have you received from someone else? Where does it show up in the way you live?
2. What would help conversations about death feel more natural in your family or community? What small step could you take?
3. Chapter 14 considers technologies that might dramatically extend life. If that choice were available, what would you need to know about yourself to choose well?
4. After reading the book, what does living fully mean to you now? Is there anything you want to do differently?

Optional reflection*:* Choose one small action you'd like to take in the next month and decide when you'll begin.