or shamanistic powers are not only nurtured and encouraged, but, in some cases, demanded of people who have nearly died.

References


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Bringing the NDE Home

To the Editor:

I recently read a copy of Barbara Harris and Lionel Bascom's book *Full Circle*, which pointed out for me the problems involved in making a transition from the near-death experience (NDE) back to the less luminous world. Harris and Bascom phrased the question in something of the form: "If the reality of life as discovered in the NDE is light and love, why are our lives so often in turmoil?"

The answer is, to use an analogy from earthly journeys, that visiting Paris does not make a person a Parisian. To be a Parisian a person has to take up residence in Paris. For the NDEr this involves making the perceptions during the NDE the core of your belief system, your intellectual home.

The first step in this process is accepting the experience and accept-
ing the reality of the experience. To my mind, if a theologian or a
clinician counseled an NDEr that the NDE is a useful imaging, that
would set up a tension making the experience more difficult to inte-
grate. Once you have accepted that you have experienced what for
generations has been called "the divine," or at least a significantly
different dimension of reality, the process of integrating the experience
can begin.

A useful mental technique for establishing the NDE perceptions as
the core of a person's belief system is what I call the "TV meditation,"
the method of spiritual advancement achieved through watching tele-
vision. While watching TV a person's attention will often be caught up
by the action on the screen; consciousness will be in the screen action.
While breathing normally and in whatever position is comfortable, the
spiritual aspirant should shift his or her consciousness back so that he
or she is aware of the action on the screen and of the television set and
of the room around the television. This discipline can be carried out
whenever the spiritual aspirant thinks of doing it; it can be done even
while consuming potato chips.

With practice the aspirant will be able to carry over this shifting of
consciousness to the non-TV world. In the non-TV world you can shift
consciousness between the action you are involved in and how the
same action would look in the light of the NDE. When your kids, your
boss, or the person in the next car start getting to you, step back
mentally and try seeing these people not as out to make you miserable,
but as trying to act in the light but being confused about what they're
doing, as Harris and Bascom suggested. When the refocusing becomes
second nature, the turmoil decreases and is replaced by a compassion
for their confused efforts.

The TV meditation technique does not work overnight, but neither
does it require living in a cave. With a moderate amount of effort, it
probably gets results faster than eating brown rice for long periods of
time.

For the adventurous, this centering on the NDE can be taken some
steps further, allowing the perceptions gained during the NDE to take
over more and more of one's consciousness. This process within the
framework of the Roman Catholic tradition was described in a turn-of-
details how the aspirant moves from the prayer of quiet, in which one
spends longer or shorter moments in the refocused state of light, to the
prayer of union, in which one becomes an active part of the light.

There are pitfalls to this more rigorous practice. One potential haz-
ard is that of being overwhelmed by the experience and losing control of the outward life. Another is turning inward and living only for the experience with a lessening of interest in the outer life. Both of these may be overcome by bringing more light into the material world.

Psychic abilities are a more sophisticated pitfall and their varieties have been described by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. In addition to out-of-body experiences, thought transference, and bodily sympathy or feeling another's feelings at a distance, levitation and the ability to see through solid objects are said to appear at times to distract the aspirant. Because these abilities are so novel, some aspirants stop their refocusing practices at this point; others will keep at it until light and life are one.

Perhaps other readers can add details to this theme.

References


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Concerns About Ring and Rosing's Omega Project

To the Editor:

While I have long been an admirer of the work of Kenneth Ring, I found Ring and Christopher Rosing's (1990) recent article, "The Omega Project: An Empirical Study of the NDE-Prone Personality," troublesome for several reasons.

The weakest part of this article was the Instruments section. Of the nine tests reported, only three have been cited in other studies and all to date are unpublished. While this is not a problem in and of itself, no data on norms, reliability, or validity of these tests are given, with the exception of incomplete data on the Psychological Inventory. While it is customary to omit this information on well-known tests like the