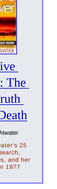
Q and A with P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D. (Hon.)
An in-depth look at the near-death phenomenon

December 2004

P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D. (Hon.), is one of the original researchers in the field of near-death studies, having begun her work in 1978. She is one of the very few top NDE researchers who have actually had a NDE. Her website is filled with very interesting NDE research information and articles of hers. Her contribution to near-death studies is considered to be one of the most important as her first two books, Beyond the Light and Coming Back to Life, are deemed the Bibles of the near-death experience by researchers and a multitude of experiencers and enthusiasts. Using her firm understanding of polite investigative techniques as a protocol, she has specialized in original fieldwork and research that also included sessions with significant others. Her findings are contained in six books (see right). Some of her findings have now been clinically verified. Her research is referenced in the distinguished Lancet medical journal, December 15, 2001 (the landmark Dutch study by Pim van Lommel, M.D.).

For more information about Dr. Atwater's contribution to near-death studies, download her press kit here in PDF format. You will need the Adobe PDF Reader installed on your computer to read the file. If you don't have the Reader, download it by pressing the Adobe Reader icon provided on the right.

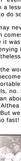


ANNOUNCEMENT: If you are at all interested in near-death cases (or have had one), deathbed visions, transformations of consciousness, and altered states, not to mention the new sciences, please do yourself a favor and see the movie, What the Bleep Do We Know? It's really not a movie, although of movie length. It is a documentary ... about creation and consciousness ... literally a filmed version of the book Future Memory. Parts of it are direct quotes from the book. Since truth is truth, no matter where it comes from or how, I doubt that anyone connected with the movie had ever heard of me or read the book; still, I find it amazing that what plays out on the screen is exactly what I was trying to describe in "Future Memory." Consider this one a "must see." If you don't go to movies, make an exception this time. It is extraordinary!!!!!!!!!! PMH

ANNOUNCEMENT: Here is an important book for children and teens about death and dying. It has been around for awhile, but I just discussed it: The Kids' Book about Death and Dying, Eric E. Rofes and The Unit at Fayerweather Street School. Boston, MA; Little Brown, 1985.

AMAZON REVIEW: This book was written by a group of 14 children, ages 11 to 14 in Cambridge, MA. These children visited funeral homes, interviewed the elderly, and shared their own personal experiences with death and dying. The book speaks frankly about topics ranging from the cost of funerals to assisted suicide and from burial customs to ideas about life after death. The coverage of the book is comprehensive and will likely answer most questions adolescent readers have about death.

QUESTION: Two years ago a very good friend of mine was very sick (dying). This sickness all came about very quickly. She had sepsis, as well as lupus. We were all called into the hospital because time was getting close. My friend had been taken from her room to the Emergency Room to be monitored. There were no beds in CCU at the time. Her sister was coming in from New York and had asked me to pick her up at the airport. Before leaving the hospital, we were all allowed in the room for a few minutes. I knew she would not make it for her sister to get there. The doctors were working on her to try and stabilize her BP. We were sent out of the room. Standing in the hallway, I could feel this energy. I knew she was gone. On the way out of ER, sitting there was a woman who could have been a twin. I asked my son over and showed him. On the way to the airport, Adam (my son) told me he felt the energy while standing in the hallway outside of Althea's room. He felt like the woman sitting in the Waiting Room was there to take Althea home. I did not tell me the sister any of this on the ride back to the hospital. The lady in the Waiting Room was gone and Althea was on life support. We all knew she was gone. The next morning I got a call from the sister asking me to take her back to the hospital, that Althea had just passed on. You know how it is, if there is no response from the respirator, it will shut down by its self. This is what happened with Althea. Do you feel like it really could have been an angel sent here to get her? Allison, the sister, told me she felt this strange feeling during the flight to Richmond, and found Althea on the respirator. I told her what I had seen and said it sure sounded like her sister had passed on. -- Patricia K.

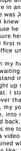


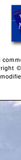
PMH Atwater's reply: We can all surmise that indeed the woman in the Waiting Room, who was a twin in appearance to Althea, was sent there to help Althea die. Please know there is no way anyone can be certain of that or prove it in any way. I would, however, like to share what I have found to be true not only in my research of near-death states and transformative states, but in my personal life as well.

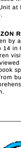
That "feeling" that someone is about to die or has died is very real, very physical, and almost always very accurate. I want to emphasize this. Death has a feel to it and a smell, and we sense it (pick it up) right away. Just as animals can pick up such things, so can people. In those few cases where what was sensed was not accurate, those I have investigated involved people who just couldn't or wouldn't believe what they were feeling. They denied those feelings, or talked themselves out of them. If you are open, sensitive, or even a little bit receptive when death is about to occur, YOU WILL KNOW! We pick up on the appropriate signals and we know what they mean. No one has to tell us. We just know. Now, I have seen cases where the individual was truly dying, significant others were picking up the same thing, and then there was a sudden, unexplainable recovery. Who's to say why. Possible explanations include: the soul changed its mind and decided to live, the "near death" event was staged by the soul to make an impression on those concerned or to teach a lesson, or the individual was able to reverse the dying process through will power and to do so was part of his or her growth/development.

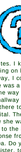
We may never know the full import of what is happening or not happening at the time death comes, but we always know it is coming. Even if the individual survives, we still knew it was coming and what we knew was and is right! You can block out death's signal by denying it, being too tired or angry or worried or fearful, but the signal goes out nonetheless.

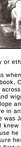
Was the woman in the Waiting Room an angel? Well, let's not use the term "angel." It has become a catch-all word to describe any type of otherworldly being. I'm not comfortable with that, as, for the most part, these beings are not angels. Heavenly, yes. Angels, no. So, let's just say that there was this strange woman who looked like the woman about to die who was waiting around and then suddenly disappeared around the time Althea died. Since no one saw the woman disappear, we have no idea if there is a link. But we "feel" as if there is - it seems possible therefore it must be what we think. Not so fast!











I can go along with this if we are clear that what we assume to be true is just that - an assumption. I would be much more comfortable about the situation if someone saw her leave or turned his or her head for a moment and then turned back and she was gone. Either way, my attention is perked up, for that is the way real otherworldly beings usually "leave." Since no one can see this in Althea's case, the question of identity will always be a question. Go with what your heart tells you.

But the idea of otherworldly beings physically manifesting and being seen around the time of death or when there is extreme need, is ABSOLUTELY VALID. Thousands of people have validated this for me over these many years and I have physically seen it for myself - even touched such beings. Sometimes their touch was very real and sometimes it was as if a mistyy or etheric "wave-through." Let me tell you about one such manifestation.

It was when my husband and I lived in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and I was busy writing my first book, Coming Back to Life. I had walked out the door to get the mail (our boxes were across the street), and noted when I handled the mail that one particular letter was hot and wiggling. As soon as I was back in my kitchen, I hurriedly opened the hot envelope and instead was a letter from a grieving mother, who had lost her son the year before in an accident between his motorcycle and a car. She didn't say, but I knew his name was John. I turned to go into my office and there was John. Real and manifested. And I knew it was John. He had influenced his mother through dreams to write the letter, because he hoped I would consent to allowing him to write a letter to his mother to reassure her he was just fine and to stop all that grieving. I agreed to help him, but told him I first needed to cook my husband's dinner and then do the dishes. He could wait in my office until I had time, and then we would do the letter. He agreed to wait as asked.

When my husband came home, I told him we had a visitor, his name was John, and he was waiting in my office. They agreed to meet him, so I led him into my office and had him stand inside of John's body. Terry never saw anything, but he screamed and jumped straight up saying he felt a strange and pulsing cold standing there and wanted no part of that. I started laughing and told him that strange prickle was John. Terry never quite got over that. Then, when I finally could go into my office and spend some time with John, my youngest daughter Paulie walked into the front room. She could see, at an angle, into my office and yelled at me, "Mom! Who's that man leaning over you?" I yelled back, "Oh, that's John. He died last year in a motorcycle/car accident and he wants me to help him write a letter to his mother to tell her he's okay." I told wish I had had a video camera at the time, so I could have filmed what happened next. Paulie remained where she was standing in the middle of the living room, muttering to herself things like: "I can see a man leaning over my mother. But he died last year. I can really see a man in there, but he's dead and has been dead for a year. I can't lie. He doesn't look like a ghost. He's a man and he's leaning over my mother. But he's dead." Then I heard Paulie say: "Mom, I can't handle this. See you later." She walked left John and I wrote that letter, by the way. His mother replied saying it was as if her son had actually written it - his style, his choice of words, his way of doing things. She was very thankful for the letter.

Now, certainly, my little story is about a disincarnate, true. But the same kind of thing can happen with "visitors" who come to the deathbed. "helpers" who repair your tire when you're stuck out in the woods, "rescuers" who aid you in a hundred different ways when your needs are the greatest - and then disappear, poof, when no longer needed.

The unseen world is very real, is formed of an etheric material substance that can duplicate "matter" on earth or appear misty, and has beings in it that interact with humans on the earth plane and offen. The veil between worlds is not as heavy or as solid as you might think. Folks cross back and forth all the time.

Many blessings,

P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D.
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"We cannot keep the life we have on the earth realm, not our possessions or our achievements 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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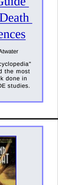
Last modified: May 14, 2005.

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.

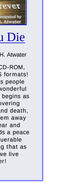
Beyond the Light
by P.M.H. Atwater
An in-depth study of the NDEs of over 3,200 adult experiencers.

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!

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A Book of Columns
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.