

Lesson 4—Level 4 Evidence: Near-Death Experiences

Outline Summary

But is this true? We need to know if God exists and if the life after death that people feel called to is real.

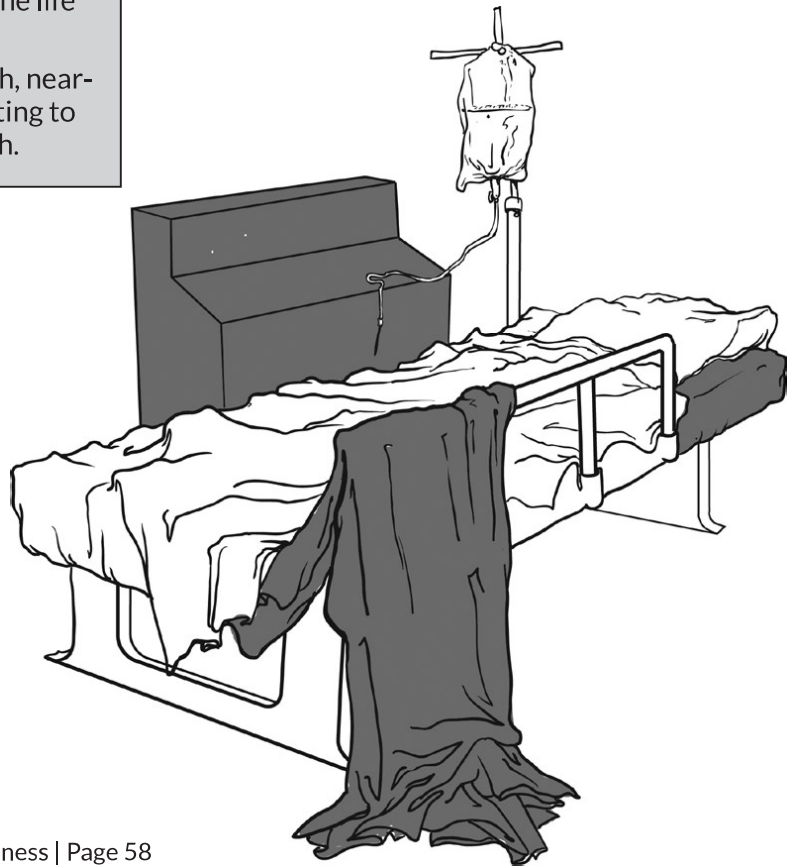
When we are looking at evidence for life after death, near-death experiences can provide medical evidence pointing to the survival of human consciousness after bodily death.

I. What Is a Near-Death Experience?

In thousands of clinically monitored cases of clinical death, the patients have reported a similar phenomenon, what we now call a near-death experience. Several basic elements recur across these reports.

Awareness Outside Their Body

For the typical patients, the experience begins with the consciousness leaving the body—often described as going through a tunnel and coming out—and hovering over the body, so they can “see” their body as well as the activity going on around it in the hospital. They are fully aware—not only able to sense things by seeing and hearing, but able to recall past memories and to remember the events they have witnessed while unconscious (and to recount them afterward, as we will see below).



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Experiencing the Transcendent

This awareness transcends the normal sense experiences of daily life in several ways:

1. Free from Physical Laws

The person's consciousness in these reports is not subject to physical laws during the experience:

- They can pass through walls.
- They can move up in the air unrestrained by gravity.
- They can move with inordinate speed.

2. Moving to Another World


Many report moving from this world altogether, into another world that is transcendent, beautiful, and peaceful.

3. Encountering Others

Those who move into this other world frequently see deceased relatives and friends. These loved ones are transformed from how they were in life:

- They are youthful (even if they died old).
- They seem to have a spiritual quality.
- They manifest extraordinary wisdom, peace, and love.
- They are recognizably themselves, however, and will greet and converse with the person.

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 **NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE**
Phenomena reported by people who have seen and experienced things while they were clinically dead (and thus incapable of sensing anything with their physical senses or brain).

Overwhelming Love

Perhaps the most well-known pattern in these reports is the white light that people encounter, a light that is incredibly bright but does not cause pain. The light is filled with overwhelming love and seems to know everything about the person. Some people, particularly children, see Jesus.

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III. Evidence for a Nonphysical Cause

If these causes are excluded, this would indicate that the human person has a transphysical dimension to it, something akin to a soul. In other words, it would indicate our consciousness is distinct from our organic brains, since it is able to sense and think in the absence of physical brain activity.

Several sources of evidence do in fact seem to exclude physical explanations of near-death experiences.

Monitoring the Brain: Dr. Janice Holden



Episode Timecode
4:25

The most immediate issue with physical explanations of near-death experiences, all of which attribute them to malfunctioning brain behavior, is that there is *no* activity in the brain during the experience. We know this because the documented cases being studied occur in hospitals, and the brain is typically being monitored. The flat EEG indicating the absence of any brain activity (malfunctioning or otherwise) is one of the key factors in diagnosing clinical death in the first place.

Any cognitive functions reported by the patient, therefore, had to be performed outside of his physical body.



TRANSPHYSICAL SOUL

A soul that exists independently of the physical body.



Dr. Janice Holden
(Living)

Researcher of Near-Death Experiences

A widely published researcher in the field, she is president of the International Association for Near-Death Studies. Dr. Holden received her doctorate in education from Northern Illinois University and is Professor and Chairperson of Counseling and Higher Education at the University of North Texas.



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Blind People in Near-Death Experiences: Dr. Kenneth Ring



A controlled scientific study of the near-death experiences of blind people revealed that the blind experienced sight during their experience just as others did. Many of these people were blind from birth, and thus had no prior experience of sight, which they reported as being initially disorienting (though often deeply moving as well) during the near-death experience.

Here, then, is a form of sensory awareness that is not only inexplicable during clinical death, but goes beyond the physical abilities of the patient's brain during normal life.



VERIDICAL DATA

Data that can be verified after the fact by the observations of a third party. Such data, as a rule, is concerned with facts about the documentable physical world.



Dr. Kenneth Ring
(Living)

Medical doctor and psychiatrist

He authored the study on near-death experiences of blind people, primarily the blind from birth. He received his doctorate from UCLA and became a professor of psychology at the University of Connecticut, where he has catalogued near-death experiences through controlled scientific studies.



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Veridical Data—A Study of Studies

Episode Timecode
17:28

Veridical data refers to data that can be verified after the fact by the observations of a third party. While many elements of a near-death experience take place in an unreachable world and cannot be verified directly by observation, the things that people witness in this world and remember afterward can be verified. Dr. Holden took thirty-seven clinically controlled studies and made a study of the veridical data in all 37 of them (which spanned hundreds of cases).



Some near-death experience details can't be observed or verified by someone else



Veridical Data: Details that can be verified by someone else

She found that the veridical data was reported more accurately by the clinically dead than by the other people in the hospital room. In some cases, the details being reported and independently verified involved distant or inaccessible areas of the hospital, or conversations overheard while the brain was being actively monitored and failing to register activity.

Again, we see conscious activity that exceeds not only the limitations of the clinically dead but the physical abilities of the healthy.

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IV. Conclusion



The Evidence of Near-Death Experiences

The veridical data, the vision of blind people, and the many highly monitored and controlled studies of near-death experiences make it difficult to deny the existence of a transphysical soul: a soul that survives bodily death and can see, hear, remember, think, feel—and even transcend the laws of physics.

Another important suggestion from these studies is the existence of a transphysical world: a world where the deceased live transformed. This world is overseen by a loving white light that reveals the loving nature of the afterlife.

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The Personal Implications of a Soul

The existence of the soul is not simply an academic or scientific question.

How does it change your life if you know you are going to endure beyond death? How do you treat other people if every one of them is destined for a transcendent existence? How do the difficulties and even the despair you may sometimes face in life change, if there is something more that comes after this life altogether? The existence of a transcendent world, a loving destiny beyond this life, is of great personal importance. We have seen the evidence of near-death experiences—in the next lesson we will examine a different source of evidence.

