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"It is possible that there exist emanations that are still unknown to us. Do you remember how electrical currents and 'unseen waves' were laughed at? The knowledge about man is still in its infancy."

—Albert Einstein

THE GOAL

To enrich our understanding of the nature and scope of human consciousness and its relationship to the life and death process.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
 FOR NEAR-DEATH STUDIES, INC.

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THE EXPERIENCE

When people come very close to death, they may later report a remarkable experience which they state occurred during their unconsciousness. Called a "near-death experience," the event profoundly and permanently alters a person's perceptions of the nature of reality. Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the experience is that no matter what a person's cultural background, religious persuasion race or social standing, the experience tends to follow a *single common pattern*.

Thousands of people have reported these visions of a darkness leading to radiant and indescribable light; episodes of being "out of body"; encounters with presences and meetings with deceased loved ones. Some tell of being flooded with knowledge far beyond their ordinary capabilities. Many say they have glimpsed the pattern, the meaning of their lives and the universe. Almost always, that meaning involves inexpressible peace, undemanding love and growth toward the spiritual.

An NDE may occur when a person is considered clinically dead, or even to one not close to death but who is under some biological and/or psychological stress. Somehow, the experience appears to be a biologically-based trigger for a spiritual event.

IS IT REAL?

No physiologically or psychologically-based theory yet put forward adequately explains the NDE. Medical technology has brought many of the survivors back, but medical science is not yet able to explain what happened in the process.

The phenomenon cannot be dismissed lightly. A 1987 Gallup Poll reports that at least eight million adults in the United States alone have had an NDE. Through the centuries, accounts have also come from children, and from many cultures and religious traditions. Whatever it is, the near-death experience is not local and not a recent development. Something happens, and it changes people's lives.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Each individual interprets the NDE according to his or her own belief system, whether exclusively physical or deeply spiritual. For the experiencer, it means loss of the fear of death and perhaps dramatic after effects. Whatever the perspective from which the NDE is viewed, it is clear that human consciousness remains an enigma. There is much still to be understood about its role in the life process.

WHY AN ORGANIZATIONS?

It was the pioneering work of psychiatrists George G. Ritchie, Raymond A. Moody, Jr. and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross that brought the near-death experience to public attention in the 1970s. Since then, other studies have confirmed and extended their findings.

As more and more people recognize the potential significance of the NDE for many fields of study, it was natural that they would want to share their interest. Founded as a non-profit organization in 1981, IANDS members now represent every continent but the Antarctic.

For professional and lay person alike, IANDS serves as a clearinghouse for information that ultimately affects everyone—the relationship of human consciousness to the life process and the possibility that some aspect of consciousness may continue beyond physical death. Further, based on the convictions of experiencers, IANDS explores issues related to the quality of living.

IANDS has no "party line" on the interpretation of the NDE and welcomes varying theoretical interpretations as long as they are grounded in empirical observation or direct experience. Since many questions remain unanswered, IANDS takes the position that the NDE and related experiences deserve thoughtful professional study and public debate.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

- The Association publishes *The Journal of Near-Death Studies*, a scholarly journal offered quarterly, and *Revitalized Signs*, a quarterly newsletter of general interest.
- Sponsors research conferences, seminars, and workshops for professional audiences and the lay public; these include an annual conference in the U.S.A. and an International Conference held every three years to bring together associations which function using the IANDS model in other countries.
- Seeks to bring together near-death experiencers, their families, professionals working with them, and researchers to study the meaning of the NDE;
- Provides reliable information through its printed materials, media work, and speaker services.