

"Near death experience and transformation of afterlife belief"

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[Hello everyone.

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The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speakers:

Aman Prajapati: AP

Pecos Kidd: PK]

[2025/05/15 08:05] Sonitus Randt: Hello and welcome to Virtual Ability's 2025 Mental Health Symposium. I'm Sonitus Randt.

I've been part of Second Life for seventeen years and been a member of Virtual Ability for ten of those years. Currently, I am hosting an event in Second Life during which I play old time radio shows and music.

Outside of Second Life, I've had a career as a graphic designer. I'm also a musician.

Today I'd like to introduce Mr. Aman Kumar Prajapati.

Mr. Prajapati is an assistant professor of psychology at Invertis University Bareilly in northern India. He will talk about near-death experiences and how they influence individuals' beliefs about the afterlife.

Audience, please hold your questions and comments until the end, and do not type or talk in voice, so as not to interrupt our presenter.

Welcome, Mr. Prajapati. The floor is yours.

[2025/05/15 08:09] Elektra Panthar: AP: good morning, I am Aman Prajapati
NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE AND TRANSFORMATION OF AFTERLIFE BELIEF: A
PSYCHOLOGICAL SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

What is death?

Death is a complex concept encompassing biological, philosophical, and emotional dimensions.

Here are 10 key points to describe it:

1. **Biological Cessation:** Death marks the end of all biological functions that sustain a living organism, such as brain activity, heartbeat, and respiration.
2. **Irreversibility:** In most definitions, death is considered a permanent state from which recovery is impossible with current medical knowledge.
3. **Legal Definition:** Legally, death is often defined by criteria such as brain death (irreversible loss of brain function) or clinical death (cessation of heartbeat and breathing).
4. **Philosophical Mystery:** Many philosophical traditions explore death as a fundamental mystery, pondering the nature of consciousness and what (if anything) comes after.
5. **Spiritual and Religious Interpretations:** Different religions offer varied views on death, such as reincarnation, heaven and hell, or merging with the divine.
6. **Emotional Impact:** Death profoundly affects the living, often causing grief, mourning, and a re-evaluation of meaning and priorities.
7. **Cultural Practices:** Societies have developed rituals—funerals, memorials, and mourning customs—to process and honor death.
8. **Medical Ethics:** Issues like euthanasia, organ donation, and life support highlight the ethical challenges in defining and managing death.
9. **Existential Perspective:** Death prompts existential reflection on the meaning of life, impermanence, and legacy.
10. **Inevitable Reality:** Despite efforts to delay it, death is an unavoidable part of the life cycle for all living beings.

People fear death.

The fear of death, known as thanatophobia, is a complex emotional response influenced by various psychological, existential, and cultural factors. Here are eight key reasons why people fear death:

1. Fear of the Unknown

Death represents the ultimate unknown, and the uncertainty about what happens afterward—if anything—can evoke anxiety. This existential uncertainty is a significant contributor to death anxiety.

2. Loss of Control

Death is an event beyond personal control, leading to feelings of helplessness. This loss of control can be particularly distressing for individuals who value autonomy and self-determination.

3. Fear of Non-Existence

The concept of ceasing to exist is profoundly unsettling for many. The idea of no longer being conscious or aware challenges fundamental beliefs about identity and continuity.

4. Physical Pain and Suffering

Concerns about the potential pain and suffering associated with the dying process can amplify fear. The prospect of enduring illness or a prolonged decline is distressing for many individuals.

5. Existential and Spiritual Concerns

Questions about the meaning of life, the purpose of existence, and the possibility of an afterlife can provoke existential anxiety. Individuals lacking clear spiritual beliefs may experience heightened uncertainty and fear.

6. Impact on Loved Ones

The fear of leaving behind grieving family and friends can be a significant source of anxiety. Many individuals worry about the emotional and practical burdens their death may impose on loved ones.

7. Cultural and Societal Influences

Cultural attitudes towards death, including taboos and stigmas, can shape individual fears. In societies where death is seldom discussed openly, the lack of dialogue can increase fear and anxiety.

8. Psychological Vulnerabilities

Individuals with certain personality traits, such as high neuroticism, or those with existing mental health conditions like anxiety or depression, may be more susceptible to death anxiety. These psychological factors can amplify fears related to mortality.

What is a near-death experience?

A near-death experience (NDE) is a profound psychological event that can occur when a person is close to death or in a situation of intense physical or emotional danger. Individuals who have had NDEs often report vivid and transformative experiences that challenge conventional understanding of consciousness and existence.

Key Features of Near-Death Experiences

1. Out-of-Body Experience (OBE)

Individuals often report a sensation of floating outside their physical body, observing their surroundings from an elevated position.

2. Tunnel and Light Phenomenon

Many describe moving through a dark tunnel toward a bright, warm light, sometimes interpreted as a spiritual realm or afterlife.

3. Life Review

Experiencers frequently recount a rapid, panoramic review of their life events, often with emotional clarity and understanding.

4. Encounters with Spiritual Beings

Reports include meeting deceased relatives, spiritual guides, or religious figures who convey messages of love or purpose.

5. Emotional Transformation

Post-experience, individuals often report lasting changes in their attitudes, values, and a decreased fear of death.

About our research

In India, a notable case of a near-death experience (NDE) was documented by Dr. Satwant Pasricha, a leading researcher in the field. One such case involved a man who was mistakenly declared dead after a severe illness. During this time, he reported being taken to a place by spiritual beings, where he was told it was not his time to die and that there had been a case of mistaken identity. He was then sent back to his body and regained consciousness.

This type of NDE, common in Indian cases, often includes encounters with Yamdoots (messengers of Yama, the god of death) and is deeply influenced by cultural and religious beliefs surrounding karma and rebirth.

Such cases highlight how cultural context shapes the content and interpretation of near-death experiences.

Near-death experiences change perceptions of life after death, spirituality, and fear of death.

How near-death experiences (NDEs) can change perceptions of life after death, spirituality, and fear of death:

1. Strengthened Belief in an Afterlife: Many individuals report a newfound or deepened belief in life after death after an NDE, often based on vivid experiences of otherworldly realms or encounters with deceased loved ones.

2. **Reduced Fear of Death:** Those who have undergone NDEs frequently express a significant reduction in their fear of dying, viewing death more as a transition than an end.
3. **Increased Spiritual Awareness:** NDEs often lead to heightened spirituality, even among those who were previously non-religious, as individuals report profound feelings of peace, unity, and connection with a higher power.
4. **Transformation in Life Priorities:** People commonly reassess what matters most—valuing relationships, love, and compassion over material success or superficial goals.
5. **Sense of Purpose:** Many return with a renewed sense of purpose or mission, believing they were sent back for a reason, such as helping others or completing a task.

Near-death experiences provoke questions about the meaning of life.

Absolutely—near-death experiences (NDEs) often provoke deep and lasting questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Here are some ways this happens:

1. **Confrontation with Mortality:** Experiencing the brink of death forces individuals to confront the fragility of life, prompting reflection on how they've lived and what truly matters.
2. **Life Review Phenomenon:** Many NDE accounts include a "life review," where individuals relive key moments—often through the perspective of others—sparking deep introspection about their actions and values.
3. **Existential Awakening:** Surviving an NDE often triggers existential questions like: Why am I here? What is my purpose? What happens after death?
4. **Detachment from Materialism:** People often emerge from NDEs less concerned with material success or social status, seeking instead meaning through love, connection, and personal growth.
5. **Greater Focus on Altruism:** A shift toward helping others and making a positive impact in the world frequently follows, as individuals seek purpose in service and compassion.
6. **Re-evaluation of Goals:** Many survivors question whether their previous life goals were meaningful or superficial, leading to major life changes such as career shifts or relationship re-evaluations.
7. **Search for Truth:** NDEs often ignite a desire to explore spiritual, religious, or philosophical systems in an attempt to understand the experience and its implications.
8. **Appreciation of the Present:** There's often a newfound reverence for everyday life, with a focus on mindfulness, presence, and gratitude for simple moments.
9. **Unity and Interconnectedness:** Some report a sense of oneness with all life, leading to questions about the collective purpose of humanity and the universe.
10. **Inquiry into Consciousness:** The experience of consciousness seemingly existing beyond the body can spark questions about what consciousness is, and whether it survives death.

Near-death experiences may change values in belief systems.

Near-death experiences (NDEs) often lead to profound changes in personal values and belief systems. Here are several key ways this transformation can manifest:

1. **Shift from Religious Dogma to Personal Spirituality:** Individuals may move away from strict adherence to organized religion and instead embrace a more personal, experiential spirituality based on what they felt during the NDE.
2. **Redefined Concept of God or Higher Power:** Many report encountering a loving, nonjudgmental presence, leading them to redefine their view of God as more compassionate and inclusive than previously believed.
3. **Increased Emphasis on Love and Compassion:** After an NDE, people often place greater value on kindness, empathy, and unconditional love, sometimes citing these as the most important aspects of life.

4. Diminished Materialism: Material wealth, possessions, and social status tend to lose importance, replaced by a desire for meaningful relationships and inner fulfillment.
5. Universalism and Inclusivity: NDE survivors may adopt a more inclusive worldview, recognizing value in all religious paths and believing in a shared spiritual truth.
6. Greater Tolerance and Open-mindedness: Exposure to a transcendent experience often fosters openness to different perspectives, cultures, and belief systems.
7. Heightened Sense of Morality: Ethical behavior and integrity become more central, sometimes based on a direct experience of cause and effect during the NDE (e.g., through life reviews).
8. Belief in Life Purpose and Destiny: Many begin to see life as guided or purposeful, often with a sense that they returned from the experience to fulfill a specific mission.
9. Reassessment of Life's Priorities: The focus shifts from external achievements to inner growth, relationships, and living authentically.
10. More Nuanced View of Death: Instead of seeing death as a final end or something to fear, it may be viewed as a natural, even beautiful transition—altering existential beliefs entirely.

Can near-death experiences be explained physiologically or as a cognizance of a spiritual afterlife?

This is one of the most profound and debated questions in neuroscience, psychology, and spiritual philosophy. Near-death experiences (NDEs) can potentially be explained from both physiological and spiritual perspectives, and the interpretation often depends on one's worldview.

Here's a breakdown of both sides:

1. Physiological Explanations (Scientific Perspective)

Several biological and neurological factors may explain the features of NDEs:

- Lack of Oxygen (Hypoxia/Anoxia): Oxygen deprivation in the brain during trauma can cause hallucinations, tunnel vision, and sensations of floating—common NDE elements.
- Temporal Lobe Activity: The temporal lobe, especially the right side, is linked to mystical experiences. Stimulation of this region can induce sensations similar to NDEs, such as out-of-body experiences and visions of light.

2. Spiritual or Metaphysical Explanations

From a spiritual or existential perspective, NDEs are interpreted as genuine encounters with an afterlife or higher realm:

- Consciousness Beyond the Brain: Many NDE reports include accurate descriptions of events that occurred while the person was clinically dead or unconscious, leading some to argue that consciousness can exist independently of the brain.
- Consistent Themes Across Cultures: The recurring motifs in NDEs—light, peace, deceased relatives, life reviews—are cited as evidence that people are accessing a real, spiritual dimension.
- Transformative Aftereffects: The profound, lasting psychological and spiritual changes after NDEs (e.g., reduced fear of death, increased altruism) are often seen as evidence that something real and meaningful occurred beyond hallucination.
- Shared Death Experiences: There are also cases of "shared death experiences" where bystanders report similar visions as the person dying, which some interpret as further evidence of a shared spiritual reality.

Conclusion: Two Perspectives, One Mystery

While science can offer compelling physiological models, these do not fully explain all aspects of NDEs—particularly verified perceptions during unconsciousness and the consistency across cultures.

On the other hand, spiritual interpretations give meaning and coherence to the subjective richness and transformative power of these experiences, though they lack empirical verification.

In short, NDEs remain at the intersection of biology and mystery, inviting ongoing exploration from both scientific and spiritual viewpoints.

Key Points from the Conclusion:

Near-death experiences (NDEs) are profound and life-altering events that commonly occur during close encounters with death or extreme physical trauma.

NDEs typically include similar elements, such as:

- Out-of-body experiences
- Traveling through a tunnel
- Encounters with a bright light or spiritual beings
- A sense of peace and detachment from the physical body

These experiences often lead to lasting psychological and spiritual effects, including:

- Increased appreciation for life
- Reduced fear of death
- Strengthened belief in an afterlife or spiritual realm

Scientific studies have explored various explanations, including:

- Physiological responses (e.g., brain activity, lack of oxygen)
- Psychological theories (e.g., dissociation, expectation)
- Transcendental/spiritual interpretations

Despite the lack of a universally accepted explanation, NDEs remain an important area of research for understanding consciousness, death, and human spirituality.

Thank you

[2025/05/15 08:49] Elektra Panthar: PK: Thank you so much

Any questions?

[2025/05/15 08:49] Cattie Rosca: Yes

[2025/05/15 08:49] Elektra Panthar: Cattie Rosca [asks question in voice]

I work with people at end of life

I wanted to thank you so much for the scope you presented and the balance of biological and spiritual aspect

I'll use what I learned here today for sure