



Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-Death Experiences of Children

Melvin Morse , Paul Perry , Raymond A. Moody Jr. (Foreword)

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The skeptics have had their say; now listen to the experts. In hundreds of interviews with children who had once been declared clinically dead, Dr. Morse found that children too young to have absorbed our adult views and ideas of death, share first-hand accounts of out-of-body travel, telepathic communication and encounters with dead friends and relatives. Finally illuminating what it is like to die, here is proof that there is that elusive "something" that survives "bodily death."

Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-Death Experiences of Children Details

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From Reader Review Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-Death Experiences of Children for online ebook

David J. Bookbinder says

I read this book 22 years ago, shortly after I had my own near-death experience and was trying to make sense of the phenomenon. This book, along with Raymond Moody's *Life After Life*, helped me see that although the experiences near-death experiencers have are shaped by their spiritual and cultural beliefs, there are some common denominators that recur even with young children.

Nicole says

Fair warning, I'm writing this review on a post Brewers/Dodgers game adrenaline rush! So close to the Series, I can hardly stand it!

I was disappointed in this one. It wasn't that different from Raymond Moody's *Life After Life* and I prefer Moody's book on NDE (near death experience) as Morse's *Closer to the Light* feels less organized. Maybe part of the problem, for me, is that I don't get a clear picture of his thesis statement. Sometimes, I wondered if the author even had a clear idea of his thesis in his studies.

Maybe I was driven by Katie's deep sincerity when she told of the miraculous journey she had taken. Maybe the driving factor was Raymond Moody's bold assertion that if someone were to conduct a scientific study it would confirm his findings that NDEs do exist.....

Most of all, I wanted to know what had happened to Katie? 16 Also, a one sentence paragraph? This should have been tacked on to the previous paragraph.

The lack of a strong, driving thesis statement led to a loss of focus throughout and a drifting, helter skelter attitude. At times, Morse seems to contradict himself and he's not always clear where he stands, on his own material. Overall, the book doesn't do justice to the very personal NDEs shared by these children.

In the Appendix Morse explains how certain drugs, claimed to cause NDEs, do not, actually, create the true NDE. However, Morse attempting to explain how hypoxia cannot cause a NDE was confusing and I take issue with this entire topic. First of all, when he questions, regarding hypoxia, *In itself, it can certainly cause death, but does lack of oxygen necessarily cause death?* 191 To which, I'm assuming he means does lack of oxygen necessarily cause the NDE. A near death experience, first of all, is **near** death, but not completely dead, and, why yes, depriving the body of oxygen will cause death or a near death state. He then sites "*the Medune mixture*" 192, which contains a high amount of carbon dioxide and was used in a study in the 1940's and 1950's by Dr. L.J. Medune. I do believe he has this named wrong, I believe it's the Meduna mixture, named after Dr. L.J. Meduna, Morse repeatedly uses Medune, instead. Basically, this mixture was used to treat mentally ill people, according to Morse, affordably, by recreating a NDE and curing their neurosis. It did seem to work, but patients were brought to the brink of death. I don't get why Morse is arguing against hypoxia, obviously it's recreating the NDE by practically killing patients.

Although Morse makes some great statements, as a scientific study, I feel it's lacking in scholarship.

Cyndi Tefft says

Lots of great NDEs in this one. Definitely worth the read!

Paula says

I thought this was a very informative read about children who have had near death experiences. Morse does his research and looks through the records to see if drugs they were given could have caused the reactions or could it have been something else. He was very thorough.

Iona Stewart says

This book was recommended to me by an on-line friend, for which I am grateful.

The author is a physician who has done research on children's NDEs and thus listened to their accounts.

This is a simply written, very readable book containing many case histories of children who have been close to death/have died, and experienced Heaven and met God or Jesus.

The author informs us of the scepticism of his fellow physicians and how they were unwilling to listen to these children's accounts. One such stated "children don't have near-death experiences".

Dr. Morse was good at listening to the children he interviewed and they thus opened up to him and willingly recounted their experiences.

Chris, aged 10, told his mother he had "climbed a staircase to Heaven". He wanted to keep on but knew that if he went too far, he wouldn't be able to come back, and that would hurt his parents, who had already lost a child.

Dean, 16, told his family he had had an experience which no human words could describe. He found himself travelling through a wide tunnel accompanied by a being about seven feet tall wearing a long white gown; his hair was golden and he radiated peace and love. It wasn't Christ but was possibly an angel, he thought.

Kurt was 7 years old and had severe muscular dystrophy. He found himself out of his body in a beautiful place with flowers and rainbows and where there were angels. Everything was white "like it had its own light". He spoke to Jesus, who wanted him to stay with him, but he decided to come back and see his parents again. However, he died a few weeks after his conversation with Dr. Morse. The latter would have liked to tell Kurt's family about the experience, but medical school hadn't taught him to talk about such things.

An 8-year old girl called June who nearly drowned started going up a tunnel and found herself in Heaven, She knew it was Heaven because everything was bright and everyone was cheerful, "A nice man" asked if she wanted to stay there, which she did, but she said she wanted to be with her family so she was permitted to come back. She totally recalled all the events of the resuscitation.

Mark, aged 7, told Dr. Morse about an NDE he experienced at the age of 9 months. He crawled up a tunnel

towards a bright light. At the end of the tunnel there was a “bright place” and he “ran through fields with God”, He observed that one can “double jump” in Heaven, whatever that is.

Five other absorbing case histories were related in the chapter.

It was the author’s opinion that since people die in hospital, the dying process should be examined there. But he was not allowed to continue with his research. When he requested a grant to study Asian immigrants at the point of death, this was refused on the grounds that such a study would be intrusive on patients’ rights and would cause unnecessary suffering; in fact the opposite was the case, since patients really appreciate a doctor showing interest in their experiences. The author concluded that doctors just don’t like to research death; death is taboo in hospitals. “As patients get closer to death their doctors spend less time at their bedsides.”

I much appreciate Dr. Morse, also because of one experience he recounts. He and other staff were laughing boisterously following their attempts to save a baby, who died, when the parents suddenly appeared. (The reason for their laughter was that “they were filled with the excitement and adrenaline that such an experience can generate”.) He recounts that the shame hit him hard. It is so nice to hear doctors admit that they are human and have compassion though they often demonstrate the opposite.

There is a wonderful chapter informing us about pre-death visions. “The dying patient often sees God, angels, dead relatives or visions of heaven superimposed upon reality or actually present at the deathbed.” These experiences resemble NDEs.

We are apprised of the case of Cory who at 7 was dying of leukaemia. Chemotherapy had been unsuccessful. He began to have many visions in which he was advised to stop chemotherapy, which wouldn’t make any difference. He was told when he would die, a date what ultimately was correct to within a few days. After listening to her son’s account, Cory’s mother refused further medical treatment for him.

Here, the author disappoints me when he declares: “I personally would not deny my child medical treatment because of a spiritual vision.” Who knows more, doctors, including the author, or Spirit?? However, Dr. Morse contradicts himself on the next page by stating that Cory was right in following his visions, firstly because he far outlived his own predictions for a treated patient who’d had four relapses, and secondly, because he died the same week that God told him he would when they met.

7-year-old Seth was dying of leukaemia and towards the end had severe untreatable pneumonia. Three days before he died, he sat up and announced that Jesus was in the room. At 3 a.m. he sat up again and shouted that there were beautiful colours in the sky. At 4 a.m. Seth’s grandmother who hadn’t been out of the house in ten years saw a vision of him asking her to come to the hospital. She called a taxi and struggled out to be at Seth’s bedside.

At dawn he asked his parents to let him go. “Don’t be afraid”, he said. “I’ve seen God, angels and shepherds. I see the white horse.” He had seen where he was going and it was a wonderful place. He died two days later.

Seth’s visions consoled his family. They brought his family closer together. He had taken no painkillers or mind-altering medications. But his visions and their healing effects were never mentioned by nurses or doctors. A new resident said they could have been “cured” by giving him morphine. “The visions were seen as a problem to be medicated away, not as a solution.”

“When patients experience visions, doctors often repress them with medication and then flee to the comfort

of their other, less sick patients.”

We also hear about 13-year-old Greg dying of cystic fibrosis who was experiencing “horrible hallucinations”, which turned out to be “beautiful and wondrous pre-death visions”.

In his visions Greg saw bright lights, other people and another land. God was always present.

One physician taught the author how to tackle talking to parents of a baby that had died.

“He simply told them that their baby had died and that we had tried our best to save him. He then started to cry. --- We all sat --- and cried together. Finally, he dried his eyes and said that there were other patients to see. He kissed them both, and he left.”

This compassionate doctor showed me that it is possible to share the terror and grief of death with the patient (sic). He was thinking of them and their loss, and they felt it.”

The book contains other wonderful chapters, including one entitled “The Pure Light” and one entitled “Transformation” about the transformational effects of NDEs. Experiencing the Light gives people new purpose in life, and imparts messages such as “Love your neighbour and cherish life” and “Be nice, kind and loving”.

To sum up, this is an excellent book, one of the best I’ve read about NDEs. It comprises many heart-warming case histories, and I highly recommend it. It shows us that death is absolutely nothing to be afraid of.

Todd says

Carl Jung said, “We should not pretend to understand the world only by the intellect; we comprehend it just as much by feeling. Therefore the judgment of the intellect is, at best, only half of the truth.” Nothing could be truer when speaking of Near Death Experiences and is perhaps the reason Melvin Morse quotes it towards the very end of his book, “Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near Death Experiences of Children.”

From the first word Dr. Melvin Morse’s compassion and self effacing humor is evident. Here is a former “rodent brain” researcher, as he refers to himself, who has found something deep and meaningful in NDEs and sees the dramatic possibilities they possess for transforming modern medical science. Dr. Morse dispenses a prescription to cure our society from the fear of dying and to return us to a more compassionate and enriching way to incorporate the dying experience as part of our living experience.

He makes this point quite eloquently by quoting the French philosopher, Pere de Dainville, who is reported to have looked around at all the tubes and devices attached to his body while he lay dying in intensive care unit saying, “They are cheating me out of my own death.”

Among the most impressive achievements of Closer to the Light is the way that Dr. Morse presents his data and case studies with the integrity of the professional scientific researcher yet, all the while, unafraid to courageously speculate and theorize on the spiritual and psychological realities of the dying process.

Dr. Morse reminds us that once not too long ago humanity viewed death as a natural and integral part of life. Presentiments of death and pre-death visions were part of the process and expected. Today, physicians medicate their dying patients seeing such events as the delirium brought on by the pain of dying. He makes an excellent case for the return to the deathbed scenes of yore when friends and family once gathered around the dying person. This is a great time of healing. Instead in modern times it has been clearly documented that as a person becomes closer to death his nurses and physicians spend less and less time with them; they get fewer visits and phone calls from family and friends. When they do get visits they are of much shorter duration. Thus the understanding and accepting of these events can help us bring back dignity to dying.

The hardened empiricist or reductionist thinker may be inclined to reject the NDE wholesale, as is often the case, as simply the death throes of a dying mind deprived of oxygen or a delusion created by the mind to help the dying person cope with their impending end, but a careful reading of Morse's book will demonstrate, with good, reason, why the NDE should not be dismissed offhand.

For one thing Dr. Morse, as Dr. Raymond Moody (Life After Life et. al.) and other notable researchers, understands the evidence they are gathering and correlating is anecdotal. NDE's are not subject to the rigors of the scientific method, yet the careful collection of patient experiences should give everyone but, perhaps, the most dogmatic of thinkers pause.

Dr. Morse goes through the list of objections offered by NDE debunkers such as hallucinations, drugs, anesthesia, and others and explains clearly why these are not NDE's and why they do not mimic the NDE.

For me the most interesting revelation was that of the Sylvan Fissure, a structure located in the right frontal lobe above the right ear, which has been determined as the physical location where the events of the NDE occur. Patients undergoing neurosurgery have reported out of body experiences, tunnel experiences, "seeing" god, seeing dead relatives, hearing beautiful music etc when the Sylvan Fissure is stimulated with electricity. This gives us a brief introduction into the so-called seat of the soul hypothesis.

Whether or not NDEs are truly spiritual experiences that prove life after physical death is hard to say. Science may not be able to answer that question satisfactorily for some time to come, if ever at all. But, one thing is clear. The NDE is a profound psychological process that does occur and studying it will give us a greater understanding of the dying process. This understanding will lead to more compassion when dealing with dying loved ones and eventually to understanding and accepting our own eventual entrance into that dark tunnel at life's conclusion.

Alexander Hanson says

I read this book because a friend of mine told me it would change my life. Being a believer in the resurrection from the dead and life everlasting world without end, Amen; I was wondering what could be so great about it. From my perspective there is nothing interesting about this book besides the testimonies themselves, everything else is a lot of scientific jargon that pretends to be thorough and authoritative, but really does not shed any light on the subject of death. Maybe something liberal societies should start investing in is real religion so that they can actually look at death with a modicum of peace. If some secularist is looking for a pseudo-scientific answer to the problem of death that will at least momentarily calm their anxiety this book would probably fill that need.

Tim Malone says

This one is sad for me, mainly because I learned the author was recently charged with torture of his eleven-year-old daughter. This book was a bestseller at the time of publication. He was interviewed on Oprah, Larry King and other shows. It is specifically about Near-Death Experiences of children. At the time I read the book I thought it was well-researched and well-written. After all, Dr. Morse is a recognized authority in the field of near-death studies. His book was endorsed by Dr. Raymond Moody. I enjoyed the book and learned much from it. He published a later book on the same subject entitled *Transformed by the Light* (1993) which is about how NDEs transform people. It is similar to Cherie Sutherland's *Reborn in the Light* (1992). Seems like everyone was writing some sort of book about NDEs back then and making sure they had something about the light in the title. I don't know if you can get past his current problems and get some good out of this one that did well back in the 90's. Perhaps focusing on the beauty and innocence of children will help. I hope the charges prove to be false. The torture charge stems from his daughter's claim that he held her face under running water as a form of punishment and called it waterboarding. As his lawyer said, he has already been tried in the court of public opinion and the media. So sad.

Source (my blog): <http://latterdaycommentary.com/2013/0...>

Michael Nalbone says

I was about five the first time. I ran to the end of the dock to greet my incoming Grandfather in his boat, only I kept going and went into the water. I had no fear, no pain, or concern. A tunnel opened in front of me that was peaceful with a bright light. Then I see my Grandfather grab me by the center of my shirt. The NEXT thing was a dock full of adults hollering and screaming while someone is pumping the water of my lungs. I started to scream because all the adults were....

The second time was December 19, 1998. I was having trouble breathing, so I called my wife to come home to take me to the Doctor. She told me in the WIFE VOICE "Unlock the front door." When I went back to pick up the phone there was the disconnect buzzer. The next thing I remember is walking up a tunnel, no pain, breathing fine, until arriving at a doorway. My Grandpa Holcomb slams his hand into my chest. "NO! Go BACK, not your time!" I open my eyes to a swarm of blue uniforms. One of them asked me "Mr. Nalbone who are talking to? What do you want? I responded "To breath."

The third time was about 8:15 PM October 17, 2012. I was watching TV with the cat on my lap. I regretfully set her aside to use the bathroom. I stood up, and then.....my wife is yelling at me from far away as I walked a path, expecting to see the light. "You cannot leave me, we have too much to experience still." I turned around and woke up on the floor. Until it is experienced, a person doubting the event will never understand.

Sandra Baši? says

Jako zanimljiva knjiga o djeci (i odraslima) koja su doživjela iskustvo "tik do smrti", njihovom putovanju do svjetlosti i natrag

Denise says

This book is about near-death experiences (NDEs) of children. If you have read Raymond A Moody, M.D.'s Life After Life, you will know what this book is about. I don't feel that Morse really added much new information regarding Near-Death Experiences. He does tell you from what part of the brain he feels that NDEs are generated from. He gives an interesting example of how an ancient society in Egypt produced NDEs by sealing a person in a coffin and keeping them in there until they were almost dead from lack of oxygen. It was an okay book, and a fairly quick read--if the subject is of interest to you, you might enjoy it.

Jenny says

I would like people in the field of medicine, who look after the sick and dying, to read this book. It encourages an open mind, and points out that these experiences can be comforting and healing for the patient and their loved ones. I enjoyed reading "Closer to the Light", it was easy to understand, light{no pun intended}, and not too long. If I was the person having these experiences, I would like to be able to tell someone, without fear of them feeling threatened, or thinking I was just demented. At such a vulnerable point in my life I would like to have acceptance, without prejudice. It might be a wonderful experience, that would be nice to share.

Irene says

This book is a fascinating exploration of the near-death experiences of children from a non-religious standpoint. I loved the glimpses into heaven and the beautifully simple descriptions by children. I often remember these visions when thinking of my own children in heaven.

Laurent Videau says

Another excellent book on NDE (Near Death Experience). This time the book concentrates on Children's NDE.

Very entertaining to read. Another brick to the edifice of books demonstrating/proving the reality of NDEs and the existence of the spiritual world where we all belong and return all the time.

Peter Upton says

I originally borrowed this book from the library about 20 years ago and it has stayed in my mind all of that time until I recently bought it.

Inspired by an earlier study by A. Moody M.D. this was a properly organized, researched and funded medical study, into the near-death experiences of children. Children being chosen because they would be less

likely to have deeply ingrained spiritual beliefs on what would happen to them at the point of death which could colour their experience and also because they would have less practical knowledge of medical resuscitation techniques.

Most of the accounts are very similar in that at the point of suffering the cardiac arrest they find themselves outside of their body, watching and recording in a detached way, not only the medical tools and procedures used on them but accurate details about the doctors and nurses who carried out these procedures and even in one case recounting travelling in the car to the hospital with their family as it chased after the ambulance carrying their body. For me, one of the important points of these out of body experiences was the sense of calm detachment the children recorded feeling. Having lost my own child in a similar way it comforted me to know that none of these children reported feeling afraid.

At some point in this near-death process, the children found everything going suddenly dark and then found themselves in a 'tunnel of energy' rushing towards a point of light that they all wanted to reach because, "It was a giant infinite world of calm, and love and energy."

Some children found themselves pulled back into their bodies before reaching the Light. Others arrive there at a sort of borderline, sometimes described as a riverbank where the child is met by someone who is glowing white and whom the child believes is anyone from Grandpa to Jesus but is I suspect a spiritual entity in an energy form that the child interprets to be someone they can love and trust and who generally gives them the choice to remain or to return to their body.

For all of these children, whether they reached the end of the tunnel or not, the near-death experience was a life changing event leaving them no longer afraid of dying yet cherishing each day of life as well as believing that their life had a higher purpose even if it is only to grow up to be a loving parent to their future children because as one child pointed out,

'they now knew that everything is interconnected'.

Following up on these children years after their near-death experiences they found that they were all more mature and responsible than others of their age and hadn't got involved in drugs or gone on to have teenage pregnancies.

Some people claim that the anaesthetics used in the various hospital procedures cause the near-death experience but the study was able to disprove this.

They were also able to prove, through their questionnaires, that seriously ill people didn't have these experiences, only those whose heart had actually stopped.

The author did point out that in another study using electrodes attached to the brain a point was found approximately behind the right ear, 'in the right temporal lobe within the Sylvian fissure' that is the seat of the out of body and near-death experience and when triggered by an electrical charge these experiences can be made to occur. But as he points out Scientists have not been able to come up with any anthropological reason for humans to have this ability. Personally, I can't see, if the whole development of the human race is designed towards the survival of the fittest, where is the advantage to a person on the point of death, in leaving his body and going off down an energy tunnel to consult with spiritual entities. How can that help him to survive?

As the author says, 'We search and search for the source of spiritual experiences, mapping the brain to find where these phenomena occur. For the most part, we forget that it isn't so important how they happen as it is that they happen.'

For me, the real strength of this book is the sheer number of recorded accounts of children all telling of their near-death experience in their own words and yet virtually all of them telling of the same stages of the experience and all talking about the peace, love, and joy of the heaven they visited.

This is the norm of the book but there are other stories that the author came across during his study that were so exceptional that he felt he had to include them in this book such as miraculous healings and of a rescuer

finding a drowning child deep in murky sea water by the Light emanating from her body.

Finally two quotes, the first from the author;

'Events such as floating out of the physical body and giving accurate details of one's own cardiac arrest.....are virtually impossible to explain if we do not believe in a consciousness separate from our bodies that could be called a soul.'

The second from a girl who following her near-death experience spent years dabbling in different religions because 'the God she sensed in the Light was not the God perceived by the many religions with which she had been involved.'

"The rules of religion are put there by people. From my brief encounter, I got the idea that being one with God is something that can be done without rules."

I'll agree with that!
