



VITAL SIGNS

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CONTENTS

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Suggestions & Feedback

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

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President's Message	3
Meet IANDS's New Executive Director	4
Media Roundup	4
An IANDS Match!	5
Crossing the Veil Through Art	6-7
2024 Conference Snapshots	8
View from the Stage	9
Healing through Sound	10-11
Holding Death with a Joyful Presence	12-13
IANDS Groups & Events	14
IANDS YouTube Channel Videos	15
Save the Date: 2025 IANDS Conference	16

COVER IMAGE: *Crossing the Veil* painting by Lee Ann Heltzel (and the IANDS Conference community)

If you or your group desire to explore "Crossing the Veil," contact Lee Ann directly at leeann@leeannaheltzel.com. Lee Ann is available for in-person and online presentations, corporate wellness programs, and keynotes. The original is available for sale or rental, and reproductions are available on her website at <https://www.leeannaheltzel.com/store/crossing-the-veil>



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 <http://www.iands.org>.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By all accounts, the 2024 IANDS conference was a roaring success. I heard rave reviews about the venue, Wildhorse Pass—so much so that the IANDS Board of Directors is contemplating returning the conference there every four years or so. Attendees gave high marks to the program, speakers, and conference organization—much thanks to Conference Chair Maryann Sperry and the extensive team of dedicated volunteers who worked with her. And IANDS's new Development Chair, Deborah Conner, designed activities and processes that resulted in the previous conference donation record being shattered. Most important, attendees told me about the high energetic vibration they experienced. I was gifted with reuniting with one of my graduate students from the mid-90s. After a very brief connection at the conference, we met for coffee a week or so later here in the Dallas area. She said that the moment she touched the conference hotel front door handle, energy flooded her, remained throughout the conference, and continued to linger as of the time we met.



Still basking in the afterglow, no sooner did IANDS leaders return home than we began preparing for the online Spring Symposium in late April—addressing the topic of religion, spirituality, and near-death experiences and related phenomena—and the 2025 Conference over Labor Day weekend in the Chicago

area; we're currently considering the theme of celebrating the 50th anniversary of publication of Raymond Moody's book, *Life After Life*, which opened the contemporary field of near-death studies, and inviting conference presentations that address retrospectives of the field as well as new developments at its growing edges.

I hope that, as with my former student, the higher vibration of the conference continues to linger for you. I so enjoyed reconnecting with many of you, and I look forward to seeing you again at the 2025 Symposium, conference, and other IANDS events.

Janice Miner Holden, EdD, LPC-S, ACMHP



2024 IANDS Conference: Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass, Phoenix, AZ

Meet our New Executive Director, Janet Riley, MS, CAE

IANDS's first quarter-time Executive Director, Janet Riley, joined our team in August and is quickly immersing herself in the organization. She is collaborating closely with the Board to identify priority projects for IANDS.

Based just outside Washington, DC, Janet operates a communications and organization development consulting firm. For nearly 30 years, she was the national spokesperson for the American Meat Institute and served as the face of the meat industry in response to major crises such as foodborne illness and animal disease outbreaks. She has appeared on CNN, Nightline, ABC News, *The Martha Stewart Show*, *The Daily Show*, and many other news outlets.

While at the Institute, she worked closely with Temple Grandin, PhD, to change the way the industry handles livestock. As a result, she is featured in a new documentary about Grandin called *An Open Door* that won the Cannes Film Festival award for the best biopic and that will soon go into broad release. For nearly five years, she served as vice president of communications at Maple Leaf Foods in Toronto, Canada, and then launched her own consulting firm in July 2023.

Janet is a Certified Association Executive by the American Society of Association Executives and a certified professional facilitator. In addition, she is certified to administer and facilitate the DiSC and the



Five Behaviors, both workstyle and personality assessments published by Wiley Publishing.

She has a master's degree in organization development and leadership from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia and a bachelor's degree in journalism from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

Janet became interested in near-death experiences in 2021 after watching "Surviving Death" and then losing her sister prematurely. She was present for her sister's death, which had a profound impact on her. She soon subscribed to

IANDS and received an alert that IANDS sought an executive director.

"I am thrilled and honored to work for an organization that is doing such important and meaningful work," Janet said. "I am still working hard to learn about IANDS's many programs and services and to become acquainted with our dedicated staff and volunteers. I am looking forward to helping IANDS grow and expand global awareness of near-death experiences."

When Janet isn't working, she is passionate about dance – a passion she shares with her dance partner and husband of 31 years, Rudy. She also has two sons: Riley, 27, a naval officer, and Aran, 24, a graduate student in Scotland studying energy transition engineering.

Media Roundup

Media coverage of near-death experiences and related phenomena has been heavy in recent months as experimenter Sebastian Junger promotes his new book *In My Time of Dying*. Numerous reviews have spotlighted the book and near-death experiences broadly. Respected media outlets such as the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* have featured Junger prominently. Similarly, much coverage has been devoted to both actor Jeremy Renner and music superstar Madonna, who have shared publicly that they experienced NDEs and have found their experiences transformative. Articles about Renner's experience have appeared in *Men's Health*, *Rolling Stone*, and many other outlets. Madonna's story has been featured in *USA Today*, *Variety*, *Rolling Stone*, and many other outlets.

In "Psychedelic Drugs May Give a Glimpse into Near-Death Experiences," the *New York Times* reported on a

new study that surveyed near-death experiencers who later used psychedelic drugs. Numerous other outlets covered the study, including *Newsweek*, *The Independent*, and the BBC.

A new study linking near-death experiences to vivid dream phenomena appeared in the journal *Dreaming* and triggered media coverage. The study was done by the University of Massey in New Zealand.

The popular social media personality Hospice Nurse Julie (@HospiceNurseJulie on Instagram) also continued to generate media coverage through her release of the social media detailing "six things people do before they die." MSN most recently covered the video, which notably details terminal lucidity and shared death experiences, as well as visioning, the death reach, the death stare, and choosing the moment of death.

An IANDS Match!

by Deborah Conner

IANDS received the first-ever matching gift during our annual conference. Soon after it was announced, the matching gift became two, when a guest at the Fundraising Banquet gifted an additional amount to encourage others to give.

Matching gifts are a thoughtful way of increasing the value of gifts to an organization. Typically, matching gifts are made by an individual, a group of individuals, or a business, and range in value.

The matching gift concept enables donors to double any gift amount. For example, if you donated \$50 at the IANDS Conference this year, your gift doubled to \$100, thanks to our matching gift donors!

The gift that tipped it all off this year was from Mike Precopio (*photo on right*). Mike is a new IANDS member, donor, and visionary. In following up with Mike on the success of the first IANDS matching gift during a conference, I asked the following questions to share in *Vital Signs*.



Deborah: At what point in your life did your personal philanthropy become important to you (and what triggered it)? Has it changed over the years?

Mike: What you call philanthropy, I consider to simply be support for things which are important to me. It started with my kids' school, which is a Waldorf School in Pennsylvania. The pedagogy was wonderful, but it was their considerable financial need which triggered my support. I was able to see my modest donations yield immediate results. This was typically in the area of facilities, which I considered to be an area of admissions, because first impressions play a large part in the enrollment decision.

Since then, I give my time and funds to organizations which help young people prepare to live their best lives. I do this through mentoring in career and entrepreneurial development.

Deborah: What inspired you to give your first donation to IANDS?

Mike: I am inspired to help IANDS because I align with the fundamental message so many NDEs return with: the fabric of the universe is love.

I consider NDEs one of the miracles in our human existence, hiding in plain sight. I feel this message needs a wider audience, and I will do whatever I can to help.

Deborah: What do you believe would make the biggest impact on those we serve?

Mike: Getting the word out that the priorities a vast majority of experiencers come back with are: nurturing personal relationships, helping our fellow human beings and the planet, and the fabric of the universe is love. People living these values can't avoid making the world a better place!

Deborah: How would you describe the impact you personally want to make at IANDS?

Mike: My intention is to assist in mission fulfillment, to help those with NDEs, and other related experiencers. Through outreach and membership development, IANDS can reach out to more experiencers, providing a safe place to go and be understood. I am not always sure how to help, but I see myself supporting others who are working so diligently to move the mission forward.

Deborah: Where would you like to see IANDS in 5-10 years?

Mike: I would like to see IANDS as an abundant organization, continuing to be a source of inspiration and comfort for anyone interested in NDEs, or anyone with related interests, such as the purpose of our highly improbable human existence!

IANDS is one of the organizations I am following which examines how are we connected to each other and to source. IANDS helps us ask some of the deeper questions. I want to be aligned with whatever intelligence knows how to digest my food and grow a tree!

My goal for the 2025 Conference is to invite individual donors who are interested in becoming a group of matching gift donors. As a group, we can inspire more gifts and facilitate greater IANDS impact. I am very happy to be part of this great organization.

I would like to thank Mike for his time and commitment to IANDS.

If you made a gift before, during, or after the conference this year – thank you! Matching gifts received during the conference are being used for upgraded conference registration capability and website upgrades.

If you are interested in joining Mike and others in forming a matching donor group for next year, please reach out to me: Deborahc@iands.org.

Crossing the Veil Through Art

Lee Ann was the guest community artist at the 2024 IANDS Conference, where several conference presenters and attendees, including PMH Atwater, Vinney Todd Tolman, and his son William, contributed to the painting before Lee Ann completed it.

Picture this: Dena D., a seasoned meditator from Ohio, immersed in the vibrant atmosphere of the IANDS Conference's bustling bookstore, her gaze fixed on MetaArt "Crossing the Veil." Suddenly, the painting comes alive, transforming before her eyes. Overwhelmed with emotion, Dena later recounted her experience, tears streaming down her face, her voice trembling:



"There was a dot with a blue dot in the middle. It was coming towards me and then going back in as if it were breathing. I had the thought to ask to talk to my brother, who died tragically 30 years ago, a victim of a drunk-driving accident. At first, I only sensed him; the feeling was strong, and I knew he was there. I said, "I want to see you." He responded clearly, "First, I'll show you me as you remember me, and then I'm going to show you how I am now."

"In all my years meditating, nothing this dramatic has ever happened. I could see my brother in the painting just as I remembered him, youthful and healthy." I asked him, "Do I want to see you as you are now? And, he became this beautiful white column of light with vibrant green."

"As I sat there in awe and in deep joy, my mind began to question, 'Is this really happening? Can I see and hear my brother, or do I want to experience this so badly that I'm making it up?' But as soon as I had that thought, he touched me! It felt like a hand softly touching my neck; I could feel him! Words cannot adequately describe the gift this is. I can't stop crying. These are tears of joy."

Quite a provocative story, yes? Yet remarkable interactions like this happen with MetaArt. The paintings that Lee Ann Heltzel creates are physical

portals where people of all ages can enter. Many of the paintings include music or guided meditations that offer the benefits of healing sound. This particular piece, "Crossing the Veil," adds the sense of smell by using Unfiltered Frankenscense sacred oil direct from

Egypt offered by Jim Kupczyk of Sahu Oils, another vendor at this year's conference. <https://www.sahuoils.com>

Lee Ann is a death doula who works with the side of spirit, assisting those actively dying. Years ago, she understood she could connect with various multi-dimensional aspects of a person. Eventually, her work evolved to channel pieces of art that, when meditated on, open a threshold to higher states of consciousness beyond human understanding.

She states, "These paintings are alchemic portals masquerading as paintings, fitting easily into society."

MetaArt paintings shift the energy of the space, but the real magic happens when you meditate with



them through Ocular Meditation, or Trataka, an ancient Sanskrit practice.

The process starts with a transmission she calls MetaInsights, in which the painting's title, details, and essence come through. Here are some excerpts from that information.

“As evolution occurs, new capacities come ‘online.’ Some may call them psychic abilities. What people find acceptable to hold within the collective framework is constantly changing and evolving, and this is most certainly occurring from the perspective of what is perceived as ‘death.’

Evolution occurs both vertically and horizontally. Horizontal evolution may not look like ‘progress’ as it allows the repetition of maladies and horrors. It is a slow process that spirals around, revisits, and repeats life.

Vertical evolution occurs when groundbreaking leaps within the collective occur. It is based on the deep soul's desire to experience Fully Realized Divine Earth. The result is humanity being in a new virgin space where one must find the path to Universal Truths and discover what humans are truly capable of.”

This painting is a mechanism, a tool to reground into a new foundation of this Universal Truth.

Meditating with the “Crossing the Veil” painting offers access to a sacred realm in a gentle and supportive way in these capacities:

- Possesses the transformative power to bring a person into a state of balance, leading to a space of neutrality and centered action.
- Serves as a healing mechanism to soothe the inner chaos, allowing the ‘dust to settle’ within the self.
- Recognizes sacred gifts free from judgment and fear and awakens the spark of the human spirit that finds joy in the ‘other side’ rather than misunderstanding.

I REVISITED MY NDE

Debbie D. of Massachusetts had an NDE during a stroke several years ago. She shares this from her time

with the painting: *“It’s hard to explain a near-death experience, but what a gift it is to experience it again! This time having no confusion and only joy.”*

“Within the painting, I immediately saw a beautiful crystal city, the hand of God, and Mother Mary all swirling in gorgeous colors with this beautiful energy lifting me up and vibrating me lovingly and gently out of my body. All my relatives were there, too, with love pulsating. Beautiful angels and I could hear their sweet sound. All I could feel was love. It was like a door opened, and they allowed me to go to the other side again. I understood I was being given the chance to experience this love and peace reliving the profound sense that everything would be ok. To feel that again was unexpected and very magical!”

One constant with people having these experiences is the profound emotion and deep joy of appreciation and an experience that is beyond words.

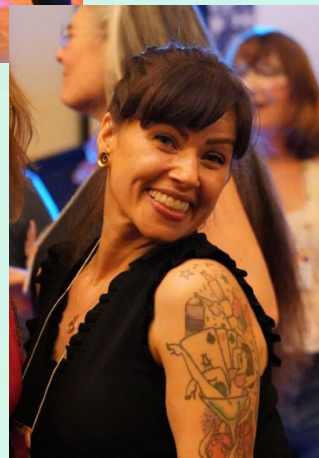


PMH Atwater adding to the painting.

“CROSSING THE VEIL” IS HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Lee Ann’s focus is getting this painting and reproductions into the hands of those who feel called to meditate with it, share it with their clients, and research its effects. “My role is to bring these paintings in; now I seek those who are here to bring it to society,” shares the artist.

If you or your group desire to explore “Crossing the Veil,” contact Lee Ann directly at leeann@leeannaheltzel.com. Lee Ann is available for in-person and online presentations, corporate wellness programs, and keynotes. The original is available for sale or rental, and reproductions are available on her website at <https://www.leeannaheltzel.com/store/crossing-the-veil>



View from the Stage

by Scott M. Taylor, EdD, Kilted Emcee
2024 Conference, Phoenix, AZ

When I started attending IANDS conferences in the late 1990s, the question everyone was wrestling with was, “Are NDEs real?” The conferences were filled with academic researchers, and the presentations contained lots of statistics, Venn diagrams, and bar charts. Average attendance was about 250 souls.

Ten years later, that question has been answered with a resounding YES. Granted, there is always more to learn, but the aching question has been addressed, and we have moved to the realm of academic nuance.

This development created a wonderful yet challenging problem for IANDS. What would conferences look like? What would attendees want to know? How could we best serve those who wanted to delve deeply into this most profound of experiences?

IANDS had to evolve.

Little by little, IANDS has found its way. The old question of NDE verification has been supplanted with the new, more profound question, “How do we live with what we know?” The Phoenix conference addressed this question on multiple fronts. It also affirmed that we are serving the people who most want to know.

The statistics are clear. The conference saw the largest ever:

- Attendance
- Bookstore vendors

- Number of healing sessions
- Amount of great conversations
- Fun by attendees

OK. Those last two are purely my observation. But I witnessed full tables by the coffee bar with people deep in conversation. The Experiencer Lounge was always full. The number of people who had their face painted prior to attending the dance party was a good indication of anticipated fun. The raucous good time had by those attending the fundraising dinner lightened everyone’s spirits. Everywhere I looked, people wanted to know how NDEs affected their lives and the lives of loved ones.



My step-daughter attended her first conference and was astonished by how much she enjoyed the speakers, attendees, and subject matter. “This is such a huggie group!” she exclaimed. Melissa has already made plans to bring a friend to the Oak Brook / Chicago, IL conference next year.

The advent of a whole new line of research on Shared Death Experiences (SDEs) also opened a whole new range of conversations. The prospect that all of us can share in this equally profound experience had attendees buzzing with possibilities.

The conference operation was smoooooth, thanks to the tremendous work by the conference committee, staff, and board. The volunteers really stepped up and helped in ways seen and unseen. There is an extra star in heaven for all those who made the Phoenix conference happen. Just sayin’.

Healing Through Sound: My Journey from Near-Death Experience to Music Therapy with Crystal Singing Bowls

by Ellen Wier, MA, MT-BC

People often ask me how my near-death experience (NDE) influences my life. My answer is simple but true: it influences everything I do. If something resonates with the light energy from the other side, I embrace it almost instinctively. Where I see this show up most is in my work. After all, when I came back, I returned with a vow to heal people with music, and that is what I plan to do.

My mission has evolved to not only teach people how to heal themselves through music but also to assist them in connecting to their higher light, the light on the other side that I experienced. My goal is to give people a glimpse of heaven, much like I did during my NDE, using the power of sound, vibration, frequency, and music to access information from Source and guide my clients on an extraordinary journey of expanded consciousness.

My journey to develop my process began at age 12 when an NDE transformed my life forever. Kicked in the temple by a horse, I fell into a coma. As my family and doctors anxiously waited for signs of recovery, I embarked on a spiritual journey. During my NDE, I encountered visions of both Buddha and Jesus before being given the choice to stay or return to live my life. When I chose to live, I was so filled with gratitude, that I vowed to come back to heal people with music.

It was just after I made this choice that classical music became the pathway to pull myself back into my body. I woke from my coma to music playing at my bedside, and it forever guided my path and purpose.

Emerging from a coma to music ignited a curiosity in me: Why does music have such a profound effect on the brain? How does it facilitate recovery, foster new neural connections, and elevate us to higher states of consciousness? These questions propelled me into the

study of the science behind music's impact on the brain and its potential for healing and transformation.

My curiosity and vow to heal people with music led me to study music therapy. My ever-growing fascination with collective consciousness and

transpersonal techniques were a driving force. I wanted to find a way to access that love and light again, and I wanted to teach others how to do it, too. This is how Source led me to find Naropa University.

Naropa University, founded by Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, integrates contemplative education with rigorous academic study to cultivate both personal and professional growth. There, I received a master's degree in Transpersonal Counseling Psychology with an emphasis in Music Therapy. Through this training, I found how I would integrate the lessons learned during my NDE with academic and practical knowledge to serve

my clients. My NDE gave me my *why*, and Naropa gave me *I*. Since graduating over 20 years ago, I have developed a unique approach to spiritual and emotional healing, blending ancient contemplative practices with modern therapeutic techniques, spiritual insight from my NDE, sound, music, breathwork, and more.

As I continued to develop my practice, I discovered the transformative power of crystal singing bowls in facilitating theta brainwave states. I found it was the perfect induction technique to lead to transpersonal states of awareness. The bowls became a conduit. Each note resonates with the vibrational essence of the universe, echoing the harmonious frequencies I experienced on the other side.

The bowls are the first part of a journey to take clients to heaven, akin to a psychotropic journey but without the use of plant medicine. Remarkably, studies have shown that the music program I employ stimulates



the same part of the brain as LSD. This discovery underscores the potential of music to facilitate lasting changes and connect us to deeper layers of conscious knowing.

Through the power of sound, clients can begin to clear emotional and energetic blockages, moving into a higher state of awareness and tapping into their innate ability to create and manifest their desires. The tones and vibrations produced by the bowls also facilitate deep relaxation and healing, allowing individuals to access higher states of consciousness and connect with their higher selves. This work is a direct reflection of the insights I gained during my NDE, where I understood the intricate connection between sound, light, and color, and their profound impact on our well-being.

My work takes people where they need to go. I've seen them connect with loved ones who have passed for beautiful messages of hope and light, explore past lives, communicate and shift parts of themselves wounded in childhood that needed to be healed, and even witness manifestations. It all depends on the intention set for the session.

After clients move through the process with the crystal singing bowls, we transition to the journey through classical music, where they often meet their higher selves, communicate directly with the light, and ascend to different states of awareness before my eyes. Witnessing these transformations during classical music journeys is nothing short of miraculous in a spiritual sense. Clients also feel it; they report feeling lighter, calmer, and more connected to their true selves. It is a humbling experience to facilitate these sessions and see the profound impact one music-assisted guided imagery session can have on people's lives.

Recently, I even wrote a book about this called *Waking Up in Heaven: Living with Purpose through Afterlife Wisdom*. In the book, I clearly outline this process and how each evolution of my work has come to me. I share experiences, training, and life lessons that have equipped me to help others connect with higher consciousness. The book serves as both a

memoir and a guide, offering readers a glimpse into the transformative power of music therapy, transpersonal practices, and vibrational healing. It provides practical tools and insights for anyone seeking to explore the healing potential of sound and music.

I'm so proud that I can work in a way that is a direct testament and reflection of the impact of my NDE. It is a journey that continues to unfold, guided by the wisdom and love of the light I encountered and which continues to guide me. As I move forward, I remain committed to using the power of sound to heal, transform, and connect individuals to the higher frequencies of the universe.

Through this work, I choose to honor the Divine messages I receive and contribute to the collective awakening of humanity. Each

session is a reminder of the beauty and harmony that exists within us all, waiting to be awakened through establishing a deeper connection with our Higher Presence. It is my deepest honor to share this gift with the world and to continue exploring the infinite possibilities of healing through music and sound.

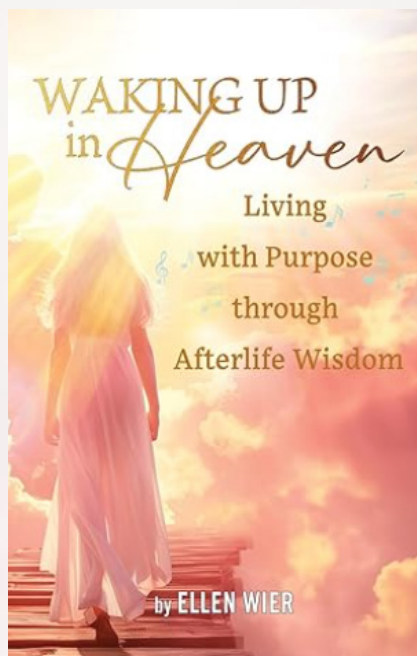
Ellen is a spiritual coach, author of *Waking Up in Heaven*, educator, and presenter. She holds a master's degree in Transpersonal Counseling Psychology with an emphasis in Music Therapy. With over 20 years of experience and known for her approachable nature, Ellen empowers individuals to make lasting, transformative changes in their lives.

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Holding Death With a Joyful Presence

by Soul Passage Midwife, Patricia Fulton L'Dara, MA

Shared Death Proper

After days of my mind ricocheting off itself trying to find a way to help my mother, a tsunami of tears rips through me. I know with every fiber of my being that my mom is dying today. The intensity of the upheaval is so disturbing that nurses gently take me into a private room. Like the storm raging outside with pitch black skies, lightning, thunder, and pouring rain in the mid-afternoon, I continue to sob uncontrollably. I feel as if I have failed my mom in her most perilous hour. Defeat is palpable in the room. I question why I don't know anything about this process of dying. I wonder if there is something I could know that might be helpful. When my tears begin to abate, I look up at the heavens to say, "Please help her." Finally, I realize that I don't wish for my mom to be alone, so I shall go sit with her. Expecting the worst, I take a deep breath to steady myself as I place my hand on the doorknob to Mom's room.

When the door opens, I am utterly shocked! My mom looks radiant, youthful, and beatific. Blessed angels surround her. The orchids on the windowsill have expanded their etheric fields throughout the room and over her bed. Their purple and white colors are pulsing with the living essence of a deep love. The entire room is sparkling like the sun shining on freshly fallen snow on a bright winter day. Surprisingly, I am propelled over to my mother's bedside and begin singing. I sing of my deepest love for her. I sing songs and hymns that she loves. A dear friend joins our song, and we become a loving triad. Later, when Mom's time is very near, I sing instructions for what is to transpire.

Suddenly, a window opens in my heart. I can see the brilliant light grid that connects everything here and throughout the vastness of the Higher Realms. Clearly there is an ever-present rhythm that binds us: people helping people; voices over the loudspeaker;

angels helping in both worlds; departed ancestors helping people; Great Beings of Light Holding the Presence. It is a magnificent symphony of a Living Being.



Abruptly, I find myself standing in the Higher Realms with my mom in my arms. I do not know how I got here. There is a dense fog. We do not know where we are. Also, I am still perfectly present and singing at the bedside. I have not left my body; rather, my conscious awareness has expanded to accommodate different realms simultaneously. Mom and I do not talk. We listen to the deeply sacred silence. It is exquisite, incredibly nourishing, and we feel we could stand here forever. Once again, I wonder where we are, when I realize that I have been here before. In fact, this

realm is more familiar than living on Earth. With my internal sonar now fully engaged, I move forward with great assurance. It occurs to me that this realm operates like an improvisation. How delightful! Ecstatic joy blesses our continued steps. We are reveling in the wonder of being when ethereal music begins to surround and infuse us. It is peaceful, fluid, and preciously loving. Soon it is emanating from within us. We have become one with the Great Song! Blissfully continuing to take small steps, we come to what feels like a bridge. It is one step up and seems to be gently arching upward. As we near the center of the bridge, the thick fog vanishes, instantly revealing the Christ standing with his arms outstretched in front of him. He is dressed in a long white robe with a white, elaborate headpiece encircling His face. His radiance is pure, profoundly loving, and decidedly welcoming. My mother is thrilled! As I pass her into the arms of the Christ, Cosmic Celebration bursts into the entire fabric of our existence. No words can touch the brilliance of this experience. When emerging from the cosmic wonder, I notice that we are entirely encircled by vast numbers of singing angels. With joy in my heart, the expanded conscious awareness gently recedes, and I find myself standing only at

the bedside singing. Interestingly, my mother's body is still breathing. I realize that our souls are Home before we quit breathing. Of course! In birth, we do not cut the umbilical cord until the baby is firmly established on Earth. Likewise, the breath continues until we are firmly established in the Higher Realms when returning.

Aftereffects

The aftereffects begin quickly following the conclusion of the shared death experience. I realize that with expanded consciousness there comes not only great joy, but also responsibility. As I am walking upstairs to tell my dad that his bride of 49 years has just passed, I feel a sharp emotional stab in my heart. The enormous transformative experience I have just had will in no way have any meaning to this dear man. My blessed soul takes the lead with every fiber of compassion and profound love for my dad who is experiencing deep loss. Holding Dad in my arms, we gently shed tears together. "I am sorry, Dad," I whisper.

The following day, a different aftereffect asserts itself. My mind is chattering away that the experience with my mother is a figment of my imagination and that I am just trying to make myself feel better. It certainly feels possible in this type of situation, but ultimately, I conclude that the cosmic journey was more powerful than any experience on Earth. Later in the day when I am in my parents' bedroom gathering some needed items, I feel an overwhelming exhaustion bearing down, when suddenly I find myself on the bed. As I am about to close my eyes, my mother appears! She says telepathically, "Thank you." We are both thrilled beyond belief. Just yesterday we were agonizing about her departure. Today we are telepathically communicating across worlds. Incomparable joy resounds through both of us as we visit. We look forward to our next visit, not knowing how it might appear but certain that it shall be.

Integration

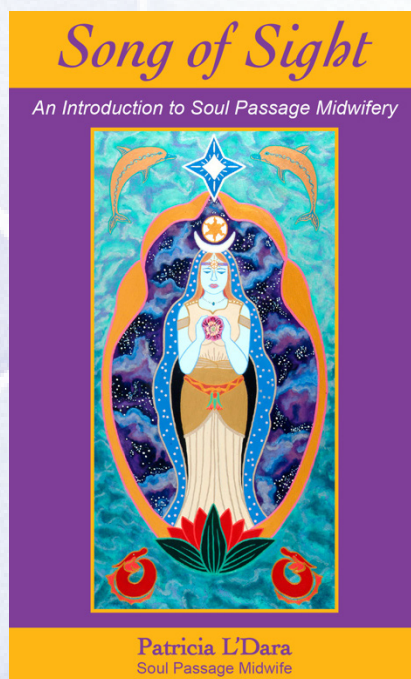
Integration of the shared death experience with my mom evolves over time and takes me to even deeper levels. At some point I ask two close friends whose parents had passed if what I experienced is what everyone experiences. "Oh no!" they reply. Further, they feel that if I can be present in that way with my own mother, it is likely that I can be consciously present with anyone during a death transition. I am incredulous at the thought. What an amazing concept! Indeed, this is precisely what occurs. Because I now perceive death as birth, I call this work *soul passage midwifery*. I realize one day that I often perceive myself as a soul. It is not that the body is unimportant but, rather, that the soul takes the lead. My life is centered around committed spiritual practice. I live simply and deliberately so that I have time and space to accompany those who are largely afraid of dying when they arrive on my doorstep.

One year following my mother, my father passes peacefully in our home. My parents and I continue to visit on occasion. A book of my experiences with people from all walks of life is published. After 30 years of continuous involvement with soul

passage, I can say that every crossing is profoundly loving; each is unique; there are religious and non-religious transitions; mystical and magical moments abound; we are all deeply held in the living vibration of Oneness; and the entire creative unfolding is remembering our true magnificence.

In closing, please take note that there is a gentle path we can follow when confronting the doors of death. Our hearts are connected to the soul, and the soul is connected to the universe at large. Expanding conscious awareness is a natural part of our essence. When we make the effort from a place of profound love to help our loved ones or others to cross the threshold, great forces can come into play. Shared death brings

greater understanding, which invites celebration of the transition to the Higher Realms bringing each of us new life and great joy!





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