

# Q and A with P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D. (Hon.)

## An in-depth look at the near-death phenomenon

July 2003



In this new section of the newsletter, Dr. P. M.H. Atwater will answer questions submitted to her from subscribers to this free newsletter. If you would like a question that you would like her to answer, just



email your question to [webmaster@near-death.com](mailto:webmaster@near-death.com) for consideration.

P.M.H. Atwater's next book, entitled [The New Children and Near-Death Experiences](#), will be released on December of 2003. You can order your copy now through Amazon.

Dr. Ken Ring had this to say about her book: "This book is the richest, most probing, and most comprehensive available of NDEs in children."



## Books by PMH Atwater



### [We Live Forever: The Real Truth About Death](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

Based on Atwater's 25 years of research, personal stories, and her own NDE in 1977



### [The New Children and Near-Death Experiences](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

An expansion of Atwater's original book "Children of the New Millennium" taking it to another level.



### [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Near-Death Experiences](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

This is the "encyclopedia" of the NDE and the most complete book done in the field of NDE studies.



### [Beyond the Light](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

An in-depth study of the NDEs of over 3,000 adult experiencers.



### [Coming Back to Life](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

Looks at all aspects of the NDE and its aftereffects including possible changes in the brain.



### [Future Memory](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

Deals with the transformation of consciousness and what that might portend to future memory.



### [Children of the New Millennium](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

An in-depth study of child NDEs and a how these children compare to the new children being born today.

## Videos by PMH Atwater



### [Beyond the Light](#)

featuring P.M.H. Atwater

Dr. Atwater shares her testimony of three life-changing NDEs with host Mary Lou McCall.



### [As You Die](#)

featuring P.M.H. Atwater

Available in CD-ROM, DVD, and VHS formats! Atwater leads people through the wonderful journey which begins as one lays hovering between life and death, then leads them away from any fear and despair towards a peace and unconquerable hope, knowing that as we die ... we live forever!

## Ebook by PMH Atwater



### [A Book of Columns](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater

This ebook contains all of Dr. Atwater's columns from the IANDS newsletter "Vital Signs" from June of 1981 until 2004. Proceeds go to support IANDS and its mission.



**QUESTION:** In the June 2nd newsletter, you remarked, 'A word of caution is due here: near-death experiences can occur without perceived or actual physical death involved.' Could you say some more about this? -- *Yangtzu*



**P.M.H. Atwater's answer:** The vast number of near-death experiences occur either when the person is at the edge of death and could die, or when the individual actually does die but is later resuscitated or revives. That's why the phenomenon is so important to medical science. It happens under their watch and they can no longer explain it away or ignore what patients have to say. Too many millions of people, all ages, are involved - worldwide. The [large prospective clinical study done by Pim van Lommel, M.D. and Associates in Holland](#), and published by The Lancet medical journal 12-15-01, really brought everything to a head in the sense that he was able to establish that his patients had no brain

wave function as well as no vital signs, yet they still had their senses, could "travel around" and see and hear things "impossible" for them to do. And they had aftereffects, and they took a long time to integrate what they went through because it was that intense. The suggestion here is that many things we term "paranormal" may not be paranormal after all (but then, that's another subject, isn't it?).

What surprises medical science, researchers of any ilk, and even the individual experienter, is that near-death episodes can occur under other circumstances, as well. I talk about this a lot in [Beyond the Light](#) and [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Near-Death Experiences](#), and I suggest that you refer to either book for more details and actual case histories. What I can offer you here are a few examples.

Late one night, a man had stopped his car at the request of his mother who was riding with him, to pick some flowers along the side of the road. He had pulled over enough that he created no safety hazard for other motorists. After picking the flowers, he was returning to his car when the lights of another car suddenly loomed large and larger, right in front of his face. The incident was such a surprise, and was so threatening, that he experienced a near-death episode which included a life review. Just when he was certain he was about to die, the lights veered away and disappeared. He was so shook up he could not move for awhile. This is a case of "perceived" death. There was nothing wrong with this man. He was in excellent health. Yet, because of how the lights were positioned, how large and threatening they were, he thought he was about to die, when actually this was not true. He experienced the near-death phenomenon, including the pattern of aftereffects, and this remained clear, coherent, and powerful to him throughout the rest of his life.



Early on a Sunday morning, a woman walked to the front porch of her home to retrieve the Sunday newspaper. She bent over, picked up the large bundle, and, as she straightened herself to walk back inside her home, she gazed into the rising sun and had a full-blown near-death experience complete with aftereffects. She was transformed on the spot, never to look or act the same again; her family utterly puzzled as to what had happened to her. The impact on this woman was overwhelming; her story the same as that of any near-death experienter. Yet, she was in perfect health, and nothing even close to "perceived" death threatened. We call her case a "near-death-like" experience. Nothing can be offered scientifically to account for this.

Lastly, a young man in Canada was sitting on the sofa of his apartment when he decided to walk across the room to the window and either open or close it (I don't remember which). He did this. When he turned to walk back to the sofa, he walked into a transcendent near-death experience fully-conscious and alert to what was happening at the time that involved meeting Jesus and learning how to interpret the Bible "correctly." His episode was on the order of [Betty Eadie's](#), only even more amazing and complex. Consumed with the intensity of his experience and the spread of aftereffects which followed, he devoted his life to speaking with theologians and at seminars and churches, and with ministers or anyone interested in learning more about the Bible. He did not live long. It's as if the intensity of his experience "burned" him up. In good health, he was suddenly overtaken by the type of leukemia that quickly kills - as if the individual is "on fire." This case is also termed a "near-death-like" experience.

Research cannot explain why near-death experiences can happen under vastly different circumstances, even when death is not near. Researchers like myself know that it can, but we have no reason or explanation to offer as to why.



**QUESTION:** I have gone through many articles on NDE, and I have noticed a great percentage of people who experienced NDEs are physically sick people. I personally feel that when a person is sick, met with an accident, or any other reason, he/she may think once at least that he/she may not survive, and the thought lead him/her to have NDE. Mostly, we see in NDE what we have heard, thought, or seen. My question is: should we believe in what we experience? -- *Kapoor*



**P.M.H. Atwater's answer:** With adult experiencers in my research base I noticed an interesting pattern to how most of them died. A little over half the men exited because of heart-related ailments, while another 25% were involved in some form of violence or violent accidents of various types. A whopping 70% of the women experienced their episode during childbirth, miscarriage, or hysterectomy. With the children, drownings were the number one killer, followed by suffocation, parental or sibling abuse, surgery (more from minor surgeries like tonsillectomies, than major surgery).

I have long maintained that emergency

wards are the place to "hang out" in search of near-death episodes, rather than in surgical rooms or at sick beds. Or, travel with EMTs on their life-saving calls to those who have been injured or whose life is suddenly at risk. It is the venue of "accident" or "suddenness" that seems to set the stage for most near-death experiences.

And, as Pim van Lommel, M.D. made it so clear in his ground-breaking study, those who did not have time to think, who had no thought of death or that they might die, these were by far the most likely individuals to experience the near-death phenomenon. He found that the longer a patient lingered, the less likely he or she was to have such an episode.

So, dear Kapoor, I question the articles you have been reading. Perhaps they are not deep or broad enough. I would hardly say that the largest percentage of near-death cases come from sick people or from those who think they are about to die. However, about the idea that we only experience on the other side of death what we expect to experience - that idea is hotly debated.

Almost all experiencers, at one point or another, claim, "they got what they needed," during and after their experience. What is termed "the need factor" is undeniable. It's almost as if these types of experiences, no matter how caused or what we call them, are triggered by some mechanism we have not been able to identify and/or some power source or "plane of being" that exists beyond that of the personality. Such a notion broaches on the existence of a soul or higher self. But note: the connection here is to "need" ... not desire.

Yet, some experiencers do indeed seem to visit the heaven or hell they have portrayed in their own mind and are certain exists as they have believed it does. And the treatment they received fulfilled their expectations. In the Idiot's book, there is a section devoted to the great Swedish genius and mystic, [Emanuel Swedenborg](#) (1688-1772). During his mystical journeys and in his writings, he went to great lengths to explain what he had discovered about heaven and hell, that each was a construct the individual created by projecting their own values and fears upon the "lens" of their "inner view screen" (the subconscious). And many contemporary researchers and scholars agree with him. His discoveries, though, "fall apart" in consideration of the following:

\* **Shared near-death states.** There are cases in which several experiencers seem to share in each other's episode; that is they have the same or similar elements, scenario type, or basic storyline. Usually you encounter most of these when two or three people are involved in the same accident at the same time or are in the same general section of the hospital at the same time. Sometimes these states are experienced singly (one individual is not aware of the other during the episode but learns later on that both apparently had the same scenario). Sometimes the people involved are aware of each other, and

are able to confirm the extent of that awareness after they are able to compare their separate stories.

\* **Group near-death states.** These are rare, but they do occur. With this kind, a whole group of people simultaneously seems to experience the same or similar episode (as per above). What makes these so spectacular and challenging is that all or most of the experiencers see each other actually leave their bodies as their scenario begins, then dialogue with each other and share messages and observations while still experiencing the near-death state. Their separate reports afterward either match or nearly so. Reports like these emerge most often from events of a harrowing nature that involve a lot of people. (Please refer to [The Complete Idiot's Guide](#) for actual case studies of this - like "Hot Shots from Hell.")

Yes, you can trace some of the imagery and elements of a near-death experience to the inner life and expectations of the individual, but not all of it. Invariably the experienter will be exposed to things he or she has no thought or background for. They encounter data and details impossible for them to know. And, afterwards? I don't know of any experienter who had any expectations about the aftereffects, that there would even be any, or how to handle them - or how his or her life would be changed afterward. Remember, languaging is always a problem - there are no words to describe what most people encounter, at least none they are aware of. In choosing words to say, experiencers will offer use terms they have been exposed to, rather than trying to find or draw what they really saw and experienced.

Do we always find what we expect with near-death experiences? Although it may seem so, at least at first, I would say - no, not really. We experience more, far more than we might ever suspect. Should we believe what we experience? That's up to you. The truth is, you are the only one who can validate your experience. No one else can do it for you.

Many blessings,  
P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D.  
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## Contact P.M.H. Atwater

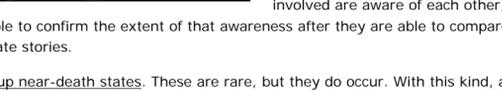
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"We cannot keep the life we have on the earth realm, not our possessions or attachments or relationships. What we can keep is our memories and our feelings of what we have integrated into our heart of hearts from the experience of being here, plus the love we have shared with others." - Dr. P.M.H. Atwater.

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Last modified: May 14, 2005

