

# Near-Death Experience

Evidence that there is No Death



Robert G. Mays, BSc

Suzanne B. Mays, AA, CMP

[www.selfconsciousmind.com](http://www.selfconsciousmind.com)

2021 IANDES Conference, September 3, 2021

[youtu.be/gmJS5PU5yKo](https://youtu.be/gmJS5PU5yKo)

# Near-Death Experiences

- What is the human experience of dying?
- Near-death experiences (NDEs) are a ‘core’ experience
  - Consistent for people of all ages and across many cultures
  - Hundreds of millions of people worldwide have had an NDE
- The characteristic “elements” of the experience define an NDE
  - Feeling a profound sense of peace and freedom from pain
  - Feeling a separation from the body, generally floating above one’s physical body
  - Seeing events in the physical realm beyond normal physical sight that are later verified as accurate, called “*veridical perceptions*”
  - Entering a beautiful heavenly realm or a dark velvety void, feeling it is one’s True Home
  - Encountering deceased relatives or spiritual beings, including a “Being of Light”
  - Reviewing the events of one’s life, a “*life review*”
  - Either choosing to return to earthly life or being told to return to the body



Hieronymus Bosch  
Ascent of the Blessed  
c. 1510

# Can NDEs be studied scientifically?

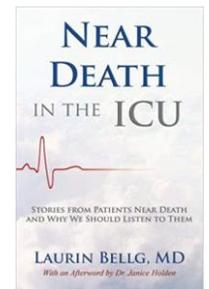
- **Yes, NDEs can be studied scientifically**
  - The elements in NDEs are remarkably consistent: can be regarded as *objectively real*
  - *Individually*, the elements may appear to be *subjective*
  - *Collectively*—across many millions of NDErs—they reflect a common, *objective* reality
  - Therefore, they provide valid data for scientific study
- **The quality of evidence from NDEs and related phenomena**
  - NDErs are credible eyewitnesses to their experiences
  - Millions of NDErs report the same experience with the same characteristics
  - Similar first-person testimony from multiple NDErs provides strong *objective* evidence
  - Independent corroboration from other credible witnesses of the phenomenon
  - Multiple lines of evidence from NDEs and other death-related experiences build a consistent, coherent picture

# Are the experiences in an NDE real?

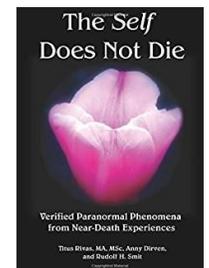
- NDE cases of *veridical* perceptions
  - Example: Lloyd Rudy's patient
  - Example: Laurin Bellg's patient Howard (Bellg, 2015, 33-43)
- These cases mean that the experiences in an NDE are *real*
  - The perceptions of the physical realm are accurate, that is, *veridical*
  - The veridical perceptions occur from the NDEr's reported *vantage point outside* the physical body
  - The objects or events perceived are *unusual* or *idiosyncratic*; frequently detailed and *purely visual*
  - Often the veridical perceptions are *immediately disclosed* by the NDEr
  - The timing of specific reported events establishes that the perceptions *could not have been produced by the brain*
  - Strongly suggests: the mind can separate from and operate independent of the physical body



Dr. Lloyd Rudy & Mike Milligan



*Near Death in the ICU*



*The Self Does Not Die*

## Evidence that the mind is a *separate entity*

- During an NDE, the mind functions as a *cohesive unit*
  - Their entire being has separated from the body
  - All aspects of their mind are consciously present *throughout* their NDE
- There is *continuity of consciousness* throughout the separation and return
- The contrast of the out-of-body mind to the mind in ordinary consciousness includes:
  - Loss of physical pain and disabilities
  - Enhanced perceptions and memory, a heightened sense of reality
  - That physical body wasn't me!
- In effect, the separate mind is the *essence* of the person
- These experiences strongly suggest that a person's mind is a *separate entity* that is independent of the body

## Is the separate mind entity *objectively* real?

- A subjective phenomenon is *objectively real* if it can be observed by others
  - Several lines of evidence that the *nonmaterial mind* is objectively real
- The NDEr can be seen by others
  - Seen by animals – Jerry Casebolt and the German Shepherd
  - Seen by other people (“apparitional” NDEs) – Olga Gearhardt
  - Seen by *other NDErs* (simultaneous NDEs) – hotshot firefighter team
- The *objective corroboration* by others of the NDEr’s out-of-body presence demonstrates
  - The NDEr mind entity is a *real thing*, a *real being*
  - The separate *mind entity* really exists



# The *mind entity* hypothesis

- **The NDE evidence so far:**
  - The nonmaterial mind can *separate* from the body
  - The mind is a *separate entity* in itself
  - The mind entity is a *real thing, a real being*
- **The mind entity hypothesis**
  - The human being consists of a nonmaterial “mind” that is integrated with the physical body
  - The mind entity is the *seat of consciousness* of the person; all cognitive faculties reside in the mind, *not* in the brain
  - For “in-body” consciousness, the mind entity interacts with the brain to establish consciousness
  - Ordinarily, the mind is *completely dependent* on the brain’s electrical activity for consciousness
  - For the “out-of-body” state in an NDE, the mind entity separates from the body and operates independent of the brain
- **For this theory to work, there must be:**
  - Some form of energetic interaction between the mind and the brain
  - Some plausible mechanism of interaction

# How can a nonmaterial mind interact with the brain?

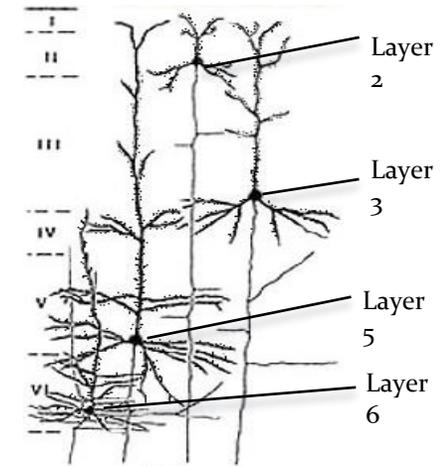
- **How could a nonmaterial mind interact with the material brain to achieve consciousness?**
  - **There is strong evidence that the out-of-body mind *does* interact with physical processes**
    - **Light, sound waves in the air, and solid matter**
    - **Giving rise to subjective sensations and accurate veridical perceptions in the physical realm**
  - **There is evidence of new subtle, push-pull *force* when the out-of-body mind entity passes through solid matter,**
    - **Giving the sense of resistance or increased density in the NDEr.**
  - **There is evidence when NDErs interact with another person's body**
    - **The mind can interact specifically with neural electrical processes**
    - **Both *sensing* and *triggering* neural electrical activity**



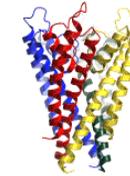
# How does the mind-brain interface work?

## A plausible mechanism for mind-brain interaction

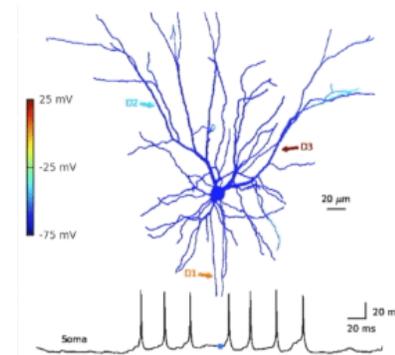
- The physical interface between the nonmaterial mind and the brain is in the gray matter
  - Specifically in the apical dendrites in the outermost 2-3 mm of the cortex
- There is a two-way causal interaction between the nonmaterial mind and brain neurons
  - The mind “senses” neural action potentials thru back propagation
  - The mind opens ion channels to trigger action potentials
- Neural electrical activity brings *perceptions* and *thoughts* to *awareness* in the mind
  - Mental intentions trigger electrical activity which activates *motor actions*



Apical dendrites in layers 2-3 and 5 pyramidal cells



Neural ion channel



Action potentials propagate back through the dendritic arbor

# Philosophical objections to the mind entity theory

- Addressing philosophical objections to interactionist dualism
  - There is strong evidence that the *out-of-body mind interacts with physical processes*
  - There is evidence that a subtle, previously unrecognized *two-way force* is involved in mind-matter interactions
- Three specific philosophical challenges to interactionist dualism
  - Taking the mind to be a “thing” is a *category error*
    - The nonmaterial mind is actually in the *same category* as physical objects because the mind is an objectively real thing that unites with the brain and body
  - The *causal pairing* problem
    - The nonmaterial mind is a three-dimensional object in physical space
    - The mind and brain are located in intimate spatial relation to one another and exert direct causal interactions with each other
  - The *causal closure of the physical*
    - The mind is nonmaterial, yet *interacts* with physical processes and thus takes part in *physical causation*
    - The mind interfaces with the brain at *specific points of contact* at the surface of the cortex

# Are there other explanations for NDE phenomena? ...

- **Physiological and neurological explanations**
  - Altered blood gas levels, neurochemical factors, or brain seizures
  - None of these factors, *alone or in combination*, is adequate to explain NDEs
    - The reported experiences bear only *slight resemblance* to NDEs
    - Many NDEs occur under conditions *without* the suggested factor, and/or
    - In cases where the factor is present, NDEs are *not reported* in even a large percent of cases
- **Explaining away NDEs with *ad hoc* hypotheses**
  - The NDEr actually got their information *just before* losing consciousness or *sometime after* regaining consciousness
  - These explanations are *ad hoc*: they apply only to a specific NDE
    - Proponents fail to explain *all* anomalous aspects of the NDE
    - They fail to *validate* their explanation of the NDE with the facts of the case
    - They fail to develop *general* explanations that can be applied to *different* NDEs with similar characteristics
  - Reliance on *ad hoc* hypotheses to explain NDEs indicates that the explanation *lacks coherence*

# Are there other explanations for NDE phenomena?

- **NDEs *also* occur in people who are *not* near death nor in physical distress**
  - NDEs can also occur in *non-life-threatening* situations: during sleep, fainting, meditation, drug or alcohol use, or even spontaneously
  - NDEs *cannot be distinguished* whether the person was perfectly healthy or in cardiac arrest
    - There's *no significant difference* in either the NDE *content* or *intensity* between “near-death-like” experiences and “real” NDEs (Charland-Verville et al., 2014)
- **Suggests that there is a *common proximate* or *immediate* cause for all NDEs**
  - There must be a *unifying factor* that is *common* in all cases of NDEs and near-death-like experiences
  - Nearly 80% of NDErs report feeling separated from their body
  - We propose that the common proximate cause of all NDEs is *in fact* the separation of the mind from the physical body
    - Various physiological and psychological conditions—or no apparent condition—can *trigger* the separation of the person's conscious mind from the body
- **Explanations of specific physiological or neurological factors fail—considering there is a *common proximate cause* for all NDEs**

## Summary: NDE evidence that the mind is a *separate entity*

1. A person's mind or consciousness can *separate* from the physical body and operate independent of it
2. The separate mind embodies all of the person's cognitive functions; it is the *essence* of the person
3. The separate mind itself is an *objectively real* thing, a real being
4. The *mind entity hypothesis* is a plausible picture of the human being
5. There is a *plausible mechanism* for two-way *causal interactions* between the nonmaterial mind and the brain
6. The mind entity theory addresses the main philosophical objections to dualism
7. Other explanations of NDEs fail—they do not apply to *all* NDEs with a *comprehensive explanation* of all aspects of the core experience

# Evidence during NDEs from deceased persons ...

## Encountering deceased persons is an important element in NDEs

- Nearly half of NDErs report encountering someone who had died earlier
- The NDEr generally recognizes the deceased loved one for who they are
- The deceased person may give the NDEr a message to bring back to someone still living
- Typically, the decedent tells the NDEr “It’s not your time. You must go back”

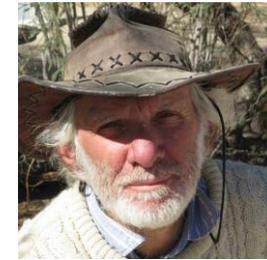
## Skeptics argue that:

- Whereas NDErs may have been near to death, they didn’t actually die; they came back
- Skeptics say, any encounters with deceased loved ones are actually due to:
  - The NDEr’s expectation of meeting deceased loved ones because they realize they have died, or
  - The NDEr’s wishful thinking or pure imagination
  - Any veridical information received from the deceased person is just a lucky guess
- Skeptics’ conclusion: NDEs *do not* provide credible evidence of survival of physical death

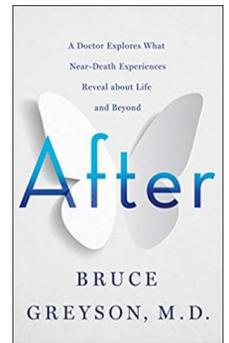
# Evidence during NDEs from deceased persons

## Two types of cases of encountering deceased loved ones that address these objections

- **Persons known to the NDEr but who were not known to have died**
  - The case of Jack Bybee and nurse Anita (Greyson, 2021, 132–133)
- **Persons not known to the NDEr but later identified**
  - The case of the unknown sister Rietje (van Lommel, 2010, 71–72)



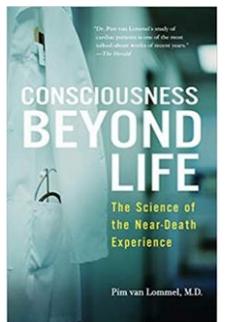
Jack Bybee



*After: A doctor explores NDEs*

## What do these cases mean?

- Veridical communication with someone who has already died is *evidence implicitly for personal survival of physical death*
- These cases are strong *objective* evidence of contact with those who have died
- And strong evidence that the minds of deceased persons continue after physical death



*Consciousness Beyond Life*

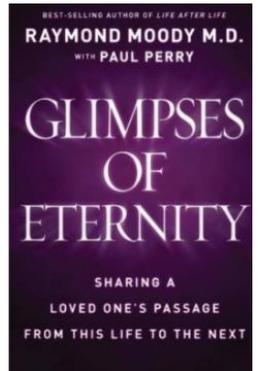
- Greyson, B. (2021). *After: A doctor explores what near-death experiences reveal about life and beyond*. St. Martin's Essentials.
- van Lommel, P. (2010). *Consciousness beyond life: The science of near-death experience*. HarperOne.

## Evidence from shared experiences ...

- Skeptics can still argue that the presence of deceased persons in an NDE is not *sufficient* in itself.
  - What is the evidence that the *NDEr* could *continue on* to actual physical death?
- What are shared death experiences (SDEs)?
  - Someone attending a dying loved one experiences the *dying process* along with the loved one
  - The geometry of the room may change, an unusual light seen, ethereal music heard
  - The SDEr may see the dying person's spirit leave the physical body
  - The SDEr may leave their own body and accompany the deceased person out-of-body
  - The SDEr may see deceased relatives and friends of the dying person come to escort the person to the other realm
  - The SDEr becomes an *objective eyewitness* of the process of dying.

# Evidence from shared experiences

- **The case of Dr. Jamieson and her mother** (Moody, 2010, 6–7)
- **The case of Dana and Johnny** (Moody, 2010, 11–12)
- **What do shared death experiences mean?**
  - The SDEr observes the decedent's transition to death
  - They *directly perceive* elements that commonly occur in NDEs but *from a third-person perspective*
  - The decedent's "spirit body" is the *mind entity* that separates from the body in an NDE
  - Thus, in the SDE, the decedent's *conscious Self survives physical death*
- **Skeptics still argue that SDE phenomena are merely *subjective* perceptions of the dying person's transition, due to the SDEr's wishful thinking**
  - Is there any *objective evidence* that the dying person *actually continues to exist after death*, or do they just disappear?



*Glimpses of Eternity*

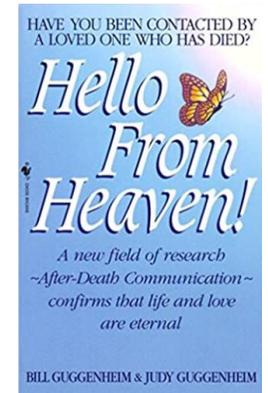
# Evidence from post death through after-death communication ...

## Consider spontaneous after-death communications (ADCs)

- An ADC is the spontaneous direct communication from a deceased person with a living person ...
  - By sensing a presence, hearing a voice, feeling a touch, smelling a fragrance, or seeing the decedent in partial or full appearance ...
  - While the witness is completely awake, while asleep, or while falling asleep or waking up
- The decedent may provide *veridical information* about a lost insurance policy or hidden valuables, or warn the witness to avoid an airplane crash or other dangers
- About one-third of the worldwide population has had one or more ADCs

# Evidence from post death through after-death communication

- **The case of Blair's father** (Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 1997, 329)
- **What do after-death communications mean?**
  - They are strong evidence of the *persistence* of the decedent's *personality, memory, and relationships* with those still living
  - Shared ADCs, that is, encounters in which two or more people witness the decedent, provide *objective corroboration* that the decedent continues to exist after physical death
  - Thus, ADCs indicate that the decedent's consciousness and identity *continue on after death*



*Hello from  
Heaven*

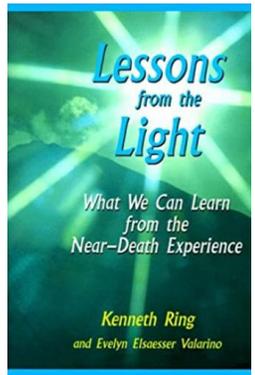
# Summary of the Evidence

1. **The evidence from near-death experiences (NDEs)**
  - The essential, nonmaterial aspect of a human being (the person's *mind entity*) *separates from the physical body* in an NDE and operates independent of the brain and body
2. **The evidence from shared death experiences (SDEs)**
  - In the process of physical death, as witnessed by SDErs, the dying person's mind entity separates from the physical body and *transitions to a different realm*
3. **The evidence of meeting deceased persons in NDEs, SDEs, and in after-death communications (ADCs)**
  - The decedents are *objectively real* because they are observed at times simultaneously by multiple witnesses and at times provide *veridical information* previously unknown to the witnesses
  - Credible veridical communication with someone who has already died is *evidence implicitly for personal survival of physical death*

**Based on the evidence from these phenomena, taken as a whole:** A person's essential Self or mind *separates* from the physical body at death, *transitions* to a different realm, and *survives* the death of the physical body

# The survival of physical death: The Self does not die

- The most important shift for all of humanity will be to accept that the human being is an eternal spiritual being clothed in a physical body.
- There is no need to fear death because our essential being does not die with the death of the body. *There is No Death.*
- When people lose the fear of death, their whole perspective changes (Ring & Elsaesser-Valarino, 1998)
  - Inner peace and greater appreciation for life
  - Less judgmental and more loving
  - Less self-centered, more compassionate and more understanding of others
  - Less materialistic and more altruistic, with an increased concern for others
  - Less competitive and more cooperative
- You don't need to have an NDE in order to make these changes yourself, inwardly.



*Lessons from the Light*