

Sense of Contact with the Deceased: Experiences of Police, Firefighters, and Emergency Medical Personnel

IANDS Conference
October 2006

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Background

- State Police "Stress Unit" founded in 1977
- @200 cases per year
- Case % by type
 - 21% - Marital/Relational
 - 20% - Alcohol/Substance Abuse
 - 16% - Job Stress
 - 12% - Line of Duty Critical Incidents
 - 10% - Depression/Personality Disorder
 - 8/7/6 % - Family, Injury/Illness, Grief

Background

- @250 cases of traumatic exposure care (1977-1987) as primary treatment focus
- Traumatic exposure secondary or contributing factor estimated at double
- Treatment included early intervention & long term therapy
- Standard therapeutic model used

"To the degree we think we *are* our body, that is the degree we may be confused upon removal from that vessel"

"Who Dies" - 1982
Stephen Levine

Background

- Four seminal cases developed over time
 - Case 1 - House Painter
 - Case 2 - New Year's Eve
 - Case 3 - Highway Pedestrian
 - Case 4 - Water Rescue
- ADEC Forum 1982 & Annual Conference 1983
- Research designed

Data Sources

- Re-Interview of 4 seminal cases (6 subjects)
- Review of 2548 Stress Unit case files
- Criteria
 - Traumatic
 - Fatal
 - Emergency Service Workers (ESWs)
 - ESW present at death
 - Not ESW's first death attendance
 - No major mental illness in ESW
- 130 ESW Questionnaire

Study Respondents

- 5 Original subject re-interviews
- 62 Questionnaire respondents
 - 50 Anonymous
 - 12 Self-identified
- 28 Subjects interviewed from case files (including the original 5)

The Question

Have you ever felt a "presence", "communication" of some kind, or a feeling of "attachment" from a deceased victim?

"Trauma Counseling of Emergency Service Workers: Contact With Deceased Victims and ..."
Kelly, 1996

- 17% (15) Primary subjects described one or more feelings of presence, attachment or communication
- 11% (10) Other subjects described related experiences

"Trauma Counseling of Emergency Service Workers: Contact With Deceased Victims and ..."

- 15 Primary subjects related 23 separate events
- Several reported multiple experiences ranging from 3 to 17 to estimated 100 to "All"
- Subjects clearly denied imagination, inner voices, stress, mental illness
- All recognized the phenomenon as unusual

"Trauma Counseling of Emergency Service Workers: Contact With Deceased Victims and the Use of Reverent Acts to Gain Cognitive Mastery"

- Case 42 - Fugitive
- Case 5 - Saw Mill

"I was brought up to think that when people died in their sleep that was the best possible death. ...I now see that a sudden death may not be as fortunate as we have been conditioned to believe. ... Someone who has popped out of their body without much preparation, like a teenager in the fullness of life who has a fatal accident, may, after the smoke clears wonder, 'What the hell was that all about? What happened to my body? I can't be dead because this is all still happening around me.' "

"Who Dies" - 1982
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Trauma Counseling of Emergency Service Workers: Contact With Deceased Victims and the Use of Reverent Acts to Gain Cognitive Mastery

Have you ever "prayed", attended services, or performed some other similar act on behalf of a deceased victim?

Briefly what is your belief in life after death?

Briefly describe the extent of your religious belief and practice.

Trauma Counseling of Emergency Service Workers: Contact With Deceased Victims and the Use of Reverent Acts to Gain Cognitive Mastery

92% Described having a general belief in God

71% Did not practice religion actively

76% Described a belief in "life" after death

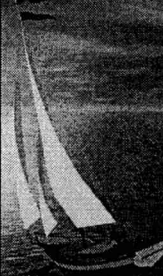
68% Described "praying" or attending services

Related References

- Research limited on contact with the deceased
- Anecdotal
 - Moody
 - Sabom
 - Levine
- General OBE accounts


Possible Study Populations

- Emergency Medical
- Coroners Office & Medical Examiner
- Funeral Home
- Clergy
- Hospice



"Let Go.
Go on.
You have only died.
Don't be confused.
Let love guide you.
Let go into the light."

Texas physician's "prayer" at every death.
"He says he doesn't know if it does them any good, but it does something very useful for him." Levine

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- Prayer may not be the LAST resort
 - Prayer may be the BEST approach
 - The real struggle may be spiritual