

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

An in-depth look at the near-death phenomenon

July 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 police 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 research, [download her press kit here](#). On this page, Dr. Atwater answers questions submitted to her.



QUESTION: Ponder this. I work and care for people in a large Alzheimer unit. I have seen some die, and be full code for a good thirty minutes. Before death they were totally comatose, even for a year or more. Then after they were prepped to be sent to the funeral home, they sat up and spoke for the first time in years. Their first words were "I am alive! Why are you doing this?"

The first time it happened, I was in total shock wondering what in the world happened? They wanted a shower and asked for special meals, which I provided. They asked for family and I got on the phone and called, but most didn't come because they had already given up hope. They all had an air of peace about them.

One family did come because this man had passed six times in a month's time. Every time he came back he was more outspoken. He told his boys the mistakes they were making and told them to mend their ways. The last time was the last time. But the family was so unsure, they asked that we hold the body until it was for sure. We held him for 24 hours and they stayed until the final end.

Two days ago, we sent one to the funeral home and after two hours she came to. She is hospitalized, entertaining everyone. If their minds were more clear when they passed, could they tell us more? Everyone of them came back lecturing family with total grace. When I had my experience, I didn't want to come back but was allowed to stay for a while. Maybe they had unfinished business that was very important to them. Guess I did, too.

Any ideas? This still continues to baffle me. -- Love, Pat



PMH Atwater's answer: Determining that moment of final death is always a puzzle. Just because vital signs have ceased doesn't mean the soul cannot return. I have a section in my book [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Near-Death Experiences](#) that talks about this and what the medical community now uses to make that judgment call.

Basically, physicians use a three-tiered approach to establish death:

- An EEG, or electroencephalogram, to check for brain-wave activity.
- Auditory-evoked procedures to measure brainstem viability.
- Documentation from other tests to show the absence of blood flow to the brain.

There are all kinds of stories of people who were buried alive, even today, who woke up and came back. No matter how certain a physician is, the soul is capable of reanimating the body - if there is still a body to reanimate. That's why in olden times there was a tradition to wait three days after a person's death before you did anything to the body. It was a way of being certain that the individual really was gone and gone for good.



When we view life and death we skip the soul. I don't know why. I guess we moderns like to think what constitutes our life is name / social security number / personality / address / resume. If nothing else, the near-death phenomenon shows us and quite graphically that we are not our bodies. We are a soul. Our body is just something we wear for a while because living in the earth plane is infinitely more comfortable and more fun if we are encased in its trappings and subject to its rules. We can't do much here in this world if we don't have a body to do it in and with. Our soul, though, is far more powerful than our body / mind / personality arrangement.

The soul, anyone's soul, is unlimited in its resources and what it can accomplish. I would urge you to get my latest book, [We Live Forever: The Real Truth About Death](#). It is out now through [A.R.E. Press](#) (yes, that's the Edgar Cayce people). I talk a lot about the soul, soul cycles, soul knowing, interventions from the soul, in this particular

book. And I do this in a friendly sort of way, revealing some of my own stories and more about the reaches of my research. If you count the investigations I began of altered states of consciousness and psychic phenomena in the sixties, you could say that I have been nosing around this field of thought for almost half a century. Yup, I'm a very curious person.

When you consider death from the soul's point of view, you may think differently about those Alzheimer's patients. No matter how destroyed or affected the brain is, nothing can impede the soul if it wants to take action or make a statement. That urge, what most propels the soul, is - you guessed it - unfinished business. Human beings do not like to leave anything hanging. We like to concluded things, have endings, say our last goodbyes, spill the goods, have the last word. And where is this urge most powerfully felt? At the deathbed.



You said it yourself, these people come back with a special grace to live a little longer and say a little more. They want to finish things before they left for good. And, with those who are more like yo-yos than concerned way-showers, remember, Alzheimer's patients tend to forget things. That pattern is in them, the pattern of forgetfulness. Although the soul can and does intervene on occasion, it will only do what is appropriate at the time or in consideration of the circumstances at the time. This process isn't magic, you know. There's a lot of effort expended to do this - die and come back, die and come back. The process can be and often is hard on families, though. It can be an emotional drain. Counseling would really help them.

Also, it would be helpful if you or someone else like you just sat with the family for a while and enabled them to feel calmer about the affair, that it's okay to be frustrated or confused. Express that things like this sometimes do happen. The soul, for whatever reason, can take more time in its leaving. It can be driven by a need to say more, share more, reveal more, and even by a desire to enjoy the death environment. Remember the woman who was entertaining people in the hospital after she revived from the morgue? Dying is not necessarily a clean-cut, one-time affair. Really, dying is a process and like all processes, it can take time.

I would urge everyone who works for hospice, nurses, physicians, clergy, everyone who has a loved one who is dying or who has just died, to get my audio presentation [As You Die](#). It has been re-mastered and redone, and is now available in four different formats, all of them at low cost, through Focus Worldwide Network, 106 Metairie Lawn Drive, Metairie, LA 70001: (504) 840-9898; website [www.focusvideos.com](#). The four formats are audio cassette, CD, VHS video, or DVD. Focus, by the way, is a non-profit organization formed by the retired Archbishop of New Orleans, Philip Hannan. He's the Catholic Priest who presided over the funerals of President Kennedy and later for his wife Jacqueline. I went with these people because everyone at Focus is dedicated to bringing the mystical, that personal sense of union with God, back into the churches and into a new and more uplifting kind of spirituality. They are a rare group of people who truly seek to serve in oneness with the Creator. Those of you who have "baggage" with the Catholic Church, need not worry about Focus. They are a separate group, privately endowed.



Focus did a study worldwide about [As You Die](#), and found that there is no other audio presentation like it on the planet. It truly is unique, geared to help alleviate the fear of death and enable the dying to leave more peacefully and easily. It has been tested with hundreds of people for over fifteen years and it works. I do what it was designed to do. Actually, the tape came to be after a young New Yorker dying of AIDS called me on the phone and said: I've read all the books on death and dying. I've attended all the seminars. No one is telling me what I want to hear. I want to know what you know." What I shared with him enabled him to pass quickly and calmly. In meditation, I was guided to make the tape so others could benefit as the young man had.

Many blessings,
P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D.
[www.cinemind.com/atwater](#) & [www.pmhatwater.com](#)

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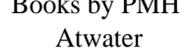
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"We cannot keep the life we have on the earth realm, not our possessions or attachments or relationships. What we can keep is our memories and our feelings of what we have integrated into our heart of hearts from the experience of being here, plus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

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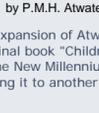
[We Live Forever: The Real Truth About Death](#)

by P.M.H. Atwater
Based on Atwater's 25 years of research, personal stories, and her own NDE in 1977



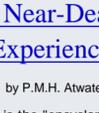
[The New Children and Near-Death Experiences](#)

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](#)

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

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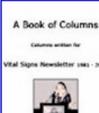
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[As You Die](#)

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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.