

VITAL SIGNS

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Submissions

Submissions to *Vital Signs* are welcome. Please submit materials to vs@iands.org. Please use Word format for attached documents. All submissions are subject to *Vital Signs* editorial review and approval processes.

Suggestions & Feedback

We welcome your questions, comments, or suggestions. Your opinion matters!

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Cover Image: Painting by Diane Goble

Fifty-two years ago, Diane Goble had a near-death experience by drowning while white water river rafting. Nobody, not even Dr. Moody, was talking about such things back then. No wonder it was 15 years before Diane told her story in public. But putting all she experienced into words has always been a struggle. She felt painting might make her experience more relatable to others. At age 80 she took up painting and began exploring palettes and techniques until she discovered ways to share the many universes she experienced during her NDE adventure. She has turned her paintings into meditation tools that relax the left brain and allow the right brain the freedom to explore and wander and make new discoveries.

Visit Diane's Contemplative Art Gallery and find your doorway into other worlds at <https://www.dianegoble.com/>

Founded in 1981, the International Association for Near-Death Studies, Inc. (IANDS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. The organization is dedicated to encouraging scientific research, education, and support regarding the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual nature and ramifications of near-death and related experiences. IANDS associates comprise a broad audience from around the world, including experiencers; researchers; medical, mental, social, and religious/spiritual healthcare professionals; educators; and the general public. For more information, or to become an IANDS member, visit <https://iands.org>.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

IANDS Board of Directors Annual Meeting: Inspiration and Dedication in Action

From the evening of Thursday, February 22, through noon on Sunday, February 25, the IANDS Board of Directors met at the IANDS office in Durham, NC, for its annual meeting. In addition to this monumental donation of time, in-person attendees paid for their own travel and accommodations.

Attending in person were (including where out-of-staters traveled from):

- » Board officers **Jan Holden**, President (Texas); **Martin Tanner**, Vice President (Utah); and **Robert Mays**, Treasurer
- » Board members **Deborah Conner**, Fundraising Chair (Nova Scotia, Canada); **Bob Coppes**, International Local Groups Coordinator (The Netherlands); **Daniel Endy**, Technical Systems and Website (South Carolina); **Angela Harris**, IANDS Groups & Events; **Debbie James**, Education and Ethics Committees Co-Chair (Texas); **Evan Mecham**, US Local Groups Coordinator (Colorado); **Maryann Sperry**, Marketing and Conference Chair (Colorado)
- » Guests: **Susan Amsden**, office manager; **Delaine Deal**, conference logistics (Colorado), **Jim Fisher**, Ethics Committee; **Kristin Mismash**, conference logistics (Utah); **Teresa Blemings**, office staff

Attending virtually were:

- » Board officer **Jan Melcher**, Secretary
- » Board member **David Maginley**, Education and Ethics Committees
- » Guests: **Ginette Nachman**, Education Committee Co-Chair; **Rebecca Valla**, Ethics Committee Co-Chair

We were so productive! Of all our accomplishments from the meeting, likely of most interest to you is our strategic goals—the things we did in 2023, and plan to do in 2024, that were/are new and in addition to keeping on with our many extensive established-and-ongoing activities. Below is a summary of those Goals; although the Board has not formally voted on the 2024 entries, I believe they provide a very good idea of what our final Goals and Examples will be.

IANDS's Strategic Goals Key: ✓ = achieved; ~ = partially achieved and ongoing; X = not achieved.

GOAL	EXAMPLES 2023	STATUS	EXAMPLES 2024
1. Improve visitors' experience and engagement on IANDS's website.	Create new modern design and content changes on website. Appoint a Website Content Manager.	~ X	Continue creating modern design and content changes on website. Appoint a Website Content Manager.
2. Enhance organization functions and customer service.	Complete and adopt revised bylaws. Improve conference proposal submission process. Hire bookkeeper and office administrative assistant.	✓ ✓ ✓	Hire 1/4-time Executive Director Create descriptions for each IANDS leadership role and working entity (committee, etc.). Create policy for IANDS presenters and podcasters promoting their own business.
3. Enhance mental health support resources for experiencers.	Create website listing of transpersonally prepared mental health providers. Revise Group Leader Handbook to include mental health response.	✓ ~	Expand Mental Health Provider listing to include at least one MHP from every (or almost every) state. Revise Group Leader Handbook to include mental health response.
4. Increase IANDS's publications.	Produce <i>The Self Does Not Die</i> second edition. Produce <i>Impressions of Near-Death Experiences</i> book. Distribute <i>Vital Signs</i> more broadly -- to the public.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Complete <i>The Self Does Not Die</i> Spanish second edition: <i>El Yo No Muere, Segunda Edición</i> . Produce audiobook of <i>Impressions of Near-Death Experiences</i> . Create one-sheet/two-sided <i>Fact Sheet</i> for NDEs and for primary related experiences: ADC, SDE, etc.. Update <i>The Big Book of Near-Death Experiences</i> . Pursue discussion of NDE virtual reality production.

I hope you will join me in lauding and applauding our dedicated Board members and friends for their commitment and vision in identifying ways to ever-more-extensively fulfill IANDS’s mission—which the Board reaffirmed at our meeting: to advance global understanding of near-death experiences and related phenomena through research, education, and supportive communities and resources.

Janice Holden, EdD, LPC-S, ACMHP

Clockwise from front left: Robert Mays, Martin Tanner, Teresa Blemings, Susan Amsden, Rebecca Valla, Debbie James, Kristin Mismash, Jan Holden, Jim Fly, Evan Mecham, Bob Coppes, Delaine Deal, Maryann Sperry, Daniel Endy, Deborah Connor. Photo by Angela Harris



NEW LOCAL IANDS GROUPS by IANDS Groups Coordinator, Evan Mecham

I have always felt moved by the words of Teilhard de Chardin as he spoke of sharing a part of himself with something extraordinary within one’s life. Chardin wrote “The aspect of life which most stirs my soul is the ability to share in an undertaking, in a reality, more enduring than myself—not only for the supernatural destiny of my soul but also for the further progress of the earth (Chardin, T. [1961] p. 113). *Hymn of the Universe*. Harper & Row.

I find myself uplifted and inspired as brave and intrepid souls follow their hearts to connect with [IANDS Local Groups](#) and volunteer to begin new affiliated sharing groups in their hometown areas. Leading such a group certainly aligns with Chardin’s idea of an enduring undertaking, and sharing enlightened experiences and ideas with the local community transforms hearts and minds. Thank you, group leaders!

Please welcome the following new group leaders and their affiliated groups:

ATLANTA IANDS Tia Renee Atlanta, GA	IANDS HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS SHARING GROUP Keyaunoosh Kassauei, MD Washington, DC
GREENSBORO IANDS Sanna Festa Greensboro, NC	NORTH-FLORIDA IANDS David Whittinghill, PhD Jacksonville, FL
IANDS PRESENTATIONS OF SARASOTA, FLORIDA Robert Waxman, PhD Sarasota, FL	SACRAMENTO IANDS Katherine & Richard Knecht Sacramento, CA

INTERNATIONAL IANDS GROUPS by IANDS International Groups Coordinator, Bob Coppes

We are updating the list of international groups. To do this, we had direct contact with groups from Europe (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the UK), but also from elsewhere such as Canada, Iran, and Israel. A new group was established in Denmark, and we are seeing some preliminary developments in Ecuador. In Belgium there is a wonderful organization trying to spread information on NDEs in both French and Dutch languages, but with some interesting videos in English: www.Ponto3.org. Check it out!

Hartelijke groeten, Bob Coppes



Saturday, April 20, 2024

Shared Death Experiences: What Healthcare Providers —and Everyone— Need to Know

Continuing education for many healthcare providers



IANDS SPRING SYMPOSIUM
symposium.iands.org



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BETTY GUADAGNO

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Explore the Extraordinary
Podcast

Summary of Psychiatrist Bruce Greyson's article, "The Darker Side of Near-Death Experiences"

by Janice Miner Holden, EdD, LPC-S, ACMHP

In December, 2023, the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* published an article by Bruce Greyson, MD—leading researcher in the field of near-death studies and co-founder of IANDS—titled "The Darker Side of Near-Death Experiences." In it, he summarized research on distressing NDEs; unlike the more frequently reported pleasurable NDEs—dominated by pleasurable feelings such as peace, love, and bliss—distressing NDEs are dominated by distressing feelings such as terror, horror, or guilt. In a personal message (January 10, 2023), Dr. Greyson said he would not have chosen that title for the paper, but it was invited for a special issue of that journal devoted to the darker side of spirituality. Yet, in my view, darker may be appropriate, nevertheless, because NDEs, or portions of NDEs, dominated by distressing feelings are typically devoid of either perceiving or receiving the light of unconditional love that characterizes many pleasurable NDEs; in the absence of that light, the experience is, indeed, darker.

After describing the key features of NDEs and distressing NDEs (dNDEs), Greyson noted the challenge of correctly estimating the prevalence of these experiences because the topic of them is so "laden with anxiety and judgmentalism" (p. 684); I would add from my own experience as an NDE researcher interviewing dNDEs that some avoided even thinking about, more or less reporting, their experiences because that process involved re-traumatization. Greyson also noted that distressing spiritual experiences have been reported throughout history, placing distressing NDEs in a larger context.

Greyson then addressed the diverse terminology that various authors have used to refer to these types of experiences. He concluded that although some authors have objected to the term *distressing NDE* because it did not convey the emotional strength of what some dNDEs experienced, the term may be the best available, acknowledging that the distress can range from mild fear or confusion to the most intense terror or horror imaginable.

Greyson then went on to examine the complex topic of dNDE prevalence. He walked readers through a history of how numerous NDE researchers addressed

this topic, then settled on a likely best estimate of 11-22% of NDEs.

Next, Greyson addressed how dNDEs have been described. Again, he walked readers through a historical review, including a study from Lund University in Sweden in which researchers identified 11 themes: fear, confusion, being in a dark realm sometimes identified as hell, being judged by God or oneself as unworthy, feeling little or no control over the situation, pleading for and/or being rescued by a divine entity, and feeling alone and rejected. He noted that many pleasurable NDEs have moments of fear or bewilderment and that some NDEs have both pleasurable and distressing portions—sometimes referred to as "mixed" or "hybrid" experiences.

Greyson dedicated a disproportionately long section of his article to a summary and additional commentary—with illustrative examples—on the results of his and Nancy Evans Bush's (1992) classification of dNDEs: the most commonly reported "inverted" NDE, which contains features of pleasurable NDEs but that the experiencer, for some reason, perceives as terrifying; the next-most-commonly reported experience of eternal isolation in a void; and the least-commonly reported hellish NDE. In my view, his extensive attention to this work is entirely justified, as it has provided a framework for further elaboration by other researchers. And Greyson elaborated on that elaboration: the additions of types of hellish NDEs—entity-centered, fire-centered, and vortex-centered; of instructional NDEs in which experiencers witness others' agony but do not experience it directly themselves; of life reviews in which the experiencer feels anguished guilt; and of states that transcend what can easily be perceived or conceived.

Addressing correlates of dNDEs—the question of who has these experiences—Greyson cited an unpublished analysis of 546 NDE accounts from the University of Virginia database. Results yielded a long list of demographic and other characteristics that have *not* been found to correlate—as well as a feature that *was* found to correlate significantly with dNDEs: resisting the experience / trying to stay in control of it.

In a section on the relationship between distressing

and pleasurable NDEs, Greyson noted features that were statistically more common in one or the other type of experience. Most interesting to me was a paragraph with a very long list of features that did not differentiate the two types of experiences. In other words, these features—for example, feeling out of control, being in a void, encountering grotesque elements, feeling a sense that everything always was/is unreal, and begging for mercy—have been found in both distressing *and pleasurable* NDE accounts.

For me, the very most interesting section was Greyson's discussion of personal characteristics of dNDErs. He made quick work of providing evidence to disqualify theories that attributed dNDEs to people who had not acknowledged Jesus as savior or who had lived "bad" or "evil" lives. He also reviewed the theories of researchers who had speculated on biological and circumstantial factors, and he concluded that there is likely "no single path to distressing NDEs but rather a convergence of factors that may play a role in influencing the emotional valence of a near-death experience" (p. 693).

Turning then to the aftereffects of dNDEs, Greyson once again reported on unpublished findings from the University of Virginia that substantiated earlier theorists' views that profound life changes are associated more with pleasurable than with distressing NDEs. He then reviewed Bush's observation of three types of experiencer response to a dNDE: to consider it (a) a warning to turn one's life around toward a more loving Earthly existence, (b) a meaningless event that could be reduced to a materialist explanation, or (c) an unreconcilable reality that launches the experiencer into a lifelong struggle in search of an existential reconciliation—none of which should be considered *the right way* to manage the aftermath of a dNDE. He reiterated the speculation that dNDErs do not manifest as many life changes because they may avoid the process of revisiting the emotionally distressing content of their experience and, thereby, fail to integrate the experience.

In a section on the confounding effects of samples and definitions, Greyson provided a comparison of dNDE findings between University of Virginia research and a study by Cassol et al. (2019). He offered numerous differing features of the two studies to

explain the disparate findings and to provide qualifying considerations in accepting the Cassol et al. results at face value.

Not surprisingly, Greyson concluded this tour-de-force summary of research on dNDEs by saying that compared to when dNDEs were first noted decades ago, much is now known—and much more needs to be discovered. He gave a nod to the need for further research into the controversial relationship between NDEs and REM intrusion and to the tantalizing topic of the relationship between NDEs and drug-induced states. His last words were to refer to dNDEs as "profound spiritual experiences" (p. 696).

For anyone wanting a thorough foundation in the study of dNDEs, I consider Greyson's article the benchmark. For academic researchers using his article in this way, I noted only one unfortunate detail: Researchers often use digital object identifiers (DOIs)—an article's unique numerical identifier—in the References list to find source articles, and many *Journal of Near-Death Studies (JNDS)* articles are cited in Greyson's—but without the period at the end of DOIs for publications prior to 2022. Without that period, researchers will be unable to access the article online. Such a pity, because all *JNDS* articles more than one year old are available for free online. Hopefully, researchers will be resourceful enough to visit the *JNDS* Past Issues page (<https://iands.org/research/publications/journal-of-near-death-studies/past-issues.html>) to get the little dot they need to access the goldmine of *JNDS*'s more than 40 years of publications on dNDEs.

The topic of dNDEs can, itself, be distressing. I encourage anyone interested in this topic to read Greyson's full article, which enables the reader both to acknowledge and to transcend the emotional distress of these experiences so that they can be considered in the larger perspective of humanity's search of a full understanding of the human psyche and its relationship to the cosmos.

Greyson, B. (2023). The darker side of near-death experiences. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 37(4), 683–698.

<https://doi.org/10.31275/20232843>

Out of the Void: When Love and Enlightenment Emerge from the Dark

by Mindy Tautfest

The Void. Distressing Near-Death Experiences. Estrangement from the Source. These terms elicit an instinctive aversion to the prospect of encountering an adverse afterlife experience. While our cognitive inclination is to emphasize the positive, in doing so, could we be overlooking crucial aspects of the broader narrative? Considering that the stark contrast between light and dark often illuminates the brightest truths, these seemingly disturbing encounters demand a thorough examination to extract vital insights that may offer profound revelations about the nature of these experiences. In light of my own distressing near-death experience, my perspective diverges from prevalent misconceptions that persist within discussions of near-death experiences (NDEs) and prompts a reconsideration of commonly held beliefs, urging a deeper exploration into the wisdom these unsettling phenomena might impart to humanity.

It was the morning of November 8, 2016, when my ordinary routine was abruptly disrupted by a sudden, excruciating pain which erupted from the base of my skull. Despite being a nurse, panic set in as I frantically tried to assess the situation. Considering that my genetic condition, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, was a known cause of brain aneurysms, I knew instinctively that this was more than likely what had just transpired. Feeling my life quickly fading away, my concern shifted to pleading with God to spare my young children and husband the trauma of discovering my lifeless body.

Amid my desperate prayers, I suddenly stopped and took note of my surroundings. No longer feeling any pain, I now found myself in a world of darkness, a void that seemed to stretch infinitely in all directions. Despite the absence of physical form, my consciousness remained intact, acutely aware of the journey on which I was now embarking. In the midst of this all-encompassing darkness, my expectations of an immediate embrace by the divine were shattered. There was no radiant light and no welcoming loved ones, only an overwhelming sense of isolation that enveloped me. My experience there was devoid of any comfort or solace, and my consciousness was laid bare, stripped of all physicality, and I was confronted with the stark reality of all my fears and insecurities. Amid the

shadows, I could feel the overwhelming and powerful presence of the Source all around me, radiating with eons of existence. I was in full view of the Source, a spectacle being held separately from all that ever was, and all that ever will be. This understanding of my situation only amplified the desperation and hopelessness I felt.



After what seemed like an eternity amid the desolation, I sensed a male presence. It was a subtle yet powerful force that seemed to offer a glimmer of hope out of the overwhelming isolation. It wasn't the loving divine light I had anticipated but, rather, an impartial guiding presence who initiated my journey towards the surreal sight unfolding before me. Together, we sailed towards a beautiful nebulous network of interconnected consciousnesses emanating a purple glow that pulsed with the essence of human existence. The Fabric of Humanity, as it was revealed to me, was a tapestry of linked souls, each thread intertwined in a symphony of emotions and knowledge, a testament to the unity of all life. In that fleeting moment, I knew that I had been granted a glimpse of an underlying truth that binds us all, a revelation that transcended the boundaries of human comprehension.

However, my journey into this enigmatic space was short-lived, as I was abruptly thrust back into the confines of my physical body, grappling with the aftermath of a traumatic brain injury. My body had reignited with a hard restart, much like a computer being rebooted, as the scenes of the room began flooding my senses. I could hear the muffled sounds of the television as I struggled to sit up from the crumpled position I now found myself in, repeatedly falling as I searched to find my phone and call for help. Within minutes, my husband and children arrived home and rushed me to the small community hospital located over 30 miles away. Being ill-equipped to diagnose such an unusual medical emergency, the hospital chose to send me home without treatment. That decision would begin a desperate two year search for answers that ultimately required our family to sell the house on the farm and move to Oklahoma City. Within weeks of moving, I was sent for proper testing and finally had a firm diagnosis, a Vertebral Artery Dissection. Two large gashes had

erupted from one of the main arteries leading into my brain, resulting in several small strokes in the following days. I was lucky to have survived the initial event despite no medical intervention, let alone the strokes which followed.

While dealing with the physical consequences of my medical emergency, I was also acutely aware that I was constantly grappling with the difficulty of reintegrating my mind and spirit back into this world. I experienced a profound disconnect between the limited reality of this world and the expansive, pure state which I encountered in the Void during my NDE. There was a strange longing for the advanced, unrestricted consciousness I experienced in the Void when viewed against the limitations I felt within the confines of my broken physical body back here on Earth.

In something akin to an “information download” reported by some experiencers, I could not escape the overwhelming conviction that upon my return, my consciousness had been reinserted into a simulation, a coded environment with set limitations on the boundaries of the human experience. Despite the fear I encountered in the Void, this expanded understanding challenged the conventional notion of emptiness by revealing it as a place where all things exist in their purest form. Instead of it being a place of desolate darkness, it was the primordial origin-point reality from which everything in our universe had emanated. My time in the Void offered a unique perspective, leading me to contemplate the very nature of our reality, challenging the conventional notions of an afterlife and a simulated existence.

In this view, those who have encountered the Void have glimpsed the ultimate source of creation, drawing parallels with various religious traditions and scientific theories including the Holographic Universe and Simulation Hypothesis. Rather than an emptiness devoid of meaning, it becomes the embodiment of the highest heaven, akin to religious concepts such as that of Nirvana in Buddhist teachings. This understanding is echoed in government scientific investigations describing the highest realm as the “Absolute,” a limitless void operating outside of space, time, or construct.

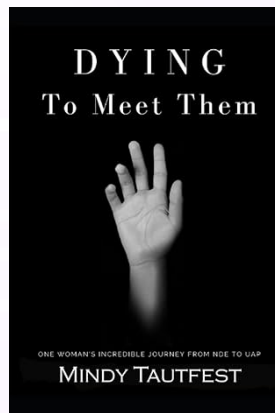
In the light of my journey, experiential Void narratives need to shift focus from distressing aspects to understanding them as profound encounters with divine wisdom and enlightenment. Contrary to being merely

a partial near-death experience, encounters within this realm represent a complete immersion, meticulously tailored to the individual, orchestrating a journey intended to lead the experiencer toward a profound spiritual awakening. Within this paradigm shift, the Void becomes a gateway to transcendence, a tapestry of enlightenment guiding seekers toward a deeper understanding of existence itself.

This transformative experience laid the foundation for my subsequent exploration into the world of UFO investigations, where I uncovered an intriguing correlation between near-death experiencers and those reporting encounters with otherworldly beings. Guided by the insights of Dr. Kenneth Ring and his book, *The Omega Project*, I delved deeper into the astonishing web of connections found between these seemingly disparate phenomena. In my role as Director of Training at the Mutual UFO Network, MUFON, I have continued to explore the realm of UFO encounters, drawing parallels between the transformative effects of these experiences and the profound impact of my own NDE. The intricate similarities between both sets of experiencers found in what Ring has called “the encounter-prone personality” and the shared aftereffects served as a testament to the underlying unity of these seemingly divergent phenomena. It is my belief that both sets of experiencers have encountered the same phenomena, albeit from different perspectives, and both such encounters serve to drive us into a deeper understanding of our existence.

In the pursuit of unraveling the mysteries surrounding NDEs, it is imperative that we cast our gaze not only towards the radiant narratives but also towards the often overlooked realm of distressing NDEs. It is through embracing both ends of the NDE spectrum that we open ourselves to the possibility of uncovering truths that may have eluded us in the past. The profound implications of my journey, from the depths of the Void to the realms of UFO investigations, continue to shape my perspective and inspire further explorations into the interconnected nature of these phenomena. Having transcended the confines of our perceived reality, I now seek to unravel the mysteries that pervade our understanding of the universe and the nature of our existence. My book, *Dying to Meet Them: One Woman's Incredible Journey from NDE to UAP*, delves into the depths of this transformative journey, inviting readers to contemplate implications of our interconnected existence and the profound journey that awaits us all.

Contact Mindy at NDEtoUAP@gmail.com



What You Can Expect to Experience When You Die: Revelations from Some Extraordinary NDErs

Excerpt from a blog post by Kenneth Ring, PhD

“And death, which alike levels all, alike impresses all with a last revelation, which only an author from the dead could adequately tell.”

-- Herman Melville

Actually, it's misleading to suggest that anyone can tell you what you will experience when you die. Despite the title of this blog, I would never be so presumptuous. But what I can tell you is what some remarkable NDErs have to say about what they experienced once they passed through the portals into the house of death. As you read their accounts, I think you will agree that their revelations are so astonishingly mind-blowing as to leave you speechless with wonder. Be prepared vicariously to enter into a world that is utterly beyond anything you have known on Earth. If you can absorb this, I can virtually guarantee it will stun you to learn what may await you – if you are as lucky as some of the people whose experiences you will be reading about shortly.

In writing this narrative of what you can expect when you die, I will be drawing on the testimonies of a number of NDErs, most of whom I know personally, but my chief source will be a German woman named Anke Evertz, the author of a remarkable book entitled *Nine Days of Eternity*. You will learn a great deal about her story as we proceed. Also, there will be many quotes in this blog from these NDErs, some of them long extracts, for who is more qualified than they to play the role of Melville's “authors from the dead?”

Now, with this preamble dispatched, let's begin this long journey into the afterlife.

One of the first things that many people report when they suffer an event that brings about a near-death crisis is a very definite sense that they have left their physical body. Not only that, but they often report that they can see it from an outside perspective. This is what happened to Anke, as she relates in her book:

A feeling of detachment came over me, and from that pivotal moment on, there were two of me, and I felt barely any connection to my physical body.

Suddenly, as if I'd been catapulted out of my body, I was able to see myself from the outside. One second, I was in my body and the next I'd become detached from it, although I was still fully conscious and alert ... I was experiencing it all from a spot some six feet away from my body.



Anke Evertz

This experience soon led to a feeling of tremendous exhilaration, freedom, and the thrill of being fully alive:

I felt no connection to my body whatsoever; it didn't even feel like it belonged to me. It was as if my body itself was home to all the pain, sadness, and heaviness of the past few years of my life, whereas I finally felt free of it all, unburdened at last. I couldn't remember ever feeling so free and light. I was like a bird that's spent its life in a tiny cage and has suddenly been set free ... but all the time, I was feeling more alive than ever in my limitless, bodiless state.

Here, we have to pause to reflect on the meaning of Anke's initial experience of being in a bodiless state. This aspect of NDEs often does not receive the consideration it deserves because of the emphasis that is usually given to what comes afterward.

But here's the first thing you need to take in. You are not just your body. You exist in a dual form. There is your physical body, but you learn in an NDE that there is more to you than that. You also are a soul, or, if you prefer, a spirit, and indeed that is what you really are.

This is the first lesson you learn in an NDE.

And here things get complicated because of language, which will force us to take a brief detour from the journey that Anke has just embarked on.

Many people who have NDEs make a point of saying that words can never capture their experience—that it is, in essence, ineffable, something that eludes our ordinary language. Here we have to remember that our ordinary language is body-based. While in your body, you are limited in time and space and feel yourself to be separate from the world outside yourself. But when you are out of your body, you see that this is an illusion. When you are out of your body, you are boundless; you no longer live in time, but in eternity, which is not everlasting time, but timelessness itself. In your body-based consciousness, you can only speculate about the afterlife. When you are out of your body, you just know.

Not everyone who enters into death is aware of leaving their body in the way that Anke did. Some simply find that they have left time and entered eternity, as happened to one of my good friends named Joe Geraci who told me this:

It was a total immersion in light, brightness, warmth, peace, security. I did not have an out-of-body experience. I did not see my body or anyone about me. I just immediately went into this beautiful, bright light. It's difficult to describe; as a matter of fact, it's impossible to describe. Verbally, it cannot be expressed. It's something that becomes you and you become it. I could say, "I was the peace, I was love." I was the brightness, it was part of me ... You just know. You're all-knowing – and everything is a part of you ... It's just so beautiful.

It was eternity. It's like I was always there and I will always be there, and that my existence on Earth was just a brief instant.

There is a lot to unpack here. To begin with, can you imagine what it must feel like to see your entire life as if it were just a brief flicker in time? But this is what Joe realized when he was able to view his life from the perspective of eternity. Joe also makes it clear that there was no way that mere words could ever convey his experience. When you exist in eternity, you are unbound from space and time and your body, but our ordinary language is constrained by and structured in a spatial and temporal framework. Only when you leave ordinary language at the door can you begin to appreciate the nature of eternity, your true home. Finally, though this is only implied by Joe's account, you still retain your sense of personal identity, but what you are is so much more than the limited local self you call your ego.

Now we come to the most important thing I have to tell you about the afterlife. This will require a little background first.

Not to brag, but my book, *Life at Death*, which I published in 1980, is now regarded as the first major scientific investigation of NDEs. It followed directly from Raymond Moody's groundbreaking book, *Life After Life*, which gave us the term, "the near-death experience." In my book, I found quite a few instances, as had Moody, when a respondent indicated that he or she had been aware of a "Presence" or sometimes just "a voice." But whatever it was, it was something that was able to communicate telepathically to the individual.

At the time, I failed to appreciate just how important this Presence (as I shall call it from now on) was or just what it was. But I can tell you now that it holds the key to the mystery of the NDE. And in what follows, I will attempt to unlock the door to the afterlife. For this purpose, I will first draw on the experience of Anke and afterward on that of another NDEr I know very well.

Here, then, to begin with, is a long extract from Anke as she tries to describe her encounter with the Presence once she becomes aware of it:

'Everything is okay, Anke.' A soft, melodious voice carried through the room.

Startled, I turned in the direction that I thought the voice was coming from and saw a radiant figure smiling invitingly at me. It was as high as the ceiling, and the light it emanated was so indescribably bright that I could barely make out a body. I stood spellbound beside the bed [clearly out of her body] for what felt like an eternity staring at the figure.

I'd never seen anything so beautiful. This figure made of soft celestial light had the power to change everything it touched...

The figure, the presence, was more than just light, and more than a spectrum of colors ... I sensed that the figure was emanating a somewhat masculine energy. I immediately felt safe and protected because it felt as if he knew me.

'All your questions will be answered ...' As the figure came closer still, I could feel myself being drawn into his luminous energy field.

I had the extraordinary sense that I was no longer bound by structure of material density. It was like an inner liberation, and I felt a happiness that I'd never experienced in my life. I felt completely safe embedded in this energy field, in this unlimited space bound by a great unconditional love ... I felt freer and lighter and more alive than ever before.

I could not only see this light but also feel it and experience it in all my senses. It felt limitless, as if it was coming from nowhere and everywhere at the same time. The light brought out in me overwhelming yet glorious feelings and sensations.

It's the light of a living, universal consciousness that pervades everything in existence. It makes you feel a complete, pure and *unconditional* love – none of the emotions we experience as human beings come close to it.

Other people are aware of speeding at a tremendous rate toward the golden light in which the Presence is to be found. This is the kind of experience that happened to a good friend of mine, who became one of the best known NDErs in the early days of my research. I would like to say that it was I who discovered Tom Sawyer (yes, that was his actual name – another story for another day), but it was really the other way around. Tom had discovered me by reading my first NDE book, *Life at Death*. After that, he made contact with me and came to visit me at "The Near-Death Hotel" in Connecticut. That visit changed both of our lives, and we remained good friends until Tom died several years ago.

Continue reading on Dr. Ken Ring's blog: <https://www.kenringblog.com/2024/01/what-you-can-expect-to-experience-when.html>

One Year Commemoration of Col. Diane Corcoran, US Army (Dec.)

2017 Interview with Diane Corcoran by Bob Coppes, IANDES Int'l Groups Coordinator

It has been a year since IANDES past president Diane Corcoran's passing. To commemorate her memory, we are publishing this interview that Bob Coppes, from the Netherlands, did with her in 2016. Diane, we still remember you and appreciate your many contributions -- to IANDES and to humanity.
Jan Holden, IANDES President

Diane is the 'president' of the International Association [for] Near-Death Studies (IANDES) in the US. I always called her the president of America, and when I was chairman of Netwerk NDE [IANDES Netherlands] she would call me the president of the Netherlands. During the Skype interview I of course greeted her with 'president of America,' but then I sighed that I would rather have her than that man with the blond lock of hair. She looks up and sighs, "Oh my God, he makes us look like fools." We both laugh. By the way, Diane is no longer president of IANDES. After eight years she says it is time for fresh blood.



Although she is again a 'normal' citizen, she still is a special woman with a remarkable career. After her education as a nurse, she started working with the American Army, in 1968. She went to San Francisco for eight months and then to Vietnam.

"When I look back, it has been a great experience. One day a young man was brought in. His arm had been shot off, and the doctors had managed to save his life. That night, when he was with me in the recovery, he wanted to speak with me. He wanted to tell me something, but I had to promise to believe him. He was crying intensely."

Then came his story, a classical NDE. The first NDE Diane had heard in her life. That was five years before Raymond Moody would coin the term 'near-death experience' in his famous book, *Life After Life*.

"I immediately believed him. I didn't think he was mad. He was so intensely emotional. I felt he was telling the truth and didn't imagine things. I didn't know what it was. I could only think: 'What a great experience.' I listened to him, but before I knew, he was on a plane back to America. They did that with all patients with a severe trauma."

It was a great experience, indeed, and a start of her 50-year career which she committed to soldiers who had an NDE. After she came back to the US and after Raymond Moody's book had become a world hit, she knew what the soldier had experienced. She joined IANDES and started to lecture about this subject in the Army. First these were basic lessons, but as her knowledge of the subject gradually grew, the number of lectures increased as well. There was a time that she lectured 37 times in a year. This had to be done outside her regular job as a nurse.

Her managers weren't that pleased with it. They didn't understand it. They said: 'There you go again, talking about death and dying.' But it couldn't stop Diane. She continued with it. Interestingly, at the 2011 conference one of them came up to her and admitted that she should have listened to Diane. Then she would have been able to give better terminal care to her father.

Often soldiers and veterans came up to her, because they had heard about Diane and her work. Nevertheless, the subject still is taboo. It still is very difficult to talk about these experiences in the military service and especially with service members. They are very afraid that people would think they are crazy. At the moment, Diane is making a video about veterans and their experiences (now available: [Veterans' NDE Training Video](#)). She hopes that it will contribute to make it a subject of discussion.

She tells about a Vietnam veteran, Mike Bongart, whom she invited to an IANDES conference to speak about his NDE that he had due to being shot in the head. That was after his helicopter had been downed.

During his NDE he got the choice between life and death, and he chose life. In the meantime he was transported to the hospital where he was operated on. Before his surgery, an old friend sat on his bed and tapped on his leg. They spoke to each other until Mike had become unconscious again. He also remembered a medic in white scrubs and green rank. When Mike came to, he was rolled out of the operation area. And while the nurse was rolling Mike away, he suddenly remembered that his friend that had sat on his bed had been dead for over 10 months. Also shot in Vietnam. Mike had even attended this friend's funeral!

Later he tried to look for the nurse in white scrubs to thank him, but he couldn't find him anymore. According to Diane, he also had been from another world, because there were no medics in Vietnam in white scrubs: Everything was so dirty there that white scrubs could never be properly cleaned.

I asked Diane whether she sees differences in NDEs between civilians and soldiers. She doesn't see many: "The only thing is that soldiers get wounded at the same time; they are being shot at or bombed together. They are not inclined to talk about it. That is because they are in the military. They are afraid to be labeled bipolar or psychotic."

Becoming wounded together intrigued me. I asked her why she brought this up.

"They see each other during their NDE. In one case a soldier who was shot could see all other wounded men around him. He saw who would die and who would survive. It in fact is a so-called 'shared NDE'."

Then I asked her whether she heard any distressing NDEs from soldiers.

"No, I have not heard any of this. That does not mean they aren't out there. We did have one soldier in Iraq who remembered that during his NDE he saw his body and those of his friends lying around. He also saw a nasty spirit who tried to get into the bodies of his friends, but he chased it away."

Diane is worried about doctors who label NDErs too quickly. Especially post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) is something that is often used or that they are bipolar. "They shouldn't do that. Those people don't need therapy; they need someone knowledgeable about NDEs, someone they can trust and who truly listen."

Diane has also been stationed in Germany twice. There she lived amongst the Germans. She didn't want to live in the compound with the Americans. While in Germany, she had very special meetings with NDErs. One was with a high-up military person who wanted to tell her his story. It was a standard NDE as a consequence of a cardiac arrest. However, he didn't want Diane to use his real name. He was afraid that it would damage his career.

Another case was a successful commander with a high military education (West Point) who told Diane that he wanted to do things differently, after his NDE. He talked about the usual aftereffects of being a kinder, more loving person. As commander, he had learned to be strict and to demand disciplined behavior of his soldiers, also when he knew that those young men and women sometimes did stupid things. He would rather put his arms around them

and tell them that they could find a solution for it and that all would be okay eventually.

Diane then explained to him that it would not work in the Army; he could be kinder and more compassionate, however, putting his arm around them and being totally against discipline was not going to work in the Army. If he wanted to pursue his career in the Army, his new conduct would turn against him. Because the Army would not adapt to him, she advised him to change his tack. He would be happier when he would do something that would fit his changed situation.

She mentions another case. A sergeant from Fort Knox looked her up because, as he said to her, "I have had one of those things you write about." He was a sturdy macho man, and he told her that ever since his experience, he had emotions he never had before. As an example, he told her that he becomes emotional when he hears birds sing. She explained to him that that is a normal aftereffect of an NDE, but he maintained that he couldn't go around crying about these things. "Exactly: That is integrating your experience into your life," she told him.

Almost at the end of the interview, I asked her whether she had had an NDE herself. Yes, but only in the last few years had she realized that she had had one as a child. When she had her tonsils out, she almost bled to death. She doesn't have specific memories of her NDE, but she has clear characteristics, like a high sense of intuition that fit with the NDE aftereffects. Also, several NDErs are convinced that Diane is an NDEr.

"That might be the reason that you immediately believed the soldier with the arm shot off and didn't dismiss his story as a hallucination," I said. There is a brief silence. Yes, she hadn't thought of that before.

Under Diane's management, IANDS in the US grew to be an organization of more than 1,000 members and 88 support groups across the US. She would have liked to have had more contacts with international groups, in France for instance. She was pleased to hear that Belgium and the Netherlands work so well together.

Even though she is not a president any longer, she plans to continue with her work for veterans. "There is enough to do," she says. "There still is not sufficient acceptance. The military health care facilities, providers, and the service members need information and training. I am hoping to provide that after we finish our [veteran video](#)."

A video link of Mike Bongart's NDE can be found on our Youtube channel IANDSVideos at: <https://youtu.be/o05rT1E2u3A?feature=shared>

Misfit in Hell to Heaven Expat: Lessons from a Dark Near-Death Experience and How to Avoid Hell in the Afterlife

Book Review by Bob Coppes, International Groups Coordinator

This fascinating memoir by M. K. (Kathy) McDaniel features a distressing near-death experience (dNDE), and I found it a very brave endeavor.

Via snippets of past generations and Kathy's own life story, the reader experiences her tumultuous incidents before, during, and after a dNDE.

The writer is very explicit as she delves into the depths of the horrific trials she encountered in a frightening, otherworldly realm. Kathy's confusion and terror are elevated by her belief that she is not dead. Fortunately, she was able to escape in an ingenious, although unexpected, fashion.

Kathy's next experience was one of total bliss and joy, plus a welcome greeting from a recently deceased dear friend. Her joy turned into disappointment when she was told she has "too much left to do." Crushed by the thought of departing this paradise, and losing her friend again, she refused to agree.

Nonetheless, she was sent back and came out of her lengthy coma in an Intensive Care Unit, to the delight of her family. Her body, which had been ravaged by lung failure, was unresponsive, and the tracheostomy did not permit her to speak.



As the weeks, months and years passed, Kathy struggled to understand why she had this extraordinary experience. Finding no one willing to listen to her experience, she prayed for a way to share all that had happened in the other realms and to receive some clarity as to why it occurred.

About 10 years later, a series of synchronicities landed Kathy in a monthly IANDS meeting in Seattle. With the help of other experiencers, the previous five decades of her seemingly chaotic life began to make sense, as her life's purpose became clear. This book offers many uplifting messages—and several secrets to a spiritually healthy lifestyle.

Link to interview by Betty Guadagno with M. K. (Kathy) McDaniel:

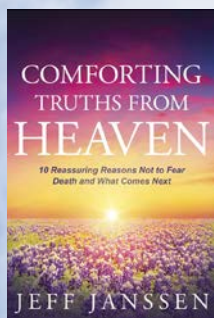
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c79QpzNdhQ>

Link to an invited talk at a Seattle IANDS Meeting:
<https://youtu.be/CGKpWwYMy1k?feature=shared>

M. K.'s book is available on Amazon, at Barnes & Noble, & other book sellers.

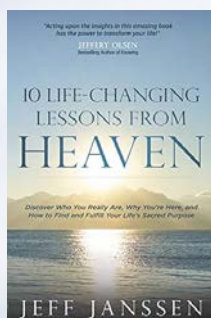
Jeff Janssen

Dr. Kenneth Ring, IANDS co-founder, encouraged me to share my books with you. I now have three that I think IANDS members would find helpful:



Comforting Truths from Heaven is written for those who have lost a loved one or are afraid of death. I share what thousands of NDErs know about death to assure them death is a beautiful transition - not a scary ending.

<https://lifelessonsfromheaven.com/resources/comforting-truths-from-heaven-book/>

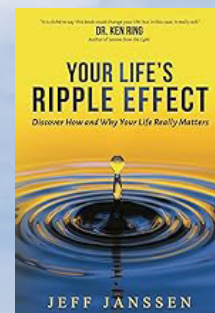


10 Life-Changing Lessons from Heaven synthesizes the 10 main messages of studying thousands of NDEs, all centering around unconditional love.

<https://lifelessonsfromheaven.com/10-life-changing-lessons-from-heaven/>

Your Life's Ripple Effect is a deep dive into the unforgettable Life Review and the impact it has on NDErs and the rest of us. To Ken's knowledge, it is the only book focusing solely on the Life Review.

<https://lifelessonsfromheaven.com/resources/your-lifes-ripple-effect-book/>





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