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# CHILDREN'S NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES, SOME STORIES

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Researching the near-death phenomenon has been my primary profession since 1978. I use police investigative techniques as my protocol; to date, some of my findings have been clinically verified in prospective studies.

With that said, let's talk about kids. Child experiencers have the same range of episodes as do adults, but they handle them differently - sometimes in just the opposite manner.

Surprisingly, tiny ones still in the womb, babes being born, infants, and toddlers can experience the phenomenon as well. Once they are verbal, our smallest experiencers do their best to convey what happened to them - through speech, drawings, words on paper, or actions. The way in which their attempts to share their story are received, determines, to a large extent, whether or not their episode has a positive influence on their life or is tucked aside, ignored, or repressed. Although the pattern of aftereffects (both physiological and psychological) cannot be denied, the experience can be.

These tiny ones, via their expressions and language, show signs that suggest they may have identified with the otherworldly imagery and behaviors they were once exposed to, rather than, or in addition to, that of earth and their earthly human family. Their temporal lobes as they form, seem to build their "libraries" of shape, size, sound, smell, color, movement, and taste to accommodate the other-worldly models provided by their near-death experience. (The temporal lobes, located on either side of our head above our ears and closer to our temples, function as "libraries" in how they alter and update the input we receive - from the day we are born until we die.) This imprinting is augmented by sensory response and intuitive knowing to the extent that the child can seem wise beyond his or her years when, in fact, the youngster is simply responding to what feels natural.

Frequently, family and friends cannot account for the child identifying in this manner, or in having models of life and living different from their own; nor do psychologists have training in how to interpret what has happened to the little one.

Here is a brief summary of the differences I have seen between how adult and child experiencers (especially

the very young) tend to handle the aftereffects of near-death states:

**Adults** - deal with changes afterward, and the necessity of finding new reference points. They are challenged to redefine themselves and the life they live from another perspective. Before-and-after comparisons can be made.

**Children** - deal with the strangeness that what they encounter in the world around them does not match what they know and identify with. They are challenged to recognize the source of their uniqueness and accept the validity of what they have gained from the experience. What happened to them is the basis of all they know.

*Adults integrate. Children compensate.*

Contrary to my work with adult experiencers - where I found that it took most of them up to seven years to integrate their episode - I discovered that child experiencers can take twenty or thirty years or more to integrate theirs. This is not necessarily a gloomy thing, as compensating is the major way children have of adjusting to the changing conditions in their lives. Once they make such accommodations, however, it usually takes until their middle years before they question "why." A child is perfectly capable of balancing two differing world views in a healthy way if they have supportive parents or relatives who are good listeners as well as talented at creating boundaries with an invisible "fence" around them, so that the child can explore and experiment without ridicule or feeling "foreign" or bad. This is done by being open and encouraging (without "squashing" or inhibiting the child), while still maintaining basic disciplines so necessary for healthy growth.

Many stories and observations about child experiencers, tips and suggestions on how to assist them and yourself (if you are a parent), are contained in my book "THE NEW CHILDREN AND NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES" (Inner Traditions/Bear & Co., Rochester, VT, 2003). What follows, though, are two cases that are not in my book, that concern the near-death experiences of two ten-year-olds, both girls.

The first is about Ann, now a young adult living in New Jersey. I'll let her present her initial story: "When I was ten years old, I was nearly electrocuted and had a near-death experience. I was perched on the top bar of my back yard swing set, when I lost my balance and began to fall. Immediately above my head was a 220-volt electrical wire, which I grabbed onto, to prevent my fall. Well, the voltage went through my body for about four minutes, at which time my father turned off the main electrical switch in the house. I then fell almost to the ground, while a neighbor who had heard the commotion came running and caught me. He handed me to my mother who carried me into the house where my father performed CPR on me and I revived.

"I remember my spirit leaving my body through my head and traveling straight upward to an open tunnel, which was dark but not scary. I was traveling at a very fast speed and after a while the tunnel became transparent. I saw specks of twinkling light and other spirits traveling in tunnels parallel to mine, some upward and some downward.

"Next I reached the end of my tunnel and began to free float in one spot in space. I felt this incredible feeling of unconditional love permeating my body. It was something so wonderful that I have never experienced before or since. I looked around and saw the wide expanse of the universe all around me. On my left was the figure of my recently deceased grandmother, wearing a flowered house dress, just like I remembered her on Earth. She spoke telepathically to me, saying, 'It is not your time. You have mission. You must go back.' Then directly in front of me was a huge cloud of light. A kind, loving voice spoke telepathically to me from this cloud. The voice was indistinguishable as male or female, and said, 'The choice is yours. You must decide.' I knew at that instant that whatever decision I made would be okay. I didn't miss my family or have any regrets about my life on Earth. I was perfectly happy to just stay there for all eternity, but my grandmother's comment had made me realize that there was more that needed to be accomplished in my life. At that instant, I was swooped away back down the tunnel and soon hovered above my ten-year-old body. I thought, how could I ever fit into that tiny body? Finally, I remember waking up with my father leaning over me and my family staring at me.

"The doctor soon arrived at our house and indicated that I was a very lucky girl. I only have one scar on my hand where I had grabbed the electrical wire. I suffered no brain damage or other burns or ill effects. So, I believe that I must have also received a healing, because the normal outcome from such a jolt for such a long period would have been quite severe."

Denise's story is told by her father Doug. She is now approaching her teen years; the family lives in Utah. "In the summer of 1999, our little ten-year-old daughter, Denise, was literally counting the weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds until school started. Denise was always a happy, sweet little girl.

"Soon after school started her personality changed. She was unhappy all the time, claiming how much she hated school, her friends, everything. Then she started going to the bathroom all the time and drinking tons of water. She would get sick and just not feel well. We asked several medical people that lived in the neighborhood about the symptoms she was displaying and were told it was probably just a virus. One was even a diabetic nurse and another one was a medical doctor!

"It progressed to the point where she felt real sick on that Friday, November 5th. She played in the morning with her mother, ate lunch and asked if she could lay down for a nap. My wife went in to check on her an hour or so later and she was asleep. Then after another hour she checked on Denise again, and found she hadn't moved and was breathing really strangely. She called me in and we found that her eyes had rolled back in their sockets and she was unresponsive."

Denise was rushed to the hospital where it was found she was in a diabetic coma. "As they pulled her clothes off, I was shocked at what a skinny little girl she was. I stared in disbelief." There were IVs, CAT scans, many tests concluding not only that the child was in a diabetic coma but that she had suffered a stroke. "It was at the base of the left side of her brain, the main artery. He then said that the left side of her brain, more than two thirds of it was destroyed by the stroke. The blood vessels and capillaries had fragmented like tissue paper and the blood had flowed freely. Normally they would put in a shunt and drain off the blood, but she was so far gone, they saw no reason to do so. All of her organs were shutting down. She would not live past the next twenty-four hours, we were told. If by some miracle she did live, she would be a vegetable the rest of her life."

The shock and strain on the family was enormous. Yet, three days later, Denise was still alive and breathing. After the tube was removed from her throat, she woke up, looked at her frightened parents, and said she was hungry. A nearby nurse came unglued at this and rushed in a medical team. Three days later she walked a thousand feet by herself. Denise's recovery stunned the medical staff. She was dubbed the "miracle child." Twenty-five days after going in, she was released from the hospital, her parents by then well-trained in how to give her two injections of insulin each day.

Her father continues: "One day I was trying to give her a shot of insulin and she kept fighting me. She wouldn't let me give her the shot. After forty-five minutes I was upset with her and let her know it. She yelled, pointing her finger above my head, that I 'was mad and I was red.' I asked what in the world she was talking about. 'You're mad, you're red,' she said again. I had read enough that I knew about the energy field around our body, called the aura.

"You can see auras?" I asked.

"What's that?" she responded.

"I told her it was the energy around our body. She said that she could see them since she woke up from her coma. This was the start of our family entering a world we did not know existed.

"Over the next month Denise displayed many gifts or abilities and told us many things. She not only could see the aura of a person, she knew what the color meant. At this point she only saw the first level of the aura. She is able to see 'spirits' as we call them or people that have passed on (died). She sees Christ and her Heavenly Father. She can tell what kind of person you are; she sees into your heart. The most fascinating thing she told us was that while she was in the coma for three days, she had spent that time with Jesus. She told me about His birth, life, His suffering in the garden, the cross. It was in detail, all the colors, smells, and sounds. She told me things that I knew a little ten-year-old could not know.

"All of this changed our lives significantly. My wife and I have six living children, five were at home during this time. The events polarized our family. I knew in my heart that Denise was telling me the truth of what she had experienced. Yet it was hard for others to understand and accept. We learned many 'lessons' from our little ten-year-old daughter."

A fuller account of Denise and her family is on my website at [www.cinemind.com/atwater](http://www.cinemind.com/atwater). Their's is an ongoing story with many lessons for all of us about not judging each other, about what unconditional love really is and how to express it. "Guidance" foretold that her father, Doug, would write a book about the affair. After much reluctance, he did. His first was "POSSIBILITIES. . . LESSONS FROM THE SPIRIT." They gave away as many as they sold. The family now travels and does what they call "book reviews," where they meet with people and the "miracle child" shares her story - what happened to her and what is continuing to happen. Their website is [www.publishinghope.com](http://www.publishinghope.com).

We can all benefit from what this family went through in accepting their "new" daughter. Near-death experiences are not simple, irrespective of the episode's length or storyline. They challenge our beliefs,

stretch our minds, and demand that we face possibilities that seem unreal, unnecessary. Once our loved one recovers from whatever the health problem or accident was, we want life to once again be "as is." Some experiencers are able to fulfill that urge; the vast majority are not, especially kids. Most of the young come back rewired and reconfigured, a puzzle to their parents and school teachers.

I am gratified that more and more counselors, therapists, medical staff, and educators are now using "THE NEW CHILDREN AND NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES" as a guide in addressing the conundrum of children who now think outside the box; who abstract at tender ages, no longer fit the typical classroom setting, and display what is sometimes labeled ADHD when nothing of the sort applies. You can use what happens with child experiencers of near-death states as a model to better understand the millions of youngsters now being born that way. I am currently working on a book that addresses these new ones and what may really be going on throughout our population and the world. Terms like "Indigo Children" fall seriously short of describing the phenomenon. If we are to understand the kids of today, we, too, must think outside the box and reconsider what we think we know about ourselves and the process of evolution.

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P.M.H.Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D. (Hon.) has written six books about her research of near-death states. They are: COMING BACK TO LIFE, BEYOND THE LIGHT, FUTURE MEMORY, CHILDREN OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM, THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES, and THE NEW CHILDREN AND NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES. Her latest, WE LIVE FOREVER: THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT DEATH, is due out in May, 2004 from A.R.E. Press, Virginia Beach, VA.

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