

Speaker to focus on near-death experiences in children

By CHUCK HUSTMYRE

Special to The Advocate, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

A woman who studies near-death experiences will lead a seminar Sunday that she describes as an in-depth presentation of child experiences of near-death states.

The seminar with P.H.M. Atwater will be at the Church of Today, 238 Little John Drive.

Atwater has researched near-death experiences for more than 25 years and written six books, including "Coming Back to Life: The After-Effects of the Near-Death Experience" and "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Near-Death Experiences."

The effect of near-death on children is vastly different than on adults, Atwater said.

"Some of the things I found with children are quite startling," she said.

"The research seems to indicate that children who've had near-death experiences have an accelerated learning curve."

Based on her studies, she said those children are much better at math and music.

Many come back from the experience with memories from their birth and some with even earlier memories -- those from prebirth, Atwater said.

Atwater 's fascination with and research into the field of the near-death experiences began shortly after her own brushes with death, she said.

In 1977, Atwater suffered a series of debilitating illnesses.

" I died three times," she said.

During a few months, she had three near-death experiences, after which she endured severe physical and emotional trauma, she said.

Months later, Atwater had not gotten any better. Her body remained weak as her mind struggled with the strange things she'd seen and experienced while crossing back and forth between life and death, she said.

" I wasn't getting well," she said. "I wasn't advancing in my life, I wasn't dealing with the experiences I'd had."

In an effort to help her heal, Atwater 's friends took her on a trip to Seattle, where she attended a lecture by Stanford physicist William Tiller.

At the end of the lecture, Atwater had another life-changing event. Tiller showed the audience an illustration of something he called the "eternal now," the manifestation of all elements of time -- past, present, and future -- existing at one place, at one time. It was the same image Atwater had seen during one of her near-death experiences, she said.

" It was that one talk by the physicist that showed me that I wasn't crazy," Atwater said, "that what I had experienced was real."

Atwater said she recovered quickly, then began her quest -- the search for knowledge about the near-death experience.

She approaches her research like a detective investigating a crime. "I was raised in a police station," she said.

Atwater grew up in Twin Falls, Idaho, where her father was a police officer. Atwater 's father used to surprise her with questions about things they had just seen or done, testing her eye for detail and her memory for facts: What color was the store clerk's dress? What type of watchband did the pharmacist have on? What did the woman around the corner's purse look like?

Atwater learned to both see and to observe. She also learned to think and investigate like a police officer. Atwater digs deep into her sources and cross-checks her facts vigorously -- just like her father taught her, she said.

Atwater 's search for information has taken her throughout the United States and several countries. She has interviewed more than 3,000 near-death survivors, including 277 children.

For more information, call the Rev. Nina Russell at the Church of Today at 225-924-9839 or visit Atwater 's Web site at <http://www.cinemind.com/atwater> .

<http://2theadvocate.com/index.shtml>