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NDE as a Threshold Experience

Abstract: My research has shown me that the near-death experience is not some kind of anomaly, but is, rather, part of the larger genre of transformations of consciousness. The clue most researchers miss is stress; specifically, the intensity which comes from that stress (known in shamanism as "high stress"). The entire pattern of aftereffects and the degree to which people change, can be traced to that factor. It's the intensity that shifts experiencers into what is called a "threshold experience" – one that straddles the boundary between this world and other worlds, between brain and that which lies beyond what the brain can access, between reality and miracles, mind and spirit, life and death, heaven and hell, sanity and insanity. Once we understand this shift, we can begin to unravel how the transformational process works. At the threshold of who we think we are and what lies beyond body and brain, is the core of ancient mysteries. We are transformed by the Oneness we find there.

My research of near-death states spans 33 years and covers nearly 4,000 adult and child experiencers. Not counted in this are the many sessions I held with significant others. Before my own near-death experiences in 1977, I was equally involved for over a decade studying and experimenting with altered and mystical states, psychic phenomena, and the transformational process, involving over 3,000 people. For some reason unknown to me, my research projects were never small. I have always preferred looking at things from multiple angles and differing views. Police investigative techniques have been my protocol throughout. Since this method relies heavily on observation, comparison, and analysis, it is never constrained by words used, language, or culture. Numerous sources of verification are used, and this can include questionnaires for double checking previous findings.

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This work has enabled me to recognize that near-death experiences are not some kind of anomaly, but are rather part of the larger genre of transformations of consciousness. We single them out as “different” because near-death states occur mostly at accident scenes, in hospitals, or in environments where devices are available to record vital signs thanks to trained emergency personnel. Contrary to the notion of how these episodes form, the scenarios they cover, and the pattern of physiological and psychological aftereffects that usually increase overtime – *is the fact that near-death-like experiences (where death is not imminent) and impactful spiritual transformations (regardless of how caused) manifest the same patterning.*

What links these types of in-depth transformational experiences is stress; more importantly the intensity of that stress.

Before such an episode occurs there are stressors, conditions in the experiencer’s life, that point to either unrest or inattention. And these are present universally. What caught my eye with near-death and near-death-like states were episodes that occurred under these conditions:

- during major life junctures;
- when a decision needed to be made, and at times of deep dissatisfaction, disappointment, frustration;
- when feeling hurried all the time or excessively strained;
- while “running a tight ship,” insisting on personal control;
- as lifestyle maintenance toppled one’s ability to keep it going;
- alongside pushing limits – at work, at play, in everything;
- when demanding and strict rules limit one’s beliefs and activities;

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- without existence of meaningful goals, or when in strong denial;
- during “happy” times that were really a façade;
- when overly satisfied or complacent.

The common thread present in each situation is stress. Even with babes and the unborn. Mother’s stress, as well as that of the father, can readily become the child’s stress. Sometimes it’s as if children have their experience for parents or doctors or significant others. . . to relieve or heighten *their* stress.

And the type of stress I recognized was the kind that pushes a person beyond his or her limits, beyond that which is “safe”. . . *a threshold experience*.

On February 29, 2000, the *Daily Progress Newspaper* in Charlottesville, Virginia, reported that Bruce Greyson, M.D., a professor of psychiatry and near-death researcher at the University of Virginia, was able to show a link between the phenomenon of near-death experiences and a natural physical response to trauma. He found that experiencers have more dissociative episodes – the normal kind, not the pathological kind – than those who were close to dying but did not have a near-death experience. Greyson was quoted as saying: “It’s basically narrowing your focus so much that you block out things that are going on around you.”

What he is describing is what shamans, spiritual, and mystical folk have for aeons of time referred to as the goal of “high stress”. . . what it takes to push one past the threshold or boundary of what is known.

Through the ages sacred initiations of the greatest order demanded a “death” – seldom physical. They required the death of the ego. One had to “die unto the self,” leaving behind previous desires and wants, to take on the trusted role of

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healer-guide who then dedicated the rest of his or her life in service to others. The core of shamanic vision quests ("calling for a vision" - or asking the spirits for guidance) still today consists of ceremonial rituals that mimic or come close to actual physical death. Probationers are prepared for this; still, there is no real preparation for that overwhelming, "over the top" fear that pushes one's panic button. Once that threshold is breached, the individual either passes into madness or breaks through the passageway into otherworlds of spirit that engender a transformation of consciousness.

Consider the mythological traditions of the "hero's journey" or the making of "wise ones." High stress was always the deciding factor: how the individual faced "the watcher at the gate" (fear at the stress threshold), overcame that fear (passed through/ascended), entered into the otherworlds of spirit (that null space where everything is said to converge/suspend/expand into the collective whole), and is imprinted from the aftereffects (bears the "mark" of ascension). *This "journey" is what establishes the extent to which the individual changes or is transformed.*

The formula then for a transformation of consciousness (the basic energetics) is: intense period of change, high stress that narrows one's focus, feeling driven or accelerated beyond states of fear/panic, encountering a threshold or boundary, maybe meeting a greeter of some kind, passing into a null space of energy convergence, becoming infused with knowing, imprinted or altered by null space exposure, returning as one who has been expanded or enhanced by the experience - as if forever "marked" by the pattern of aftereffects.

I've seen this thousands of times - experiencers who behave as if they have

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been punched, jerked, hit, pushed, or somehow spun around. Something physical happened to them, something separate from any mind play or otherworldly visitation or event that put them at death's door. And that "something" shifted their futures by pushing them into a unique arena of experience. The "something" that set them apart I call a "power punch." It is a force. It is an energy. It is intense.

This intensity, what narrows a person's focus in high stress, is the key, the hinge, to understanding near-death and near-death-like experiences and impactful spiritual transformations.

Of the 21% in my near-death research who claimed they did not have aftereffects worth mentioning, or any at all, these were the people whose episode seemed so superficial to them that they described it as if a fleeting dream. Sixty percent were openly expressive about how intense their episode was and how it had altered their lives in dramatic ways. These experiencers exhibited most or all of the aftereffects pattern. Many seemed stunned at how much they had changed once they compared "before" with "after."

The 19% who were so radically affected that it seemed as if they had become a different person or at least an altered version of who they had once been, bore the full brunt of the "power punch" – and showed it. Before and after photos illustrated the depths of what they had been through and how it had changed them. Almost to a person they displayed the full pattern of physiological and psychological aftereffects.

And, with the 73% in my research who had electrical sensitivity afterwards, I

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was able to establish that it was the intensity of their near-death episode that had been the determining factor in causing this condition – not how long or short their episode, or, how much light they had been exposed to during their scenario. No matter how I approached this, cross-comparing brief and longer near-death states, complicated and simple – regardless even of imagery or how it was described – I still reached the same conclusion: what mattered most in every respect was the intensity of the episode, *not* the episode itself.

Reaching the threshold, or boundary between realities, and then crossing through, compares almost exactly with what science calls a colloidal condition.

A colloidal condition is where forces suddenly collapse and then converge. This in-between state creates antforce, which is antigravity. Particles caught in this unique state between implosion and explosion transmute, and remain forever changed by that transmutation. On a molecular level, these particles show evidence of enlargement and of having taken on different and enhanced characteristics. An example of this is what happens when water is stirred.

There are several ways water can be stirred. For the sake of this discussion, we'll rotate it. Spin the water. Round and round. Faster and faster. Really spin it. Stop suddenly and reverse the direction. When the spin stopped, the water collapsed into itself, creating an implosion. But just before a reverse spin could be initiated, where the water could explode back out again, conditions mysteriously changed. Both the water and everything contained within it were briefly held in suspension. This is called a colloidal condition; the particles caught therein are referred to as

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The same thing can happen to the human brain if suddenly hit, jarred, or severely jiggled, especially during trauma or in an accident or fall. Typically, a colloidal-like suspension of consciousness will follow whereby the environment appears to expand out as time slows to a standstill. The individual feels somehow caught *in-between* realities, as if he or she slipped through a crack in time and space and suddenly became resident of a world neither here nor there. This peculiar feeling of being suspended in between realities affects a person so deeply that it can permanently alter the way the individual regards the world at large and his or her place in it.

The colloidal condition best describes what we can know of passing into and through a threshold experience. Once again, here's how it works:

- forces suddenly collapse, then converge;
- a momentary state of suspension results;
- everything caught in that suspension expands and enlarges as antigravity is created;
- inherent or unlimited potential is released;
- whatever is present is imprinted (becomes permanently altered by what happened);
- whatever is present then transmutes (takes on different characteristics);
- as reversal of motion is completed, forces are restored, suspension ends, but the imprinting (transmutation) remains.

The majority who go through such a process experience an enlargement and expansion of consciousness, exhibit the sudden surfacing of latent abilities, face a

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confusing array of of psychological and physiological aftereffects, and are never quite the same again.

It is my belief that the reason this process of convergence and transmutation is universal, is because all of us, now and through the ages, are and have always been imprinted by the same creative impulse that originated us. The mark of our creation is what we display whenever our consciousness is set free to rediscover itself and the source of its being. After a threshold experience, we feel as if we have found "home" because the home we think we've found already exists within us – and always has. We recognize the place because we never left it to begin with.

High stress pushes us to where we must face that legendary boundary that separates worlds readily accessible (what we know), from those either infra or ultra to our sense of perception (what seems as if fantasy, imagination, or mystery). In mythology, fear is the "watcher" at the threshold gate. Intercessories who can act as guides are loved ones who have previously died, angels, religious figures, visitors from other worlds, special animals, maybe birds. The final arbitrator, though, is always the heart.

Tradition says that it is the heart that decides: if you make it through the threshold gateway, where you go once you pass, and if you can return to the life you left. Drawings from ancient Egypt illustrated this final step by showing a set of scales for weighing a person's heart at death. If the heart was weightless like a feather (indicative of a selfless life), the individual passed into the worlds of spirit. If heavy (indicative of being ego bound), the individual was rejected and had to face punishment or some type of abandonment.

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How can the heart organ, unique as it is, be the final arbitrator of what happens at the passageway?

Let's take a moment to examine how this might be true. Research has shown that 60 to 65% of all heart cells are neural cells. This enables the heart to function in many ways like our brain does. Yes, the heart is the major glandular structure in the body, but it also produces an electromagnetic field 5,000 times more powerful than that of the brain. Shaped like a torus doughnut, the heart field busily converts one form of energy into another as it generates an infinite number of harmonic waves. These harmonics run throughout all bodily systems, and are so sensitive that *they react to conditions four to five minutes before actual occurrence*. This futuristic awareness tells the heart if what's coming is positive or negative so it can prepare. First the heart feels the coming event, then the brain is aware of it, then the eyes see it. The heart, literally, is our first responder.

Harmonic heart-waves come into coherence when you feel good, are in love, experience happiness, have bonded with someone in a positive way, or are in a supportive relationship. When the heart's energy coheres, it taps into higher energy fields to empower itself, while emoting feelings of love and connectedness. This feeling sense operates like a thinking mind and with an unbelievable memory. Heart harmonics entwine worldwide. Spiritual traditions claim this is so because our heart is the center of our soul. A soul set free by these harmonics, serves – as foretold in ancient Egypt and from wise ones who recognize the power of the heart.

Love, or lack of it, dominates near-death, near-death-like, and spiritually transforming experiences. The fullness of love, being loved, and discovering the

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power of love appears to determine the overall effect transformational states have on experiencers, their significant others, and anyone who hears their stories. It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of threshold experiencers return "in love with love." Being bathed in love beyond measure, pales anything less. A challenge experiencers have afterwards is to "step down" this power a few degrees so as not to freak out people.

The heart's code is love: love of Source, love of others, love of self. To talk about threshold experiences is to talk about the heart's ability to expand, embrace, and include the fullness of waveform harmonics. Where does this take us? Always to the same place. . . Oneness.

All transformative experiences throughout what we can know of time reflect this. . . what is now termed "the perennial philosophy." All the great thinkers have spoken of this, going back to Plato and beyond. All native peoples draw pictures of this or speak of it in their songs and stories. All of those who successfully passed the "tests" of the hero's journey, who made it through the boundary and returned infused with a new wisdom and a new knowledge - described what they discovered as Oneness:

One God.

One people.

One family.

One existence.

One law – love.

One commandment – service.

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One solution to problems – forgiveness.

This, the perennial philosophy, is what many believe to be the only true religion. All religious thought, irrespective of denomination, creed, or messiah figure, takes its root from this type of experience. If threshold energy is intense enough, and affects experiencers deeply enough, individuals return as if “God instructed.” This is why so many near-death researchers believe that religion itself sprang from individual narratives of near-death experiences.

In whatever manner this is debated, there is a wonderful corollary that comes from China. Historically, there is a lineage in China of Tibetan Storytellers, usually illiterate peasants, who are known as “Gesar Artists.” These storytellers recount numerous lines of extraordinary sophistication – tales of their most venerated hero, Gesar, a Knight from the Kingdom of Heaven, sent to earth to save and protect Tibetans. Gesar’s story has been passed from generation to generation, *but not by memorizing it!* To be a true Gesar Artist (not just a storyteller), one must experience something akin to a near-death state or what shamans call “dying unto the self” (an ego death) . . . in order to achieve *the personal experience* of what Gesar came to earth to teach. They must become as if “God instructed.”

There is no denying that the early teachers of humankind came from the otherworlds beyond the passageway. Shamanic beings, visionary images, spirit manifestations, near-death and near-death-like experiences, the dead come to life – what some label as paranormal occurrences – are actually more akin to spiritual awakenings than to what is often tossed off as paranormal or psychic phenomena.

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We have endowments to assure life's continuance: procreation/birth. We also have endowments to assure life's evolution: renewal/rebirth. This is not imagination. The spiritual, what enables renewal and rebirth, is real.

After a total of 43 years researching, experimenting, and studying a gamut of historical and first-hand, spiritually-transforming states, I can say that there is a biological imperative not only for life to exist and to continuously evolve in form, capacity, and intellect. . . but to reach an even higher order. . . as if following a "Master Plan." What happens as a result of transformational states feeds that plan because of how an individual's experience and the consequences of that experience, can be passed from parent to child, generation to generation, biologically. Many have suspected this, but , thanks to the DNA research currently being conducted, the markers of how this happens have been found. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) was a French naturalist who argued that traits acquired in life by parents could be passed on to their offspring (in violation of Darwin and his theory of natural selection). His work was shunned in his time. Scientists have now rediscovered his work; naming what they have verified. . ."Lamarckism" (refer to <http://www.qimr.edu.au/research/labs/enmaw/index.html>).

Take a good look at historical patterns. Each sudden evolutionary lift and/or period of discovery, as well as each renaissance, was preceded by stories of people who described threshold-type experiences, and to the degree that, *it appeared as if* the masses were "waking up." These physical and spiritual energetics led to bursts of new ideas, creativity, invention, and healing. Each breakout period seeded generations to follow, as if a biological imperative existed to ensure that the human

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race could reach a greater potential. We know now that if the numbers of those who change are high enough, evolutionary adaptation - even of this magnitude - can happen in a single generation.

The science that puts this into perspective is the study of fluid dynamics.

Fluid dynamics shows how birds in flight maintain organized formations even when individual birds make mistakes, how rotating colonies of bacteria stay together regardless of challenge, how a herd of buffalo maintains order even in full gallop, how crowds of people pour out from an event as if "directed." Whenever an energetic wave pattern forms, a natural rhythm of movement emerges. *Whatever is present when this happens functions as if "one mind."*

Fluid dynamics tells us that it only takes 4 to 5% of any group, condition, or situation to change, for the whole assembly to follow. Once that tipping point of 4 to 5% is reached, energy excites and becomes highly charged. This creates what is called "superfluidity". . . *a state of energy that cannot be contained.*

Currently the conservative estimate worldwide for people having had a near-death experience is 4 to 5% of the general population. This estimate does not take into consideration near-death-like and spiritually transforming experiences that are also intensely life changing. Counting them too could easily double or triple that figure, indicating that a realignment of global consciousness toward a higher order is well on its way to becoming highly charged.

Freedom tops that higher order, along with open communications, human rights, improved health benefits, equality in education, participatory governance, cooperative incentives for advancement, creativity and the arts.

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A leaderless expansion of conscious awareness, now exploding throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa, mirrors what threshold experiencers come to know. An awakening is indeed occurring . . . the cry for freedom and human rights has spread so rapidly it rings with but a single voice. The tipping point for change most certainly has been breached. We are witness to a spontaneous, worldwide, revolution in consciousness - championed by but hardly limited to the young and the marvels of Facebook and Twitter.

The idea that near-death aftereffects constitute "a benevolent virus" is true. Regardless of whether one thinks in terms of a "Christ Consciousness" that can be achieved by anyone willing to follow the teachings of Jesus, or the act of becoming "god instructed" by practicing the disciplines of Gesar Artists, today's revolution bears all the markings of a "soulquake." Forget any linkage to the so-called "New Age" beliefs of the 1960s. This is more of a "New Thought," the validation of a higher order of existence, of reality.

The goal of every spiritual and religious tradition is to "release the soul from exile," to teach that no one is ever separated from his or her divine essence. It is the transformational process, though, that actually reconnects soul with Source. Near-death states model this, the reawakening we can all attain.

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Refer to *Near-Death Experiences: The Rest of The Story*, P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D. Charlottesville, VA; Hampton Road, 2011.

