

THERAPY FOR SANE HALLUCINATIONS

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*Abstract*

*There has been a scarcity of literature related to the spiritual experiences (hereinafter sometimes referred to as SEs) of mental health, allied healing professionals and their clients. When 133 professionals, who attended an educational workshop where they were asked about the SEs of themselves and their clients, eighty-seven percent of respondents stated that a personal SE had affected their life in a positive way. Eighty-five percent of them recognized and felt their clients had been positively affected by their SEs. Forty-two percent of the research subjects took the initiative to read an article or a book on the subject of spirituality in the year since attending the workshop. A spirituality group facilitated for approximately three years by the author (Herrick, K. E., Rev., 2005, pp. 25-34) showed that it may be common for attendees of only one workshop, like the survey research group, to underreport these experiences when asked to describe in only one reporting. In keeping with the theme of this conference, SEs such as examples of communication with someone who has died from both the survey research group and the spirituality group are discussed. SEs, especially the type that give evidence for life after death, can also be described using an 1800's term "sane hallucinations."*

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This author's research objective was to demonstrate that through an educational experience that taught about spirituality and SEs, a person could be taught to recognize SEs, also known as spiritual emergencies. Spiritual emergence results from having SEs of all kinds from conversion experiences to anomalous experiences. Likewise, the study was to contribute in the development of a consensus that SEs can and do happen and that a professional's positive response to these experiences can determine whether the experience is integrated and used as a stimulus for personal growth versus being repressed as a bizarre event that may signal mental instability.

The study was based on the 104 responses (78% net return) at educational workshops on Spiritual Experiences and Psychotherapy. Participants self-selected this experience by attending the educational workshops given at different locations and conferences. There was an education emphasis with fifty-seven percent of the attendees having a Masters Degree and with twenty-three percent having a Post Masters. 85% of the attendees were female and 15% were male. The average age was forty-seven years.

The methodology consisted of pre- and post-test questionnaires administered after the presentation. A follow-up survey was given by telephone or through the mail within the following year. Fifty percent of the respondents stated that the definition "An SE is the transcendent relationship between the person and a Higher Being, a quality that goes beyond a specific religious affiliation" was most influential to them from the workshop.

The study showed an eighty-seven percent increase in learning about SEs and eighty-three percent of the respondents recognized such experiences in their clients. It was also indicated that respondents need further training in recognizing the differences between spiritual and psychotic experiences.

Rich comments from the qualitative research showed that the workshop was a confirmation and reminder of what the professionals already knew. It was a remembering or a confirmation; the study provided a structure where that could happen. The structure the workshops created could indicate that mental health professionals need more networking opportunities, such as this setting created, in order to have conversation among themselves, which has been called for by Mansager (2004) and could lead to a higher level of spiritual understanding stated by Warren (1993). (For those interested in the contents of this educational workshop: It was given and taped on cassette number 2299 for the ASPSI conference entitled “Paranormal Experience and Spirituality” in Cherry Hill, NJ, on June 10, 2006. The cassette tape is entitled “Spirituality Legitimized...Almost.” You can purchase this tape from ASPSI archives.)

Perhaps this higher level of spiritual understanding will be what William James and his colleagues first introduced to psychology, that the mind cannot be reduced to the phenomenology of the brain and that study of the mind will take into account the numerous and currently dismissed facts of the so-called “paranormal.” In short, this limited study has suggested new windows to be opened on spiritual, religious and anomalous experience for further exploration and study for mental health professionals and their clients.

### **Paranormal Experiences in the General Population**

The results of Ross and Joshi’s (1992) study showed that paranormal/extrasensory experiences were common in the general population. On June 8, 2001, it was stated by The Gallup Poll that 28% of a randomly selected national sample of 1,102 adults reportedly believe that people can hear or communicate mentally with someone who has died. This is a 10% increase from 1990 (Newport & Strausberg, 2001, p 2).

Also stated by Ring (1992), the ability to have paranormal experiences was linked to a history of childhood trauma and to other dissociative symptom clusters. Ring proposed a model in which paranormal experiences (any kind of supernatural experience, mental telepathy, precognition, telekinesis, precognitive, dreams, déjà vu, an extrasensory experience, possession by a demon, dead person, living person, or some other power or force, contact with ghosts, poltergeists, or spirits of any kind, knowledge of past lives and involvement with cults) can be triggered by trauma, especially childhood physical or sexual abuse.

Since the Second World War, and especially since 1980, the relationships among childhood trauma, dissociation, and hypnosis have been increasingly studied and understood (Bliss, 1986; Putnam, 1989; Ross, 1989). According to Ross & Joshi (1992) in an article entitled, “Paranormal Experiences in the General Population,” “It appears that of four interlinked phenomena (childhood trauma, dissociation, hypnosis, and paranormal experience), paranormal experiences will be the last to become a subject of modern scientific inquiry within psychiatry” (pp. 357 - 359). It is here that the author’s small research study fit.

## **William James and Colleagues**

It is important to remember in the interpretation of paranormal or extrasensory experiences having to do with communicating with the dead and seeing the dead that James and his colleagues presented a report in 1898 at the International Congress of Experimental Psychology, held in Paris, that was written in 1894, which was “the statistical inquiry into the spontaneous hallucinations of the sane” (Sidgwick, Eleanor, Sidgwick, Henry, Johnson, Alice, Myers, Frederic & Podmore, Frank, 1894, p. 25), entitled “Census of Hallucinations.” This report was specifically tabulated and general conclusions made “as seemed likely to interest psychologists generally who might be studying the phenomenon of hallucination” (Sidgwick et al., 1894, p. 25).

The report was begun in order to question the truthfulness of some hallucinations especially visual hallucinations under certain conditions such as grief and anxiety. The original reason for this report was to examine the evidence for telepathy. Telepathy was described as “That thoughts and feelings in one mind, conveyed somehow otherwise than through the recognized channels of sense”...and that telepathy happens “across a considerable distance of space” (p. 26). The dying person was usually “dying or passing through some other crisis at the time” (Sidgwick et al., 1894, p. 30).

The report stated: “These, (meaning apparitions or ghost reports), are the most important, because they are the most numerous, and because they afford the means of estimating precisely the improbability of explanation by chance. We have shown that after making the most ample allowance for all ascertainable sources of error, the number of these experiences remains far greater than the hypothesis of chance coincidence will account for” (Sidgwick et al., 1894, p. 393).

The dying person usually appeared in familiar clothing, a cold shudder was reported to precede or accompany the hallucination and “cases of recognized apparitions occurring within twelve hours of the death, the death being unknown to the percipient at the time” suggests “that there is no discontinuity at death” (pp. 398 & 401). “A large proportion of these hallucinations occurred in bed, many soon after waking, sometimes apparently caused by a dream” (Sidgwick et al., 1894, p. 397).

Spirituality can just be described as simply experiencing the spirit. Positive indicators for experiencing a spirit or having a SE are “when the person has had good pre-episode functioning, has a preserved and observing ego about the experience, has sufficient inner strength to proceed in therapy, and shows improved post-episode functioning” (Turner et al, 1995, pp. 437-438).

## **Examples of Communication with someone who has died – Survey Research Group**

- 1) That we are “attached” and “in communication with” others whether or not they are physically present to us.
- 2) That although I have always been very open to the idea of life after death, since my experience, there is no doubt.
- 3) Enjoy life and love. In the end of life, we are reunited with our family.
- 4) I have a stronger belief in life after death & believe “they”, our loved ones, are not so far away beyond life as we know it.

## Examples of Communication with someone who has died – Spirituality Group

- 1) I absolutely believe I communicated with my sister. I went to a medium and she brought me messages from my sister. My sister acknowledged there had been twins born in the family. She told me not to give up on men. She told me who both of her children were and told me to say hello to them. I just felt so good to know that she's really "out there" and watching. It validated for me that there really is another side.
- 2) There are so many of my loved ones that have made their translation to the other side...I communicate with them all the time...it's like speaking with them over the phone or sending emails. I may not see them but I know they surround me with much loving which definitely convinces me of God's existence.
- 3) My first time was when I was re-birthing a year after my husband died. I was on a massage table and he appeared over the table. He was telling me how to raise our young sons. He would come to my bed at night and kind of float over the bed. He has been in my bed where I can feel his back. I feel him following me around. My mother, father, uncle, grandparents and cousins have come to me in bed at different times. They appear when one of the family members they are particularly close to has a problem.
- 4) I meditate frequently and can now leave my body at will and go to the other side. I have spoken with my sister, sister-in-law and a fifteen-year old classmate of my daughter who committed suicide. After her funeral, I was very upset and sought to find out whether she was being "cared for 'on the other side'." I "crossed over" through meditation and met with my sister, Pam and sister-in-law, Barbara, both who have died. There were others there who I did not know. I asked if they had met this child and what was happening since her death. They "told" me and showed me that the child had crossed over and was being cared for by several guides. They told me the death was an accident and she was not fully in control. The feeling "on the other side" was heartbreaking. All knew the pain she was feeling. They told me she was "all right" but that did not mean "happy." It meant she was and would continue to be taken care of until she was healed. The feeling "on the other side" was of sadness – great sadness for this child.
- 5) Once when I was sick and still recovering from pneumonia, I went to the Smokey Mountains in North Carolina and stayed in a hotel in the town of Maggie Valley next to the Cherokee Indian reservation. There I experienced an encounter with an apparition during the night. I was awake at the time. I was quite frightened and closed my eyes but I could feel its presence as it passed over me several times. Each time I felt a strong chill throughout my body. I put on a light next to my bed and the apparition disappeared. When I awoke the next day I knew right away I had been cured of my pneumonia. I did not have any chest congestion. My cough was gone and I was able to breathe comfortably for the first time in weeks. Later I learned about a ghost named "Bojum" who once was a miner for jewels in these mountains. It was said he roamed about at night looking for his stash of gemstones. Interestingly, there was a gemstone convention and exhibit taking place right next to our hotel at the time of my visit. I also later learned that at the turn of the century there was a sanitarium nearby for TB patients as well as for other respiratory problems. It was widely known for its wonderful cures. This is an experience I will never forget!

“A form of spirituality has been labeled **quest religiosity** (Batson & Ventis, 1982) From this perspective; religion is a never-ending personal journey toward truth. People who are primarily quest-oriented are open-minded about spiritual matters and don’t expect to find simple answers to complex spiritual and moral issues.” (Batson & Burris, 1994) as quoted in Kenrick, Neuberg & Cialdini (2005), p. 367.

From a social psychology perspective, group members were “quest-oriented” as they saw their spiritual role as finding their journey, “following their bliss,” a Joseph Campbell (1972) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* term. They became aware that there were different truths and wisdom.

### **Development of the Soul**

In looking for evidence for life after death, we are looking for proof that in a human being there is a component that is not physical. In Kelsey (2007, p. 74), he explains “that the Soul starts as the particle of energy, derived from God, which organizes the different parts of an atom.” As the Soul “gains experience...it grows larger.” The Soul can be called the spirit or the non-physical part of the human body. It is this spirit that is called an apparition or ghost that was studied by James and his colleagues in the 1890s. This spirit or spirits have been contacted and reported in the responses of the participants of the survey research, spirituality groups and clients in general and are discussed herein.

We can turn to the early Greek philosophers to learn more about the Soul. Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) believed that the soul was how man lived, felt and understood life. Plato (“427? – 347?” BC) (The World Book Encyclopedia, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 567) believed that learning is really reminiscence because one was remembering knowledge formerly acquired by the Soul in a previous state of existence. He also believed the Soul continued to live forever. Socrates (469 - 399 BC) held that the soul existed before the body and, prior to being born into a human body, it contained all knowledge. Edgar Cayce, the famous American psychic, has been known to have said that the soul or spirit is our life force. It is this author’s belief that with our mind working through our brain, we learn about the pattern/s of this life force or soul while “following our bliss.”

Thomas Edison was known to have said that if the Soul survived, then “it is strictly logical or scientific to assume that it retains memory, intellect, other faculties and knowledge that we acquire on this Earth” (Macy, 2002, p. 20). It is said that before Edison died he was working on a machine that would make recordings of souls from the other side.

In the practice of therapy regarding sane hallucinations or the paranormal, a therapist hears many wonderful and weird stories that involve belief in this non-physical part of the human body. Many times clients had used drugs and alcohol because they were having paranormal SEs that they considered “weird.” Once they learn about SEs and/or paranormal experiences and understand them, they can then understand themselves better. Some even develop an interest in the paranormal as a vocation.

All of these types of SEs aide clients in the understanding of the spirit or non-physical part of them and others. The client SEs discussed here belong in the categories of:

- Out of Body Experiences
- Visits from dead relatives or spirits
- Reincarnation
- Visits to Mediums
- Photographs of images said to be the Virgin Mary

### **Out of Body Experiences (OBE)**

Clients report this experience feeling as if their “self” is located outside of their physical body and they can observe their body from a distance. In the beginning, clients report that they left their body “by mistake” and then eventually they could do it at will after learning to “space out.” Some client’s reports when they use alcohol and drugs they cannot leave their body and others have reported it is possible to have an OBE when they are under the influence of alcohol and drugs. I have recommended that these clients connect with the Monroe Institute in Faber, Virginia to learn more about vibrational fields. Some clients report that past lives and visits with UFOs are revealed to them during OBEs. Some also report that they have left their bodies in moments of rage.

### **Visit from dead relatives or spirits**

For clients to realize these SEs happen where they can connect with their dead parents or ancestors is an important shift in their awareness. Not only does it open up their thinking from their physical world to the invisible world of spirits but it increases their need for more knowledge of spiritual subjects and a moving outside of their life to a bigger world of meeting other people with the same beliefs. In 2007, the Associated Press reported that 34% of Americans believe in ghosts. Some client stories indicating this shift in awareness are:

#### At deathbed of a parent –

“The nurse said to open the bedroom window to let his spirit out and we did. It was like you see in a movie. His spirit looked like a white T-shirt. It was a good size and you could see it was something leaving the room.”

#### During a time of crises in a family -

“It was a floating, round ball and it followed me into my daughter’s bedroom. She was in the hospital at the time. I felt it was my father being there for me during this time of crises.”

#### Feeling the presence of a grandparent –

“One time it was this electrical “thing.” I could feel this energy that touched my hair. I felt it was my grandmother – my mother’s mother. I was always very fond of her. She was a nice quiet woman. I had a feeling that this was her.”

Other adult clients have reported seeing spirits of grandparents as young children. Some of them knew these grandparents and others had not known them personally but recognized these spirits from family photographs. They report that as children they felt comforted by these spirits and knew that the spirits wanted the best for them. One client reported “He had this silver light around his hair.”

#### Sex with a ghost

Sexual encounters of widows and dead spouses prove to be very enjoyable. One such experience is: “It was on the anniversary of Harry’s death. I had been thinking about him all day realizing a great many things about our relationship and the positives in our marriage. I had this dream that was so vivid where he came to me and laid on top of me. This feeling of love just exploded inside of me and I had an orgasm. All of the negative feelings I had ever had about him just melted away. It was the most wonderful feeling I think I’ve ever had.”

#### Incest survivors and spirits –

Incest survivors sometimes continue to set boundaries with parents who have been inappropriately sexual with them. The personal, psychological definition of incest that this author uses with clients is: Incest - A crime of power over a child that takes the form of sexual violation. Incest includes suggestive or seductive talk or behavior directed at a child; any unwanted or invasive touching, including kissing, wrestling and tickling; non-medical enemas; showing a child pornography or exposing adult genitals to them, sexual fondling; oral sex, and/or sexual intercourse (Source Unknown).

Some clients have the feeling of the presence in certain parts of their house or during certain activities and may write a letter or talk to this ghost or apparition by stating:

- I do not want you around me when I’m having sex.
- I do not want you around me when I’m in the bathroom.
- I do not want you around me when I am dressing, undressing or nude.
- I do not want you to enter my bedroom ever again.
- I want you to stop standing outside the door when I am in the bathroom.

It has been reported by clients who have written these letters or spoken directly to the ghost that the presence is then gone and has not returned. Some clients ask the spirit to come to them in a dream where they can discuss these boundaries. This setting of boundaries with the spirit of their parent is the way the client integrates assertiveness into their Soul. This strengthens them in this life and in other lives they may have.

#### **Reincarnation or a Past Life Memory**

This is a non-ordinary state of consciousness in other historical periods and/or other countries usually associated with powerful emotions, physical sensations and a convincing sense of personally remembering and reliving something one had experienced previously. Christy (March/April 2008, p. 19) reported “The Harris Poll (2003) said that 27% of Americans believe in reincarnation. In the age group 25-29, 40% believe in reincarnation.”

Best selling books have helped to bring this concept into the mainstream. This author explains the reincarnation concept to clients with past lives just being an extension of their unconscious and being located in the collective unconscious. Carl Jung, a famous early psychologist, has been known to state that past lives were part of our psychic heredity.

#### One client’s memory -

“I was on that hill in Ireland. I could feel it and taste it. I went through time and space. I was a little chap wearing kickers. I was fishing and clamming. I went back to the same area the next day and it wasn't as good. There was something about that place. I went there for a spiritual walk in the woods and when I was on 'that bridge,' I remembered I had been there one time prior. I would go back there. It's like another land.”

### **Reincarnation in therapy**

This author teaches that the importance of reincarnation in therapy is the attempt to understand the client's core issues from past lives. For example, it's very nice to know that at onetime the client had an interest in and was a ceramic artist in Athens in 1,200 BC. And, in this life, the client also does ceramics as a hobby. A past life core issue would be one where the client knows she or he was a victim of incest during a life in France in the 1700s and has also been a victim of incest in this life. The purpose of therapy is to rid the soul of these incestuous issues by working through them and to now be able to enjoy one's sexuality.

### **Reincarnation Relationships**

Some clients *know*:

- “We are twin souls. We *recognized* each other the moment we met.
- I started crying the moment we met.
- He seemed so familiar.
- It's like we've always known each other. We joke about it.”

Some clients describe other countries where they have lived. Some *know* it was Atlantis, Lemuria, Egypt, etc. Some have been told by psychics and mediums that they were in relationships previously. Sometimes these relationships are problematic in the here and now because the people are already coupled with others. Many times psychic or creative abilities begin to become stronger after a reincarnation meeting with another. Sometimes my clients have “double memories.” Something happens in their current life that reminds them of a past life. Many reincarnation relationships seem to be addictive. Some of the qualities are:

- Dependent on each other
- Feeling that they will “die” without each other (because perhaps they once did)
- Unable to endure separations even in conflict
- Preoccupation with each other's behavior
- There's a strong sexual component to the relationship
- Feel inadequate and worthless if relationship ends

### **Photographs of Marion Apparitions**

Three photographs, brought to me by clients over the years, will be shown at the ASPSI conference, “Beyond the Veil: Evidence for Life After Death” from Friday, May 30, to Monday June 2, 2008.

### **Visit to Mediums**

Many of my clients visit mediums. A medium is a person who communicates with dead people or spirits. Many times the spirit also materializes while the medium is communicating with them. One particular gifted medium who was investigated for eighteen years by James and his colleagues was Leonora Piper, a Boston housewife. James and his colleagues also investigated some fraudulent mediums.

One client reported about her medium visit: “I went with my daughters to this medium they had visited right after my husband died. She had told my daughters where he had hidden some money in the house. They went home and found the money in the exact spot that the medium described. During this evening, Charlie wouldn’t leave the medium alone. He kept talking and talking as he did in real life. He wanted to give us a hug. He wanted to say he was sorry. He wanted me to tell him that I forgive him for his drug and alcohol use. He said he was really sorry for everything that happened in our marriage and that it was his fault. He told me there was nothing I could have done to stop him from using drugs and alcohol. The medium saw him with a wall around him not taking in any help he was offered. He said not to worry about him. That he was fine there. My daughter asked him if he had his breathing problem where he was and he stated, ‘I don’t have to breathe here.’ We asked about my father-in-law who recently passed and Charlie stated that both of his parents were with him.”

Upon telling a professional about a SE, the client is no longer comfortable talking about their experience if the professional minimizes the experience or call it a hallucination, which indicates mental illness. An 1880s term such as “sane hallucinations” used by James and his colleagues could help clients understand the difference between a SE and a psychotic hallucination.

A classic way to tell the difference between a “real” SE and mental illness is reported in Shorto (1999): “One of the tip-offs to psychotic delusion, which has been known since James’s time is grandiosity that a mystic is humbled by his experience, a psychotic inflated” (p. 71) Another difference between a mystic and someone with mental illness is that the former can choose to move into or out of the state of consciousness.

A psychotic hallucination usually has no basis in fact. A SE is an individual experience and gives an answer to the person having it. Also, with a SE, the person has a good ego, meaning they can tell you the same story over and over again and the story doesn’t change.

### **A Spiritual Therapist**

For a therapist to facilitate these types of SEs with clients, the author has found it is helpful if the therapist has:

- Has at least one SE, which was worked through and understood.
- An understanding of mental illness and addictions and to understand the difference between a psychotic and a sane hallucination. To also have an understanding of the varieties of SEs.
- An understanding of the mind/body connection in order to teach the clients that their body is the most desirable vehicle to house the soul in this life and that it needs to be well taken care of.
- An understanding of Jungian and Transpersonal Psychologies.

- An understanding of religious beliefs and rituals of other cultures.
- An understanding of the client's belief or concept of their God or a Higher Power, which aides the client in co-creating with that God and/or the rituals of their choice, which enhances their present life.
- An understanding of and the ability to direct a client to professionals who use age-old divination systems, not limited to but including systems such as Astrology, Numerology, I Ching, Runes and Tarot cards, which aide the client in learning more about his or her soul's purpose in this life.
- An understanding of the process of death, according to the client's beliefs, so as to aide the client in eventually making this a peaceful transition to the other side.

### **For Future Research**

It is recommended that future researchers help to establish a vocabulary of spirituality and SEs, from simple to difficult, for therapists to use when working with SEs with clients. We also need more narrative descriptions when collecting data.

### **Spirituality and Society**

William C. Menninger, the first psychiatrist to be elevated to the rank of brigadier general, and a group of colleagues met at the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1946 to found the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP). This group drafted a report that urged that psychiatric insights be used in the service of social action to consciously change society. The September 5, 2005 issue of Newsweek stated that Americans are looking for an immediate, transcendent experience of God. No where in this article was stated the psychiatric statistic used in developing the 1994 V-Code 62.89 "Religious and Spiritual Problem" that 30-50% of the population are now having these types of SEs. This author believes that spirituality in the United States could be very different if psychiatric insights were used in the service of social action. It may definitely increase the statistic in the United States that fourteen percent of the population now considers themselves "spiritual" (Van Biema, 2004).

It is the hope of this author that other research is completed into "the statistical inquiry into the spontaneous hallucinations of the sane" (Sidgwick et al., 1894, p. 25) and that more psychologists in general will become interested in this phenomenon of sane hallucinations or SEs.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Rev Karen E. Herrick has shared her clinical expertise for the past twenty-plus years in her private practice by lecturing throughout the United States on dysfunctional homes, grief, loss and dissociation. Karen completed her PhD from Union Institute & University in Cincinnati, Ohio with a specialization in Spiritual Psychology. Her thesis was entitled "Naming Spiritual Experiences". She is the author of the book "You're Not Finished Yet." You may go to <http://namingspiritualexperiences.blogspot.com> to discuss and learn about the spiritual experiences that interest you.

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