

Pattern of Aftereffects

Around eighty percent of the people who experienced near-death states claimed that their lives were forever changed by what happened to them. On closer examination, though, a pattern of surprising dimensions emerged. Experiencers were not returning with just a renewed zest for life and a more spiritual outlook. They were evidencing specific psychological and physiological differences on a scale never before faced by them. And this was true with child experiencers, as well as with teenagers and adults.

Various researchers have attempted to profile these changes over the years. Even without the necessary funding to do clinical studies, most feel that enough research has been done to justify acknowledging the aftereffects pattern and making information about it available. Knowing what is typical for experiencers should help to alleviate any worry or confusion not only for the individual involved—but for family and friends, as well as health-care professionals and the community at-large.

The pattern of aftereffects from near-death states can best be understood if considered under the separate headings of major characteristics of psychological and physiological changes. Details and explanations follow:

Major Characteristics of Psychological Changes

Loss of the fear of death, more spiritual and less religious, easily engage in abstract thinking, more philosophical, can go through various bouts with depression, more generous and charitable than before, form expansive concepts of love while at the same time challenged to initiate and maintain satisfying relationships, "inner child" or unresolved issues from childhood tend to surface, less competitive, convinced of a life purpose, rejection of previous limitations in life and "normal" role-playing, heightened sensations of taste-touch-texture-smell, increased intuitive/psychic abilities plus the ability to know or "pre-live" the future, charismatic, a child-like sense of wonder and joy, less stressed, more detached and objective, can continue to dissociate or "separate" from the body, easily absorbed ("merge into" whatever is focused on), hunger for knowledge and learning, highly curious.

• Near-death experiencers come to love and accept others without the usual attachments and conditions society expects. They perceive themselves as equally and fully loving of each and all, openly generous, excited about the potential and wonder of each person they see. Their desire is to be a conduit of universal love. Confused family members tend to regard this sudden switch in behavior as oddly threatening, as if their loved one had become aloof, unresponsive, even uncaring and unloving. Some mistake this "unconditional" way of expressing joy and affection (heart-centered rather than person-centered) as flirtatious disloyalty. Divorce can result.

• One of the reasons life seems so different afterward is because the experiencer now has a basis of comparison unknown before. Familiar codes of conduct can lose relevance or disappear altogether as new interests take priority. Such a shift in reference points can lead to a childlike naivete. With the fading of previous norms and standards, basic caution and discernment can also fade. It is not unusual to hear of near-death experiencers being cheated, lied to, or involved in unpleasant mishaps and accidents. Once they are able to begin integrating what happened to them, discernment usually returns.

• Most experiencers develop a sense of timelessness. They tend to "flow" with the natural shift of light and dark, and display a more heightened awareness of the present moment and the importance of being "in the now." Making future preparations can seem irrelevant to them. This behavior is often labeled "spaciness" by others, who do their best to ignore the change in perception, although seldom do they ignore the shift in speech. That's because many experiencers refer to their episode as if it were a type of "divider" separating their "former" life from the present one.

Aftereffects of Near-death States

*When the near-death experience
is over, it isn't over.*

*Most experiencers report psychological
and physiological changes afterward.
From these reports, a pattern of
aftereffects has emerged.*



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There's no denying that experiencers become quite intuitive afterward. Psychic displays can be commonplace, such as: out-of-body episodes, manifestation of "beings" met in near-death state, "remembering" the future, finishing another's sentence, "hearing" plants and animals "speak." This behavior is not only worrisome to relatives and friends, it can become frightening to them. A person's religious beliefs do not alter or prevent this amplification of faculties and stimuli. Yet, experiencers willing to learn how to control and refine these abilities, consider them beneficial.

Life paradoxes begin to take on a sense of purpose and meaning, as forgiveness tends to replace former needs to criticize and condemn. Hard driving achievers and materialists can transform into easy-going philosophers; but, by the same token, those more relaxed or uncommitted before can become energetic "movers and shakers," determined to make a difference in the world. Personality reversals seem to depend more on what's "needed" to round out the individual's inner growth than on any uniform outcome. Although initially bewildered, families can be so impressed by what they witness that they, too, change—making the experience a "shared event."

The average near-death experiencer comes to regard him or herself as "an immortal soul currently resident within a material form so lessons can be learned while sojourning in the earthplane." They now know they are not their body; many go on to embrace the theory of reincarnation. Eventually, the present life, the present body, becomes important and special again.

What was once foreign becomes familiar, what was once familiar becomes foreign. Although the world is the same, the experiencer isn't. Hence, they tend to experiment with novel ways to communicate, even using abstract and grandiose terms to express themselves. With patience and effort on everyone's part, communication can improve and life can resume some degree of routine. But, the experiencer seems ever to respond to a "tune" no one else can hear (this can continue lifelong).

Major Characteristics of Physiological Changes

Altered thought-processing (switch from sequential/selective thinking to clustered thinking: thoughts bunch together/ideas pop up), comfortable with ambiguity, heightened intelligence, more creative and inventive, unusual sensitivity to light and sound, substantially more or less energy (even energy surges in body, oftentimes more sexual), reversal of body clock, lower blood pressure, accelerated metabolic and substance absorption rates (decreased tolerance of pharmaceuticals and chemically treated products), often turn to alternative healthcare treatments, electrical sensitivity, synesthesia (multiple sensing), increased allergies or sensitivities, can possess ability to heal, a preference for more vegetables and grains (less of meat), physically younger looking (before and after photos can differ).

Sensitivity to light and sound can be a serious issue and may necessitate some lifestyle changes. While most experiencers learn to limit sunshine exposure, others can't get enough. Almost everyone, though, has similar difficulties with loud or discordant sounds. Many can no longer tolerate "hard" rock music. The vast majority prefer classical, melodic, and/or natural sounds, and become passionate about using music to heal.

Energy surges up and down the body happen to many, and can be accompanied by "lights" in the air. Researchers usually regard this as the release of "kundalini" (a Sanskrit term meaning "coiled energy at the base of the spine"). Supposedly, kundalini energy and spiritual energy are one in the same, yet the theory behind this idea remains unproven. To keep in formed about ongoing research, contact Kundalini Research Network, c/o Dale Pond, R#5, Flesheron, Ontario, NOC IEO Canada.

Electrical sensitivity refers to a condition whereby the forcefield or energy around an individual affects nearby electrical equipment and technological devices. Usually sporadic in effect and impact, some experiencers have noticed: watches can stop, microphones "squeal," tape recorders quit, television channels change with no one at controls, light bulbs pop, telephone "drops off," computers suddenly lose memory, and so forth. Experiencers more at ease with their new traits report fewer of these incidents than those still in the process of making adjustments.

Physical differences, along with attitudinal changes, eventually lead experiencers to alter their approach to health and healing, employment, finances, lifestyle and relationship issues. Many say that it's almost as if they have to relearn how to use their own body and brain. Once adjustments are made, the majority come to live healthy, productive lives that are happier, more spiritually-oriented and energetic than before. To deny or repress the aftereffects seems to leave individuals feeling somehow "incomplete," and can foster unwanted "breakthroughs" years later.

Aftereffects cannot be faked. Nor can you hide your response to the way they affect you (whether you realize what you are doing or not).

You may be able to delay their onset or lessen the impact they have, but you cannot pretend away the complex and life-altering potential they bring.

Irrespective of any drama brought on by near-death states, what happens afterward is where true value and real meaning are established.

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Helpful Notes

It is possible to have near-death-like experiences without the threat of impending physical death. Children, for instance, can have death dreams that are unusually powerful. Adults can emerge unscathed from mishap, or find themselves slipping into a different meditative state, only to discover later on "they have changed." If a genuine case, the individual will exhibit the same pattern of aftereffects as a near-death experiencer.

Adjusting to the aftereffects takes time. The first three years tend to be the most confusing, almost as if the individual isn't "fully back." Experiencers and their families are urged to attend or start a local IANDS group, and to read the following books for in-depth research studies about aftereffects.

Helpful Books

Atwater, P. M. H., Lh.D.

"Coming Back To Life" (Ballantine Books paperback), *"Beyond The Light"* (Avon paperback), *"Children Of The New Millennium"* (Three Rivers Press softcover), and *"Subtext to Children Of The New Millennium"* (available on website www.cinemind.com/atwater or contact YOU CAN Change Your Life, P. O. Box 7691, Charlottesville, VA 22906-7691. The Subtext contains the "missing" appendices edited out of the original book because of space limitations.

Morse, Melvin, M.D.

"Transformed By The Light" (Ivy Books paperback).

Ring, Kenneth, Ph.D.

"Heading Toward Omega" (Quill/William Morrow softcover), and *"Lessons From The Light"* (Insight Books hardcover).

Sutherland, Cherie, Ph.D.

"Reborn In The Light" (Bantam Books paperback).