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Introduction

*W*hen I was growing up, I was taught that when people die, if they are good they go to a place called heaven, and if they are bad they go to a place called hell, where everyone burns. Heaven was *up*, where Jesus and God live, and hell was *down*, where the devil lives.

Fortunately, in my work as a psychic, spiritual healer, and ghostbuster, my knowledge of heaven and my beliefs about life after death, and death itself, have expanded quite a bit. I'm ever so grateful to all the dying people I've worked with and all the deceased folks I've communicated with over the past forty-seven years.

One of the problems that come with having a more expanded view of death is that I sometimes forget that not everyone sees death as a blessing or as the next step in our existence. For example, a good friend of mine recently called to tell me that he has brain cancer and is going to do chemotherapy and radiation to try to get rid of this very aggressive tumor. Three years ago, this

man lost his bride after five short years of marriage. Since her passing, my friend has not been the same happy-go-lucky guy he always was. He has suffered a lot of depression and in many ways has been dead himself. After I hung up from our conversation I started thinking what a great opportunity this was for him to pass on and go be with his wife. I called him back and made the suggestion that maybe he should forget about doing the aggressive chemo and radiation — perhaps he should simply live out his time here as best he can and then go home to heaven and be with her.

My suggestion was met with silence.

On the other hand, in the months leading up to her recent death, my eighty-three-year-old mother, who also had psychic abilities, had no problem talking openly about her dying. She knew that it was coming soon and said she woke every morning “wondering what side of the veil” she was on.

As I said, the voices of the deceased have influenced my understanding. For example, a student of mine told me about being at home one evening and having a vision of her daughter. In the vision, the young woman told her mother she was “okay,” and all was dark behind her. My student was confused. The vision was frightening because she had just gotten off the phone with her daughter a half hour before. Her daughter had said she was about to run out to the store to get dinner. But there she was, appearing again to her mother and reassuring her that she was “okay.”

As it turns out, the daughter never made it home from the store that night. Her car was found the next morning, upside down in a ravine, the young woman dead.

When a death occurs, I’m usually able to communicate with the person’s soul within the first twenty-four hours to see how they’re doing. If the soul isn’t able to communicate yet, someone

from the other side, such as an angel, one of their guides, or a deceased loved one, will let me know how they are. I've learned so much about the dying process and death throughout my work, and I want to share it with you in this book.



Death is a tough subject for most of us to talk about and yet, to state the obvious, it's something every one of us will go through at some point. We need to talk about it. We need to stop making it this dark, scary thing and really take a look at what happens to our body and our soul when we die. It would be beneficial for all of us to learn how to have open discussions with our loved ones when they are in their dying process *and* when we are going through our own dying process. (My mother told me how glad she was that we could talk about her dying because it was something she *needed* to be able to share.)

When I first began writing this book two years ago, I was in the process of losing someone very dear to me, and I hated it. I didn't want his physical body to be so sick. I didn't want to see him waste away to nothing. This man had been a professional basketball player during his prime years. He had been a big man, full of vitality, and the process of his dying from cancer robbed him of all that. There was a growth on his vocal cords that turned his once deep, Barry White voice into a whisper. He had no appetite and walked with a cane so that he wouldn't fall down. The dying process slowly shuts down our physical body, and it's something none of us wants to go through — or watch our loved ones go through.

This book covers a wide range of information about death, beginning with a simple chapter about what the soul is and then

a chapter about the stages that the physical body goes through in the dying process. Most of the book explains death and dying from the soul's perspective, and I include lots of stories about people I know who have died and my own experiences communicating with the dead. The final chapter includes suggestions on how to move through grief or comfort someone who is grieving, whether this is due to the loss of a loved one or their own impending death.

Throughout the book I refer to the Elders. These are wise counselors on the other side who have already lived their lives and now spend their time advising our souls about the choices we are making. A wonderful group of loving and accomplished souls, they help us make the wisest decisions for our souls' growth and development.

Angels also help guide us. They too are wise beings, but they are different in that they have never lived here on the earth plane.

Each of us also has spirit guides, souls who have been assigned to us to keep us on our path and help us accomplish the things we set out to do in this lifetime. Unlike the Elders, spirit guides may or may not be finished with their own souls' development; they aren't necessarily all-wise like the Elders and angels. You may have the same guides throughout your life, or your guides may change during your life's major transitions.

I hope this book brings you a great deal of comfort. What I have learned and experienced has not just expanded my perspective but also cemented my belief that life and death are good, and that both make for the fascinating adventure that is our existence.

Everything in these pages is based on actual experiences I've had and is true to the best of my understanding.

CHAPTER ONE

The Soul

*W*ebster's *New World Dictionary* defines the word *soul* as "an entity without material reality, regarded as the spiritual part of a person." The concept of a soul was somewhat elusive to me in my younger years. When I was a child, I used to say a prayer that ended with "if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." That was the only reference I had about having a soul.

I was in my twenties when I saw my first soul, but I didn't realize what it was. A friend of my mom's, Carol, was hearing noises up in her attic, so Mom and I went to investigate. The world of psychic phenomena was new to us and we really didn't have a clue as to what we were doing, but we gave it our best shot.

There in the attic of Carol's house were four people, but they were transparent. I didn't really understand why they were there or how they could be there. The adult female explained to us that her husband had been an alcoholic when they were living and that he had fallen asleep with a lit cigarette. They and their two

kids all perished in a fire. She said he wouldn't let them go to the other side because he was afraid he would be sent to hell. Mom and I had no idea what to do or say to this woman other than that they needed to leave. In response, they went through the wall of the attic and disappeared, but by the time we made it back to our house, Carol was calling to say that the noises were back. We decided then that we needed to learn a lot more about how to handle these situations before we went to any more haunted houses, because we hadn't gotten rid of her ghosts at all and they continued to live in the house with Carol and her family.

When I was twenty-seven, I began my journey of communicating with souls, and it was because of a fourteen-year-old boy who had fallen eighteen feet, had landed on his head, and was comatose. I have told this story before but retell the basics here because it taught me so much — and illustrates so much.

The young man, Dale, was flown from Nebraska up to the University of Minnesota hospital, and his family called me to do healings on him. I had done several healings on his stepmom for heart problems, and that's how they knew to contact me. The doctor had said there was a 10 percent chance that Dale would ever come out of the coma, and the nurse told them that he would probably be a "vegetable" (yes, that's the word they used back then) if he did recover consciousness.

I went to the hospital every day on my lunch break to work on Dale. It was my second or third time doing healings on him when his soul first appeared to me. I was standing over his body, channeling healing to him, when from behind me, I heard a male voice say, "Would you please heal the speech part of my brain? I want to talk again." It was rather startling because there was no one else in the room, but when I heard the same words a second time, I slowly

turned around, and there was a young man leaning up against the wall. I was taken aback because I didn't know who he was. On the hospital bed in front of me, Dale's head was covered in bandages, so I didn't know what he looked like. I asked this being who he was, and he very nonchalantly said he was the soul that lived in this body. He reiterated that he really wanted to speak again and asked me if I would please heal the speech part of his brain.

From then on, every day when I went to the hospital I communicated with Dale's soul. He told me which parts of his body were in pain and which parts needed healing. He taught me that when the soul is out of the body, the body experiences very little pain, but when the soul comes back into the body, the pain is intensified. He showed me by going in and out of his body. When his soul was in, his body moved around and breathed more deeply than when he was out. When his soul was out, his body remained very still and his breathing was shallow. To understand this, imagine that the soul is made up of energy and has the same effect on the body as if you put in a fully charged battery; the body becomes stimulated with energy when the soul is in.

Six weeks after I began communicating with his soul, Dale left the University of Minnesota hospital — walking and talking.

Facts about the Soul

I have been working with people's souls for close to fifty years and have learned many facts about them.

- A person's soul looks just like their physical body except the soul looks younger and less stressed and is transparent. Souls appear in clothing.

- The soul is attached to the body by a silver cord, similar to the umbilical cord. The cord is severed at the time of death.
- The soul is our personality, and it lives on after death.
- Each of us has the same soul in every lifetime, and it continues to grow in awareness, wisdom, knowledge, and consciousness.
- The soul goes back and forth between genders; in half of our lifetimes we are male, and in the other half we are female.
- The soul takes many out-of-body journeys when the body is sleeping. This is called astral projection, and you'll be reading about it later in the book.
- When a person is in their dying process, the soul spends much of its time out of the body, preparing for its new life on the other side. During this time, the soul visits with deceased loved ones quite often and reacquaints itself with its new (old) home, heaven. When the person physically dies on this side, they are being born into the other side, *in a sense*. They aren't born as a baby, but they are beginning a new life. We often hear stories about people seeing a white light as they are approaching heaven. What do you suppose a newborn baby is seeing while coming out of the birth canal? The white light, of course.
- Animals have souls too. When my chocolate Lab Jessie died, I was very sad for days, but since his passing I've seen him several times running around the yard like he used to. Yes, our precious pets do have souls

and do go to heaven. They are being cared for on the other side, and you *will* see them again.

Before we dive into the subject of death and life after death, I want to talk about life for a bit. I've written a book called *Echoes of the Soul* that I highly recommend if you would like to take an in-depth look at life, death, and life after death from the soul's perspective. There's a lot of information in there that people have found very helpful, and if I had an extra hundred and sixty pages here, I'd share it all with you, but for the sake of space, I'm going to give you a brief recap.

Our souls are made of energy, and the purpose of our lives here on earth is to develop ourselves to our highest potential. We come from God, and we have to discover what that means. The Bible says that God is perfection and we are made in the image and likeness of God, and the *we* here refers to our soul. But it's one thing to be told we're perfection and another to understand what that means, so we come here to earth, to continually develop ourselves to our highest potential and become even more conscious of our oneness with God and our perfection. At the end of each lifetime, we leave the physical body we have been residing in and go back home to rest up until the next time we come here.

Believe it or not, you have probably died at least *two hundred times* by now, depending on how old a soul you are, so death is "old hat" to your soul. There are different ages of souls and different levels of consciousness. (In my book *Echoes of the Soul*, you can read about the various levels of souls and what each of them means.) To give you an idea of an old soul versus a new soul, Buddha (a very old soul) said it took him 665 lives before he became enlightened (I'm hoping he was a slow learner). The

reason you don't remember any of your soul's earlier lives or deaths is that your sanity would be jeopardized if you did. It would be too overwhelming to have recall of all you've been through in your past lives and then have to deal with your current life, so God in His/Her wisdom put a lock on the subconscious mind (the mind of your soul) so that you need to work at getting that information, usually through hypnosis.

Before you came into this lifetime, the Elders drew up a blueprint for your life (also known as your life plan), with or without your help — if you are an older soul, then you may have helped in the planning process, and if you are a younger soul, the Elders planned your life on their own. The Elders have lived all their lifetimes and completely understand what experiences each of us need to further our soul's growth. Remember, the object of each life is to grow and advance in wisdom.

The things you want and need to accomplish in this lifetime are collected in the "life book" of your soul; some gifted psychics can access this information for you. The life books of all people are stored in a place called the Akashic Records. I've seen the Akashic Records in many readings, and it's an amazing place that looks like an enormous, very elaborate library.

The family that you were raised in was chosen as the best place for you to experience what you came here to learn — yes, even if you were adopted, lived in an orphanage, or were born into an abusive family. And your life plan indicates when you will die, which the Elders refer to as "graduating." Your astrological chart includes "exit points," or times in your life when your soul could leave and go back home if it felt it had accomplished all it wanted to. Not everyone has multiple exit points; many have just one. I'm going to talk more about this in chapter 4, but the point

I'm making here is that the timing of your death was planned before you were born.

So with that being said, let's take a good, long look at the subject that everyone is afraid to talk about: the shutting down of the physical body.

CHAPTER TWO

Physical Death

There are many ways to die — suddenly, slowly, violently, painlessly, peacefully, terrifyingly, alone, and with family, to name a few. I think it's important to address what's going on physically in death before we look at it from the soul's perspective.

If you are a caregiver of someone in their dying process, or the person dying, you'll want to know what to look for as they, or you, move through this process. Having this information keeps you out of denial, which can be a powerful hindrance for both the dying person and the caregiver. Our body does not want to know that it is dying. It was created to survive all kinds of challenges on the earth plane, so when it comes to actually surrendering to the final step called death, most of us don't want any part of it. As Woody Allen said, "I'm not afraid of death. I just don't want to be there when it happens."

When waiting for a loved one to die, most of us feel absolutely helpless — which we are. This is the final episode of *their* life,

and we need to be respectful of this time for them. I can't begin to count the number of people who have emailed me asking why it's taking so long for their loved one to die. Many people try to rush this process along, thinking that sooner would be better for everyone, but there are reasons that the dying process is short for some people and long for others. Rushing the dying process is similar to inducing labor in pregnant women. Births and deaths happen when they are meant to happen, and from the soul's perspective, there is always a reason for the timing and the supposed delay.

When my father was dying, one of the hospice nurses gave me a pamphlet explaining the three stages of death that he may or may not go through. At first I didn't want to look at it because I didn't want to acknowledge that he was really dying — not *my* dad; he would always be here. But as he moved deeper into his dying process, I wanted to understand it so that I could still feel a connection with him.

I recently went online to find a list similar to the one the hospice nurse had given me, and I found a beautiful article called "The Journey Towards Death" by Angela Morrow, RN (see <http://dying.about.com/od/thedyingprocess/a/process.htm>). I would like to share part of it with you, because it explains the stages of death in such a loving, gentle way.

The Journey Begins: One to Three Months Prior to Death

As one begins to accept their mortality and realizes that death is approaching, they may begin to withdraw from their surroundings. They are beginning the process of separating from the world and those in it. They may decline visits from friends, neighbors,

and even family members. When they do accept visitors, they may be difficult to interact with and care for. They are beginning to contemplate their life and revisit old memories. They may be evaluating how they lived their life and sorting through any regrets. They may also undertake the five tasks of dying. [According to Dr. Ira Byock in his book *The Four Things That Matter Most*, these tasks are: 1. Ask for Forgiveness, 2. Offer Forgiveness, 3. Offer Heartfelt Thanks, 4. Offer Sentiments of Love, and 5. Say Good-bye.]

The dying person may experience reduced appetite and weight loss as the body begins to slow down. The body doesn't need the energy from food that it once did. The dying person may be sleeping more now and not engaging in activities they once enjoyed....The body does a wonderful thing during this time as altered body chemistry produces a mild sense of euphoria. They are neither hungry nor thirsty and are not suffering in any way by not eating. It is an expected part of the journey they have begun.

One to Two Weeks Prior to Death

MENTAL CHANGES

This is the time during the journey that one begins to sleep most of the time. Disorientation is common and altered senses of perception can be expected. One may experience delusions, such as fearing hidden enemies or feeling invincible.

The dying person may also experience hallucinations, sometimes seeing or speaking to people that aren't there. Oftentimes these are people that have already died. Some may see this as the veil being lifted between this life and the next. The person may pick at their sheets and clothing in a state of agitation. Movements and actions may seem aimless and make no sense to others. They are moving further away from life on this earth.

PHYSICAL CHANGES

The body is having a more difficult time maintaining itself. There are signs that the body may show during this time:

- The body temperature lowers by a degree or more.
- The blood pressure lowers.
- The pulse becomes irregular and may slow down or speed up.
- There is increased perspiration.
- Skin color changes as circulation becomes diminished. This is often more noticeable in the lips and nail beds as they become pale and bluish.
- Breathing changes occur, often becoming more rapid and labored. Congestion may also occur, causing a rattling sound and cough.
- Speaking decreases and eventually stops altogether.

Journey's End:

A Couple of Days to Hours Prior to Death

The person is moving closer towards death. There may be a surge of energy as they get nearer. They may want to get out of bed and talk to loved ones, or ask for food after days of no appetite. This surge of energy may be quite a bit less noticeable but is usually used as a dying person's final physical expression before moving on.

The surge of energy is usually short, and the previous signs become more pronounced as death approaches. Breathing becomes more irregular and often slower. "Cheyne-Stokes" breathing, rapid breaths followed by periods of no breathing at all, may occur. Congestion in the airway can increase, causing loud, rattled breathing.

Hands and feet may become blotchy and purplish (mottled). This mottling may slowly work its way up the arms and legs. Lips

and nail beds are bluish or purple. The person usually becomes unresponsive and may have their eyes open or semi-open but (is) not seeing their surroundings. It is widely believed that hearing is the last sense to go, so it is recommended that loved ones sit with and talk to the dying during this time.

Eventually, breathing ceases altogether and the heart stops. Death has occurred.

I would like to make a couple of comments about this list from my observations. The first has to do with the dying speaking to deceased family members. If you find this happening, they are *not* hallucinating. Either the family members are there in the room with them, or they are seeing the family members on the other side. The door from our side to the other side, commonly referred to as the veil, is wide open for the dying at this time, and they are much more focused on the other side than this one. Pay attention to the quiet little conversations they are having. It's fascinating when their consciousness is open to both sides of the veil. If you try talking to them, they may not hear you or might become disoriented when they realize that two different people are talking to them at the same time. For example, they may see their deceased sister talking to them while hearing their living sister talking to them, and this can cause agitation or fear. Be aware of this when you're at the bedside of those in this phase of dying.

Several times my dad mentioned one of his war buddies standing near the window in his hospital room, and he would speak to him very softly. What Dad said didn't mean anything to those of us there, but it was obvious from the expression on his face that the communication was comforting to him. We shouldn't interrupt or try to stop this kind of conversation. Also, I could see my

grandma hovering over Dad for several days prior to his passing, and she never said anything to us. She was totally focused on Dad, and when he left his body, she took him immediately to the other side.

The other comment I would like to make about Morrow's article has to do with her suggestion of holding the person's hand while they're dying. From the experiences I've had, I liken the last phase of death to the last stage of labor, called transition. This is just before the mother gives birth, and her attention has turned totally inward; she is completely focused on her body and what it's doing. She can easily become agitated with the people around her, yet she wants them there for support. Often the mother wants everyone to stop touching her because all her senses are on high alert. I've seen this with the dying as well.

When I've been in the room with someone who is dying and their loved one is holding their hand, many times I've heard the soul say, "Stop holding my hand — you're distracting me." The soul is working hard to detach itself from the physical body, and when we hold a hand, it keeps the soul focused on the body and makes it harder for the soul to leave. If you want to comfort your dying loved one (or yourself) by holding their hand, keep this in mind. At any sign of distress on their part, let go.

This is not to say that you shouldn't sit by the dying and reassure them that you're there. But observe the process and be sensitive to it. See if you can sense the other souls in the room or the angels who have come for them.

Unfortunately, some people become very uncomfortable if they are in the room of someone dying, and they deal with their discomfort by becoming chatty. The incessant chatter makes it hard to feel or sense what's going on spiritually. If you are in this situation, you may want to ask the chatty person to step outside so

you can you have quiet time with your loved one. They may feel relieved. If you are lucky enough not to have one of those people in the room, quiet yourself and stop thinking of the dying person as just a physical body. Remember that a beautiful transition is taking place and try to quiet your thoughts and sense it from a different perspective. Close your eyes and ask God to help you see this event spiritually, to help you feel an inner knowing of the transition.

Over the years many people have told me they could sense angels or deceased relatives in the room when their loved one was dying. The key is to quiet yourself as much as possible and be open to viewing the situation from the perspective of the person dying, not yours.

I had a beautiful experience when I was sitting with a family waiting for their loved one, John, to die. I saw John's deceased parents waiting in the corner, coaxing him out of his body. He could see them and was talking what seemed to be gibberish to them on and off throughout the day. When he took his last breath late that night, I was in the restroom, but I could psychically see his soul come out of his body and take his parents' hands. As John and his parents were moving up and out of the room, in came eight beautiful angels. An angel went and stood by each person in the room. I silently asked an angel why they all were there if John was on his way up, and she said that angels always come to comfort the loved ones. They stayed in the room with the family until after the doctor had pronounced John dead and the family finished making arrangements with a funeral home. When everything in the room was calm, the angels left.

One of the family members who is particularly sensitive asked me if there were angels in the room. She said she could feel a lightness after John left, as if the room had become filled with

white light. I was so glad to hear that someone else could feel it also.

One more thing about this transition period: The dying person knows more of what's going on than we do, so don't feel as if you need to explain things to them.

No One Ever Dies Alone

I asked a mortician friend of mine if there were any similarities among the stories he heard from various families, and he said he hears one comment often: people tell him they stayed by the dying person's bedside the whole time except for a quick trip to the bathroom or vending machine, and the person died while they were gone and they felt awful about it. If you happen to step out of the room for a minute and your loved one passes away while you're gone, please don't feel guilty about their "dying alone." *No one ever dies alone.* There are always spirits there to assist the soul on the journey home.

When our dad was in his last days of living, my siblings and I ran downstairs to grab a bite to eat. We had been in his room the whole day, and the nurse said we had time. When we came back into his room, everything was the same except I could feel that something was missing. I looked at all the machines to see if anything had been removed, but they were all still beeping away. Dad was still breathing, yet something was missing. I asked my sister if anything felt strange to her, and she echoed my thoughts and said that it felt like something was missing. Right when she said it, I knew it was my dad's soul. His soul had left while we were gone, yet his body remained breathing. I know for a fact it would have been easier for my dad to leave when we were all out

of the room, because he hated saying good-bye! His heart stopped beating the next day.

John, the gentleman I described earlier whose room was visited by eight angels, took a long while to die. During this time, his family called and asked if I would communicate to his soul and find out if he was waiting for something specific. We all assumed it was his son who was out of town, but when I asked John's soul, he said, "No, it isn't his son. He is waiting for the triangle." "A triangle?" I asked. "Triangle," he repeated, and that was all he said. I told his daughter and girlfriend, hoping they would know what it meant, but no one knew. His son made it to the hospital when he got back to town, but John didn't acknowledge his presence at all.

We kept a vigil by his bedside until about 7:00 that evening, when, as if on cue, five of us went out of the room to do something. One of the granddaughters went to get pop for everyone. A couple of people went outside to have a cigarette. One man wanted to check and see if the oil in his truck was leaking, and I ran to the bathroom. Everyone scrambled, except for his daughter, who stood on one side of his bed; his favorite granddaughter, who stood at the end of his bed; and his girlfriend, who stood on the other side of his bed. He opened his eyes, looked at each one of them, said good-bye, and died. A perfect triangle was formed around his bed, with his three favorite people. The rest of us returned to the room right afterward, as his soul was making his way into the white light.