

# **The Role of Anomalous Experiences in Healthy Grief**

## **Using Near-Death and Related Experiences in Facing Dying and Grieving**

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### **Objectives**

**This presentation will focus on NDEs and related experiences in so far as they help experiencers and non-experiencers in facing dying and grieving. Examples of these experiences will throw light on such issues as meaning in life, death anxiety, continuing existence, and reunion with loved ones..**

#### **I. Seven categorical situations in which these experiences help.**

**Reference: Bruce J. Horacek (1997). Amazing grace: The Healing Effects of Near-Death Experiences on Those Dying and Grieving. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 16(2), 149-161.**

- 1) a dying person shares verbally and/or behaviorally his or her NDE or related experience with significant others just prior to death, and this helps the experiencer to face death;**
- 2) a person had an NDE earlier in life and it helps him or her face death in the present;**
- 3) a person had an NDE earlier in life, has shared this experience with significant others, then dies, and knowledge of the NDE helps survivors with the loss;**
- 4) a griever had an NDE earlier in life and it helps him or her to face the loss of a significant other later in life;**
- 5) a griever has an NDE or related experience after a loss and it serves as a healing agent;**
- 6) knowledge of and understanding NDEs and related experiences helps a person to face death; and**
- 7) knowledge of and understanding NDEs and related experiences helps a griever to face the loss of a significant other.**

#### **II. Near-Death Experiences**

**Examples (Laura and Erica) and lessons we can learn**

#### **III. Nearing-Death Awareness Experiences (Deathbed Visions)**

**Description, how differ from NDEs, examples (Sam Kinison; Mark, Nancy, and Bob; Susan) and lessons we can learn**

**Reference: Callanan, M., and Kelley, P. (1992). *Final gifts: Understanding the special awareness, needs, and communications of the dying*. New York, NY: Poseidon Press.**

**IV. Shared Deathbed Visions (Shared, Mutual, or Empathic NDEs)**  
Description, examples (Joan Borysenko; Jenny, Sharon, and Bruce; Raymond Moody; Karine and Celine Dion), and lessons we can learn

**References:**

- Borysenko, J. (1993). *Fire in the soul: A new psychology of spiritual optimism*. New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc.
- Cox-Chapman, M. (1995). *The case for heaven: Near-death experiences as evidence of the afterlife*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam=s Sons.
- Dion, Celine (1996). The song *Fly* from the album *Falling into you*.
- Moody, R.A. (1999). *The last laugh: A new philosophy of near-death experiences, apparitions, and the paranormal* Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- Moody, R.A., and Arcangel, D. (2002). *Life after loss: Conquering grief and finding hope*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco.

**V. Post or After-Death Communications (ADCs)**  
Descriptions, examples (James Horrocks, MD; Carole, Lauren, and David; Dawn and Amie; Monarch Butterflies, Jenny, Sharon, and Bruce), and lessons we can learn

**References:**

- Bodkin, A.L. (2000). The induction of after-death communications utilizing eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing: A new discovery. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 18(3), 181-209.
- Guggenheim, B., and Guggenheim, J. (1996). *Hello from heaven: A new field of research confirms that life and love are eternal*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- LaGrand, L.E. (1998). *After death communication: Final farewells*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Moody, R.A., and Perry, P. (1993), *Reunions, visionary encounters with departed loved ones*. New York, NY: Villard.

**VI. Summary**

**References:**

- Horacek, B.J., and the IANDS Board of Directors (2003). *The impact of the near-death experience on grief and loss*. East Windsor
- Horacek, B.J. (November 2006). Near-death experiences: Science meets spirituality. In A. Eisen, and G. Laderman (Eds.), *Science, religion, and society*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. Hill, CT: IANDS.

- 1) NDEs and related experiences reduce death anxiety;
- 2) Death itself is not painful;
- 3) We are all connected;
- 4) Contact between the living and the dead might occur;
- 5) Reunion with loved ones might await the deceased and bereaved.