

# **Glimpses of the Beyond**

*Experiences Pointing to Life After Death*



**Booklet prepared by International Foundation for Survival Research, Inc.**

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## **GLIMPSES OF THE BEYOND**

### **Experiences Pointing to Life After Death**

One of the most natural and basic questions people ask themselves at some point in life is, “When I die, will I survive death?” or said another way, “Is there life after death?” For many this inquiry is accompanied by a deep fear of dying and of what might happen after death. Some ask such questions about death out of a desire to know more fully the extent of human potential. And while often this inquiry is pondered throughout a person’s lifetime, perhaps just as often it isn’t addressed until a person must confront the death of a loved one or their own impending death.

It is the intent of this booklet to summarize clearly and simply several kinds of experiences that suggest there is life after death.

### **VISIONS**

#### **At the Deathbed**

“Deathbed visions” are often reported within hours of a death. Typically, the person dying sees a deceased loved one who urges the dying person to follow. Occasionally, the deceased person in the vision has died recently, but the death was not known to the viewer. In some cases, at the moment the dying person sees the vision, it is simultaneously seen by relatives and/or medical personnel.

Researchers have verified that the persons seeing these visions are mentally sound and drug free at the time of the experience. Dr. Erlendur Haraldsson of the University of Iceland and the late Dr. Karlis Osis of the American Society for Psychical Research wrote *What They Saw . . . At the Hour of Death* (Hastings House, 1997), widely viewed as the authoritative textbook on deathbed visions that describes their scholarly research on the subject.

Here is a typical experience:

“I was with Betty shortly before her death. Her husband was leaning over her and speaking to her when, pushing him aside, she said, ‘Oh, don’t hide it. It’s so beautiful.’ Then turning away from him toward the other side of the bed, Betty said, ‘Oh, why, there’s Veda,’ referring to her sister. Veda had died three weeks earlier, but the family withheld the news from Betty because of her own illness.”

## **During Everyday Life**

Persons nearing death are not the only ones who report seeing their deceased loved ones. Around the world, peoples of diverse cultures report “visits” from the deceased. These visits are rarely reported as frightening. At the University of Virginia in the Department of Perceptual Studies, Emily Williams Kelly, PhD, studies these and other types of “spontaneous cases” which suggest to those experiencing them that consciousness continues after bodily death.

One such case involved Leslie, a middle-aged businessman. One of his children died as an infant. Leslie was alone piloting a private airplane across the southern United States when he apparently lost control of the plane and crashed to his death. Two nights later, his mother, Marge, was awakened by some disturbance to find someone at the foot of her bed.

“There he was, Leslie, with the baby, and he was holding the baby’s hand . . . They were at the foot of the bed. They looked at each other. I was wide awake then. They were content. They were happy that they found each other and that they were together now. They were letting me know that this was so. I got that feeling.”

This experience was so absorbing that the perceptual world around Marge faded:

“They were solid, but there was a grayness all around, like a gray cloud around them. I would say there was a mist in the whole room—nothing you could touch, just the grayness all around. But they were solid, both of them. The room was dark, electric light was coming in from outside through the venetian blinds, but I didn’t need light to see them. There is a lot of traffic around my area. No matter what time it is, there’s the sound of trucks and buses. But not one sound then. All was excluded at that moment, everything, as though the world stood still and there was nobody but the three of us in the world. I got a peaceful feeling; everything around was completely serene. It’s a lasting feeling. I will never, never forget this.”

Six-year-old Jennifer, Leslie’s favorite niece, also witnessed Leslie’s form. She told her parents immediately after the occurrence. Her experience took place a few hours before and a hundred miles away from Marge’s. Although Jennifer had heard about her uncle’s death, she did not learn of Marge’s experience until two days later at the funeral.

## **Visions in Dreams**

People sometimes encounter a deceased loved one during their sleep. Although dream material is commonly discounted as fantasy, witnesses convey a strong conviction that these “lucid dreams” are very different from normal dreams and

seem to involve an actual communication with the deceased. In these dreams, the deceased loved one usually asserts that he/she is fine and asks the dreamer not to grieve.

## **EXPANDED AWARENESS**

The overpowering feeling of being at one or blending with one's surroundings has been described as an "oceanic experience" of expanded awareness. During this usually brief interlude, people report feeling a transcendence over the limits of space and time. They often emerge with the conviction that death is irrelevant because the essential aspects of consciousness will continue after death.

## **LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS WITH EXPANDED CONSCIOUSNESS**

Many people report experiencing their consciousness on some occasion leaving their body so that they see and feel, for a short time, from a vantage point that is physically distant from their body. Although these experiences generally come unexpectedly, some people claim to be able to move their consciousness away from their body at will.

Charles A. Tart, PhD, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California at Davis, is one of the pioneers whose experimental studies spanning several decades have brought wide academic awareness to these experiences. The laboratory research typically includes the subject lying down, being wired for measuring brain waves and autonomic functions, and being asked to relax and then to project his/her consciousness to a distant target room. The subject signals to the researchers when he/she is ready to try to influence mechanical devices in the target room. For example, when experimental subject Pat Price indicated to his researcher Karlis Osis, PhD, that his consciousness was in the target room, a strain gauge in that room measured significant impact. In a similar experiment, a feather suspended on a string and enclosed in an electronically shielded, closed container moved perceptibly; these movements were electronically recorded.

## **NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES (NDEs)**

Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) have received a good deal of media attention. Again, people of diverse cultures report having NDEs. Raymond Moody, MD, is one of many researchers around the world who studies NDEs and has raised public awareness of them. The International Association for Near Death Studies supports research, publishes an academic journal, and disseminates information about these experiences.

Here is an example in the account of a woman who was declared clinically dead in the midst of surgery:

“I remember moving away from my body and up to the corner of the room. I could hear the surgeon telling someone I was gone, and then a flurry of activity started around my body. Then I passed through a dark tunnel, but I could see light and I was rushing toward it. I reached the light. There are no words to describe its warmth and brilliance. I felt such peace and love. And suddenly I saw someone—pure light and pure love—and I’ve tried to describe this being to myself for years. It must have been God; it felt like God. I became keenly and instantly aware of a specific purpose for my life here, and then the light began to fade. I could feel myself moving away, and there I was back in the corner of the room, being drawn back into the body.”

People who have had a near-death experience generally have experienced all or some of the following:

- a movement of conscious awareness away from the physical body, often to a position above and looking down at the body, with medical personnel working frantically to revive them;
- a swift passage through a dark tunnel where they see a light at the end;
- an emergence from the tunnel to brilliant light, brighter than any they had encountered before, yet not harsh on their eyes;
- seeing an “infinitely loving” being of light;
- with this being, experiencing a review of their life, like a movie where each feeling is as vivid as it was in life, and feeling the impact their actions had upon others;
- gaining insights into the purpose of their life, as well as the right and wrong choices and behaviors to adopt;
- seeing deceased relatives and friends and sometimes communicating with them;
- experiencing a temporary sense of disappointment upon being revived out of their near-death experience;
- losing all fear of death after their near-death experience;
- experiencing a shift in values in which compassion, service, and a quest for meaning replace materialism, acquisitiveness, and skepticism.

**The International Foundation for Survival Research is a nonprofit, tax-deductible organization. Its purpose is to provide information to the public about these important experiences pointing to life beyond death.**

Recipients of the International Foundation for Survival Research Grants:

- Ian Stevenson, MD, University of Virginia, for research on the characteristics of persons who have experienced an NDE;
- Robert Jahn, PhD, Dean Emeritus, Graduate School of Engineering, Princeton University, for computer-based psychokinetic research on the mind's ability to affect matter at a distance from the physical body;
- Karlis Osis, PhD (now deceased), American Society for Psychical Research, for out-of-body experience research with Alex Tanous, an individual with extraordinary paranormal abilities.



**The International Foundation for Survival Research offers:**

- **an informative Web site ([www.expbeyond.org](http://www.expbeyond.org)) providing information about the life-beyond-death field, “survival” research within the field of parapsychology, and links to many organizations and researchers worldwide concerned with experiences pointing to life beyond death;**
- **public meetings featuring researchers and “afterlife” experiencers;**
- **this introductory booklet, placed free of charge in hospices, hospitals, and senior facilities.**

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