**Summarising the journey so far**

As soon as we talk about spiritual death and rebirth, we enter into mysteries. Buddhist teachings are trying to wake us up to something quite beyond our day-to-day mind – beyond our fixed categories of time, space and causality. The Buddha’s approach was essentially pragmatic. He helped people to develop a fit mind so that they could see reality for themselves.

But the Buddha lived in an intensely animistic world imbued with reverence and devotion, and this meant that many of those who met him were already receptive to the mysteries beyond thought. If we don’t identify imagination as a faculty, we won’t be able to use it.

We can trust our imagination to the degree that we have liberated ourselves from self-clinging and pride.

If we’re dharmically *immature,* we’re likely to appropriate the imagination, to turn it into yet another self-aggrandizing story or mix it up with fantasy and histrionics. So we need as a basis:

* *Integration –* For imagination to be healthy it needs to be grounded in ordinary physical sensations.
* *Positive emotion* – We need positive emotion to ensure that our imagination arises from a healthy human state of mind, not an unhealthy and distorted one.
* *Spiritual receptivity –* We need spiritual receptivity to make sure we’re open to the *unwilled*, to the stream of the dharma, pulling us beyond self-conceit. Receptivity includes being receptive to dharma teachers and friends.
* *Spiritual death –* We need spiritual death so that our imagination is the expression of a committed dharma life and not the result of some vanity-project or pseudo-spiritual fantasy. This means regularly studying the dharma: growing our imagination in the healthy soil of the Buddha’s transcending vision.

Imagination can lead us into such profound experiences that we struggle to make sense of them in everyday terms.