Chapter 9: After-Death Communication and the Intuitive Problem Solving Technique

"Shatter, my God, through the daring of your revelation the childishly timid outlook that can conceive of nothing greater or more vital in the world than the pitiable perfection of our human organism." - Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

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The script in Marcia’s book began with an imagery trip to a preferred place like in Anodyne Imagery, then shifted to a guided journey. She said to look for a house somewhere in the place, walk toward it and open the front door. The instructions then led up a stairway to the second floor where there was a big library with lots of books, a metaphor for accessing higher consciousness. The next suggestion was rather obvious which was to pick a book off the shelf that attracted me and open it.

Inside the book was written the phrase, “Build something,” which reminded me of the famous Field of Dreams movie quote, “If you build it, he will come.” That phrase felt okay, but didn’t trigger any profound insights. I closed the book and went on to the next step. I was opening and closing my eyes intermittently to read the instructions in a step wise fashion which required some expertise in going in and out of an altered state of consciousness that we had practiced extensively in Anodyne Imagery.

The next instruction was a bit of a surprise: discover an unexpected box in the library with a lid on it. She then said to open the lid, reach in and pull out whatever was inside, taking the first thing I found. I pulled out a gun which was quite a shock. It didn’t seem to have any connection to my question, unless I needed to rob a bank to get the funding. I inspected the gun more closely, and it turned into a magic cartoon gun like the one Bob Hoskins had in the movie Who Framed Roger Rabbit.

The “Toon” gun had talking Texan bullets in the movie, and I immediately realized I needed “magic bullets” to get the funding. I closed the box, walked back down the steps and out of the House of Intuition. I was intrigued by the results of the imagery journey, but was really clueless as to what it all meant. She suggested free associating around the received images using a mind mapping technique described in the book, but I didn’t get any further insights.

I went to work the next day and unexpectedly ran into pulmonologist Peter Kussin who I hadn’t seen for months since Donna Hamilton had done the bronchoscopy with him using Anodyne Imagery during the previous training. He was now chief of the medical staff, and I mentioned that I was still
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looking for funding for the next training. He got a curious look in his eyes and spontaneously launched into a story about a conversation he had the day before with the Medical Center CEO, Mark Rogers.

He said Mark had been complimenting him on the good work he had been doing leading the medical staff. Peter said Mark indicated that he was one of his favorite faculty members, so he would grant him one wish for whatever he wanted for the medical staff, like a silver bullet. Peter then turned to me and said, “I’m going to fire that silver bullet right now and get the funding for the next Anodyne Imagery training.” I was stunned to hear the synchronous words from my House of Intuition journey.

We got the funding shortly afterwards, and I scheduled the training. A few weeks later, I had a vivid dream in which I was a police detective chasing a bad guy through a house and firing my gun at him until I ran out of bullets! I woke up worried that we had lost the funding for the training. However, I went to work the next day to discover that a radiology manuscript I had been working on had been returned from the editor requesting more bullet points. We still got the funding for the training.

**Intuition Network**

As noted above, sometimes the subconscious demonstrates a sense of humor during the imagery process. Intrigued by my initial experience with Marcia’s book, I was pleased to discover that she was a member of the Intuition Network founded by parapsychologist Jeff Mishlove, PhD. They were having an international conference in Denver that year, so I decided to go to meet some of the intuition trainers who were working in the business world.

While in the hotel room right before the start of the conference, I thought I would to take another trip to the House of Intuition using a simplified version of the technique that I had been experimenting with since reading the book. It occurred to me that all I really needed was a question and an empty container to open. I decided to use a different container each time to maintain an element of surprise in order to keep my left brain from interfering.

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I found an eyedropper in my shaving kit, so I figured I could squeeze an answer out of it. I quickly asked the first question that popped into my head, “What is going to happen with my career?” A mushroom popped out the other end, and my first association was back to a classic radiology joke. “How is a radiologist like a mushroom?” The punchline was “They keep you in the dark and feed you a lot of shit.” It wasn’t a positive outlook, so I went down to the meeting pondering the experience.

Synchronistically, the first person I ran into was none other than Marcia Emery herself who was quite friendly and pleased that I had read her book. I told her about my recent abbreviated House of Intuition exercise and said I didn’t know what it meant, but would appreciate her opinion. She said “Of course, it means your career is about to mushroom!” I babbled thanks for the obvious interpretation that I had been too myopic to see, and she laughed and said “No charge for that one.”

One of my brightest Duke undergraduate students had come with me, Stefan Kasian, who had spent the summer before as an intern for J. P. Morgan on Wall Street. He came to Duke as a freshman with the intention of getting an MD/PhD in consciousness studies. We met many interesting intuitives at the conference including Gigi Van Deckter, former intuitive consultant to the president of Sony. She had been instrumental in some of the decision making related to Sony’s technological breakthroughs.

Stefan and Gigi kept in touch following the meeting and after graduation Stefan wound up going into real estate rather than to graduate school. She became his intuitive consultant doing readings remotely from New York City where she was working in real estate also. With Gigi’s assistance Stefan became quite successful in Scottsdale, AZ, and eventually went back and got his PhD in Psychology from Saybrook University mentored by psychology researcher Stanley Krippner.

Stefan’s 2006 dissertation was *Dream Homes: When Dreams Seem to Predict Real Estate Sales.* In the ten real estate dream reports he analyzed, half of them showed evidence of ESP or precognition. “Because the dream images often resembled the property sold, such synchronistic experiences provided
the dreamer with a sense of emotional confirmation to proceed with a particular real estate transaction.”

Similar results have been achieved using the intuitive imagery exercise at the end of the chapter.

Prior to the Denver meeting, I had ambitiously posted announcements about the Intuition Network at the Duke University Fuqua School of Business, in hopes of making contact with open-minded faculty or students who might be interested in intuition for business. When I got back, I was pleased to discover that Preston Bottger, a Fuqua professor, shared my interests. He invited me to be a guest speaker in one of his classes.

Never having even taken a basic economics course, I arrived at the class with some trepidation about teaching MBA students. Those fears were quickly taken to a higher level when I discovered that the class was composed of a dozen RTP Human Resource executives. Fortunately, I had just read a paper by Michael Ray, Professor of Creativity and Innovation at the Stanford School of Business, so I framed my presentation in terms of enhancing creativity in business.

My first question to them was to ask for a definition of intuition and how that might be helpful in the business environment. The first response was “gut feelings,” and the second response was rather abruptly offered by an executive for a German company who said, “We have designed our personnel intake evaluation to eliminate that factor as we have found it to be unreliable.” I was a bit taken aback, but managed to respond that perhaps it was unreliable because they had never had any training in it.

We went on to do the House of Intuition exercise and had an interesting discussion of their images and the possibilities for creative problem solving. Preston and I became good friends, and I invited him to be a guest speaker for my undergraduate stress management class. His favorite imagery exercise was to have the students imagine themselves twenty years in the future, then forty years, and finally sixty years. It was fun to see them coming up with all sorts of creative future visions.

One student came up with an impressive future vision of himself as a dynamic political leader. Later in the semester, he invited me to come to a lecture he had organized on campus. I didn’t expect
much, but decided to go because it was at the Business School. I was startled to walk into a packed auditorium listening to Bill McDonough, the most famous green architect on the planet, discussing his vision of the future. This student went on to found the influential Duke University Greening Initiative.

**After-Death Communication**

My most memorable experience with the House of Intuition exercise came when I was out jogging around the Duke Golf Course on the Al Buehler Trail, named after my former track coach and mentor. I remembered that I used to jog around the trail when my Dad was dying and send intentional messages asking him to come and let me know if he died when I wasn’t there. Out of the blue, it occurred to me that I could use my new imagery technique to get an after-death message from him.

I had just seen the movie *Forrest Gump* and remembered Tom Hanks’ line: “Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you are going to get.” I closed my eyes halfway while jogging and imagined a feather coming down out of the sky like the start of the movie. It landed on the bench at the bus stop with Forrest Gump holding a box of chocolates. He offered me one, said the famous line and added, “but I bet there is a message from your Dad in one of these.”

I surveyed the box and picked a square one that turned out to be cream-filled. It transformed into a cream-colored angel on the trail while I kept jogging along. I asked it if there was a message from my Dad, and the angel handed me a red rose. It seemed like a nice archetypal image, but I had no idea what it meant. I thanked the angel for the message, and it went back into the box. I closed the lid, gave it back to Forrest Gump, and sent the feather back up into the sky like the end of the movie.

Later that evening, I went to the grand opening of the new Barnes and Noble bookstore near my house, and they had a live Celtic band playing when I walked in. The first book I saw in front of me had a feather on the cover which got my attention right away. Then I noticed the title was *The Eagle and the
Rose which sent shivers down my spine. The quote on the cover was by none other than James Redfield, the author of *The Celestine Prophecy*, the last book I gave my Dad before he died.

“A fascinating spiritual adventure, Rosemary Altea’s journey of self-discovery reminds us that our existence is more mysterious than any of us have dared to believe.”

The author was the most well-known psychic in England whose bereaved clients would consult her for reassurance that their loved ones were okay on the other side. Through her Native American spirit guide, Grey Eagle, she would retrieve personal information from the deceased relative that no one else could possibly know.

I was amazed at the startling synchronous connection between the book and the imagery I had just experienced on the trail. The message from my Dad that I had requested had been sent in a much more elegant way than I could ever have imagined. I read the book immediately and became fascinated with the concept of after-death communication (ADC). The addition of the Redfield quote made it my second double synchronicity event, especially since his book was all about those kinds of experiences.

Preceding the Celestine Prophecy’s arrival at the top of the best-seller list in 1994, there had been a string of best-sellers with Light in the title about NDEs. These books included *Closer to the Light* by pediatrician Melvin Morse in 1990, *Embraced by the Light* by Betty Eadie in 1992, and *Saved by the Light* by Dannion Brinkley in 1994. This emergence of NDEs into the mainstream began around the time of my first double synchronicity with Ken Ring at the A. R. E in 1990.

The typical features of an NDE which do not all have to be present in each case include leaving the body during a time of loss of consciousness resulting from trauma or illness, entering a tunnel and moving toward an intense light source in the distance that exudes a feeling of unconditional love. The experience may continue with visitations by deceased relatives and conversations with spiritual beings. NDEs often conclude with a panoramic life review followed by a choice to return or stay.

The most powerful book by the above authors was Morse’s second one in 1992, *Transformed by the Light*, which detailed psychospiritual changes in the lives of experiencers after NDEs.

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Duke radiology trainees was having lunch with me one day when I started to describe the four significant transformations that occur after NDEs. I mentioned the first three: lack of fear of death, a sense of being sent back for a reason, and enhanced psychic abilities.

After hearing those three, he began to look pale and recalled that he had been in a serious accident as a teenager which included significant loss of consciousness. He did not remember any of the specific details typically reported with NDEs, but did say that afterwards he had no fear of death. His attitude toward school was transformed, and he became an excellent student. He also noticed that he always knew who was on the other end of the phone before he picked it up.

I then asked him where his watch was, and he explained that he can’t wear one because they are always breaking or stopping. That was the icing on the cake, since the fourth transformation after NDEs is an alteration in the body’s electromagnetic field creating strange effects on electrical devices such as watches, computers, and televisions sets. He had never actually spoken about these changes related to his accident with anyone in the past twenty years, a not uncommon occurrence after NDEs.

NDEs have been likened to shamanic initiations by Ken Ring and other researchers, and I wrote a column about it in the Duke Chronicle published during Easter week in 1997, “Near-death experiences parallel Biblical resurrection.” I pointed out the irony in the fact that our recent advances in technological cardiopulmonary resuscitation have resulted in the mass production of thousands of such transformative initiations in the past few decades.

The other relevant consideration is the similarity between the words “resuscitated” and “resurrected,” since after NDEs many of the experiencers report learning that unconditional love is all that really matters in life. Such “Christ-like” attitudes raise the possibility that we are creating a technologically-induced “Second Coming” of Christ Consciousness. It is also interesting to note that some of these changes such as a decrease in fear of death even occur in people who have not had NDEs, just from reading the books.
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The movie *Resurrection* with Ellen Burstyn tells the story of a woman becoming a spiritual healer after a near fatal car accident. Many gifted healers have similar tales to tell in real life, and a scene from the movie includes her being tested by parapsychological researchers, patterned after actual occurrences at the Rhine Research Center. Since many such healers visit the Center, there is a monthly Paranormal Experiences Group known simply as the PEG which is a forum for sharing anomalous experiences.

**Pennies from Heaven**

Double synchronicities tend to occur frequently in this kind of environment, and my third one occurred after an intriguing Rhine presentation in 2003 on ADC which I refer to as the Pennies from Heaven talk. Fred Zimmerman from Fayetteville, NC, told a personal story about his young adult son Eric dying in a car accident. A few years after his death, Fred and his wife Marilyn began finding pennies in unusual locations that were minted in the year his son died.

He began to perceive these coins as pennies from heaven because they were connected to poignant memories of his son, and the appearances were miraculously unusual. He described walking into the house on a muddy path and then turning around to find a clean penny in his footprint. The most impressive story was about playing golf and hitting a great shot over a pond on his son’s favorite hole. When he got to the ball, there was a penny sitting next to it with his son’s year of death on it.

I was intrigued with his stories, but had no similar experiences with finding coins. In my stress management class the next day, I talked about the pennies from heaven and mentioned some of my other ADCs related to my Dad’s death in 1994. One of the students was in the Divinity School and came up afterwards to say that his dad had also died prematurely. I noticed a dime on the floor in the classroom and asked him when his dad had died. He said 1994, and of course, the date on the dime was 1994.

After many years of interest in this area, I finally joined the International Association of Near-Death Studies (IANDS) and went to their 2005 national conference at the invitation of IANDS president...
Diane Corcoran, RN, PhD, a military NDE expert who had retired to Durham. Synchronistically, one of the featured speakers was Bill Guggenheim, author of *Hello from Heaven*. He noted that pennies from heaven are a common form of ADC.

Bill and Judy Guggenheim did a survey of 3,300 people starting in 1988 and estimated that approximately 20% of the United States population has had “a spiritual experience that occurs when a person is contacted directly and spontaneously by a family member or friend who has died.” These phenomena include apparitions, vivid dreams, hearing voices, anomalous telephone calls, smelling a familiar fragrance, and unexplained alterations in mechanical devices or lights.

I remember waking up one morning with a vivid dream of a woman coming to say good-bye to me. She looked like my Aunt Betty, but years younger than my first memories of her. She said, “Little Betsy is going home now” and waved to me. I called my mother and found out that her sister, who had been chronically ill for years, had just died. I was puzzled by the name difference, but she explained that Betsy was a nickname that her husband had called her.

Other ADC researchers have presented at the Rhine Research Center including a former hospice chaplain with an otherworldly name, Dianne Arcangel. DiAnne shared her research from the five-year international Afterlife Encounters Survey at the 2006 After Death: What Do We Know Conference. It was the first such conference including both scientists and psychic mediums held on the Duke Campus since Dr. Rhine retired in 1964.

Arcangel described the synchronistic appearances of feathers and rainbows which brought up memories of my father for me. My Forrest Gump feather experience was the initial instance, but there was also a rainbow event that occurred several years after my Dad’s death at a family reunion. We were gathered at his favorite restaurant on Mt. Washington overlooking the Golden Triangle in Pittsburgh when a beautiful double rainbow appeared right over the city directly in front of us without rain.
The experience was particularly significant because my Dad’s favorite photographs were panoramic scenes of that view which he painstakingly pieced together from sequential pictures that he had taken on two separate occasions: in 1955 when I was born and in 1970 after the Pittsburgh “Renaissance” at the Point of the Three Rivers. I have a similar picture from 1985 taken by another photographer hanging over the computer in my office, but the rainbows only occurred on that one day.

In a recent October 2010 presentation, retired psychology professor Louis LaGrand explained that he came up with the term extraordinary experiences (EEs) to appease his skeptical psychology colleagues in academics who were uncomfortable with the term ADC. His research interest has been focused on the therapeutic benefits of EEs in easing the mourning process and creating new relationships for the bereaved with the memories of the deceased.

LaGrand added several more categories of EEs including meaningful animal, butterfly and bird visitations. These events tend to happen synchronistically at the time of funerals, so are often experienced by dozens of witnesses. He told a moving story about a mourning dove flying in the door at a memorial service and sitting next to the urn containing the ashes. The normally skittish bird allowed itself to be picked up and gazed into the eyes of the bereaved person for a long time before flying back out the door.

Some of the NDE and ADC authors including Melvin Morse and Dannion Brinkley have also written about nearing death awareness (NDA), a term popularized by hospice nurse Maggie Callanan. I met her at a talk she gave on the subject at a local IANDS meeting, as their national headquarters is now in the same building as the Rhine Research Center. The central feature of these experiences of the dying is visitations by deceased relatives and conversations with unseen people.

Callanan also mentioned a sense in the dying of needing to prepare for travel to a different place sometimes expressed as “It’s time to get in line!” There are often descriptions of being able to see a beautiful scene which commonly has parallels with a favorite environment in the person’s life including
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wonderful music and colors. The dying sometimes even know exactly when they are going to die better than the doctors and nurses.

I have not witnessed evidence of NDA in person yet, but my experience in deathbed vigils has been very limited. We all have much to learn from the spiritual alphabet soup of NDE, ADC, EE and NDA. There is actually a psychotherapy technique for facilitating ADCs developed in 1995 by Veterans Affairs clinical psychologist Allan Botkin who now sponsors international trainings for mental health professionals teaching Induced After-Death Communication Therapy.¹³

Botkin was an experienced practitioner of an effective evidence-based therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) known as eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR). He accidentally created an ADC for one of his Vietnam vets using a modification of EMDR which led to complete healing of his longstanding grief through a visitation by a deceased combat buddy. Botkin initially thought it was just a hallucination, but it happened again with another patient soon afterwards.

Eventually, being a good scientist, he taught the technique to another psychologist and had the induction done on himself, producing a convincing ADC of his own. Since then, Botkin and the others he has certified have been successful in creating the experience reliably in most of their patients. EMDR is only performed by licensed mental professionals, and about sixty of them have been trained around the world in this advanced approach which has brought dramatic relief from grief for many people.

Psychiatrist Raymond Moody, who coined the term NDE in 1975, has commented on the intersection of Botkin’s work with his own research using mirror gazing to create visitations from deceased relatives. His technique is patterned after the rituals of Greek psychomanteums or oracles of the dead which were performed underground in states of sensory deprivation utilizing a mirrored reflecting pool, also known as scrying.¹⁴

Moody constructed a special room with a large mirror on one wall and curtains on the rest of the walls to exclude reflections. The subjects relax and gaze into the mirror without distractions which is
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conducive to image formation in a slightly altered state of consciousness. He refers to this space as The Theater of the Mind, and claims that 50% of the subjects experience vivid visionary encounters with departed loved ones, but not always with whom they expect to see when they start the process.

In 2003, I got to share an airport bus ride with Raymond to Council Grove, Missouri, for the annual consciousness think-tank conference that is hosted there by biofeedback pioneer Elmer Green, PhD. It turns out that Dr. Moody is also a standup comic with a PhD in philosophy and a special academic interest in nonsense. His interest in nonsense stems from the limitations in language that experiencers report in attempting to describe their numinous NDEs.

There is a joke about Raymond where he dies and goes to enter heaven at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter asks him what he learned about himself during his life on earth. He replied that he didn’t know because he had spent all his time trying to figure out what was going on up here. In that example, the joke was on him, but in one of his most recent books he gets The Last Laugh: A New Philosophy of Near-Death Experiences, Apparitions, and the Paranormal. 

I suspect that Raymond would agree that God must have a sense of humor or the universe wouldn’t be as nonsensical as it seems to be. Back in 1995, early in my career at Duke, after many of the magical intuitive experiences recounted thus far, I started signing off all my emails, “Let magic happen” followed by a Pierre Teilhard de Chardin quote. That even included emails to the Duke Medical School Chancellor Ralph Snyderman. I had no idea then, that it would eventually be the title of this book.

**The Intuitive Problem Solving Technique**

This imagery technique is a simplified version of the House of Intuition exercise from Marcia Emery. After using her detailed guided script several times I realized that all that is needed is a question and an empty container to open. It is helpful to use a different container each time to maintain an element
of surprise and keep the left brain from interfering. Containers can be seasonally themed such as wrapped packages at Christmas and plastic hollow eggs at Easter.

To add in more imagery from Dr. Emery’s original exercise, you can include an unexpected book under the box, although I have not actually used that addition until now. The most bizarre and troubling images are the most fruitful, since those usually originate from the right-brain which is relatively inaccessible through usual left-brain problem solving processes. It is important to remember that meanings which are not obvious immediately may become clear in a delayed fashion.

A young woman teacher in one of my classes asked a question about finding a new house. She pulled “dirty rags” from the box and found the Lord of the Flies book. She had no idea what either meant, but went house hunting a few days later. The first place she looked at was a fixer-upper with flies all over it when she arrived. Despite its outward appearance, it was otherwise perfect for her. She then realized she would need the dirty rags to clean it up, and the flies were never seen again after buying it.

One of my students asked a question about a relationship problem that was troubling her. She pulled a white flag from the box which was puzzling to her at first. She eventually interpreted it as a white flag of surrender and decided to let go of the issue. When she got home there was a message on her phone answering machine resolving the problem without any additional effort on her part. The right brain often displays a sense of humor and exquisite timing.

The steps are as follows:

1) Select a question that may have several possible answers and has not yielded to the usual left-brain decision making processes.

2) Set the intention to receive valuable and useful information from your right brain using this brief imagery process.

3) Close your eyes and imagine a container with a lid on it, then open the lid and pull out whatever is inside with your hand.
4) Examine what you find in your hand and observe very carefully its characteristics while asking questions to yourself about the meaning of it during the process.

5) Store that image away for future reference, close the box and reach under it with your hand to find a book that is underneath.

6) Check the title to see if it is unfamiliar or an old favorite, open it to any page, and read the writing or look at the pictures.

7) Ponder the content, then close the book and thank your right brain for its contribution to your problem solving process.

8) Spend some creative time with the images by free associating with other words or ideas and drawing pictures, then linking those back to the original question.

9) Set the intention that you will understand the meaning of the images when the time is right and be open to any possibility.

**Web Resources**

Marcia Emery, PhD, [www.drmarciaemery.com](http://www.drmarciaemery.com)

Intuition Network, [www.intuition.org](http://www.intuition.org)

Stefan Kasian, PhD, [www.drstefanjkasian.weebly.com](http://www.drstefanjkasian.weebly.com)

Gigi Van Deckter, [www.gigivandeckter.com](http://www.gigivandeckter.com)

Saybrook University, [www.saybrook.edu](http://www.saybrook.edu)

Rosemary Altea, [www.rosemaryalteacom](http://www.rosemaryalteacom)

Melvin Morse, MD, [www.melvinmorse.com](http://www.melvinmorse.com)

Dannion Brinkley, [www.dannion.com](http://www.dannion.com)
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International Association of Near-Death Studies, www.iands.org

Bill Guggenheim, www.after-death.com

Dianne Arcangel, www.afterlife-encounters.com

Louis LaGrand, PhD, www.extraordinarygriefexperiences.com

Maggie Callanan, RN, www.maggiecallanan.com

Allan Botkin, PsyD, www.induced-adc.com

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Institute, www.emdr.com

Raymond Moody, MD, PhD, www.lifeafterlife.com

2 Stefan J. Kasian, Dream Homes: When Dreams Seem to Predict Real Estate Sales (PhD Dissertation, Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center, 2006). http://gradworks.umi.com/32/05/3205395.html
6 Dannion Brinkley and Paul Perry, Saved by the Light (New York: Villard Books, 1994).
9 Bill Guggenheim and Judy Guggenheim, Hello from Heaven!: A New Field of Research, After-Death Communication, Confirms that Life and Love are Eternal (New York: Bantam Books, 1995).