

From Blindness To 360-Degree-Vision: What 4,000 Near-Death Cases Bring To Light



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MONDAY, OCT 21, 2024 - 11:45 PM

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Vicki Umipeg was prematurely born at 22 weeks, weighing 3 pounds. Her optic nerve was damaged due to high oxygen in the incubator, resulting in complete blindness. She had no visual experiences, no awareness of light whatsoever.

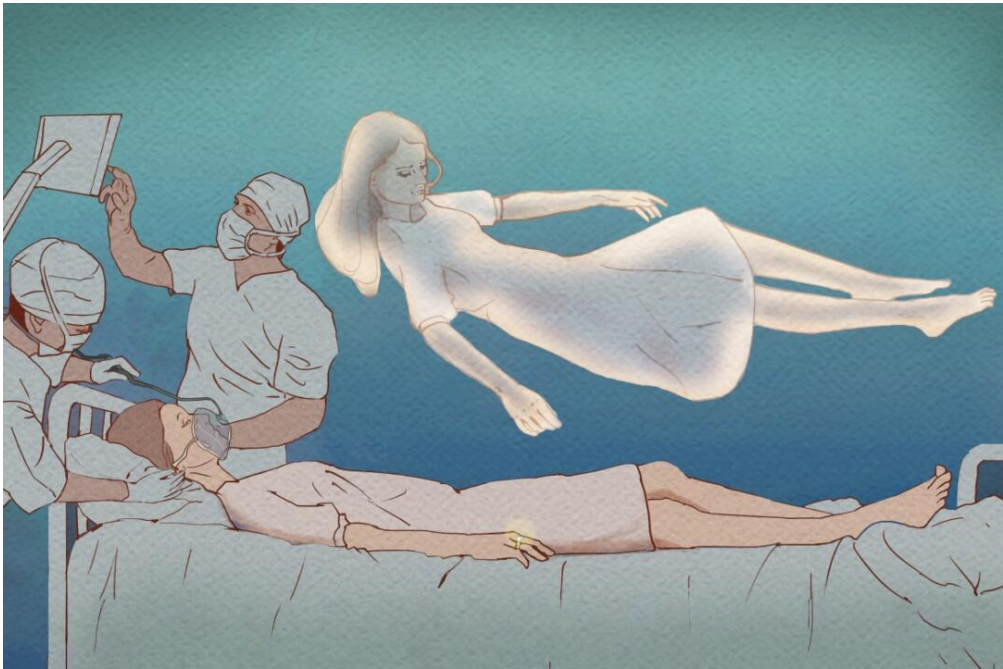


Illustration by Fei Meng

At the age of 22, she was thrown out of a car in Seattle, resulting in severe injuries—skull fractures, concussion, and injuries to her neck, back, and leg. **While being rescued in the hospital, she found herself floating to the ceiling.**

She had panoramic vision and saw a woman’s body lying on a metal operating table, with a male and a female medical staff working to save her. When she noticed the distinct wedding ring on the woman’s hand, she realized it was her ring, and the woman lying there was her.

As she had been blind all her life, she had never seen that ring or her body. Only in that near-death experience (NDE) did she see her ring.

Vicki was the research subject of Dr. Jeffrey Long, a practicing radiation oncologist in Kentucky. Long has dedicated more than 25 years to studying near-death experiences. He has researched and reviewed more than [4,000 cases](#) of unique NDEs and published them on his website, the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation.

Long summarized the most common experiences of NDE based on his research, which is similar to what Dr. Raymond Moody, known as the [father](#) of NDE, has found:

- Out-of-body experience
- Absence of pain
- Passage through a tunnel towards a bright light
- Encountering deceased loved ones in a heavenly realm
- Undergoing a profound life review
- Feeling overwhelming love and peace

Vicki’s case falls under the typical type of “out-of-body experience.” Her experience, especially the panoramic vision, is shared by all with NDEs.

360-Degree Vision

In a recent conversation with The Epoch Times, Long recalled his conversation with the blind woman.

“She had a 360-degree vision, where she could simultaneously be aware of and process vision during her near-death experience, in front of her, behind her, right, left, up, down.”

“In fact, I told Vicki that the rest of us in our earthly lives have these pie-shaped visual fields because of the location of our eyes, in our eye sockets. She literally laughed at me because her entire life experience with vision [during her NDE] was at 360 or spherical vision.”

Furthermore, initially unfamiliar with math and science, Vicki intuitively [grasped](#) calculus and understood how planets are formed after her NDE. She gained answers to questions about science, math, life, planets, and God, experiencing a flood of knowledge and understanding languages she didn't know before.

From Delusional to Real

People who reported near-death experiences were often dismissed by the scientific community as delusional or religiously influenced until a significant shift in perspective over the past few decades.

In 1978, five independent medical doctors and scientists—John Audette, who has a master of science degree; Dr. Bruce Greyson; Dr. Raymond Moody; Ken Ring, who has a doctorate in social psychology; and Dr. Michael Sabom—[co-established](#) the International Association for Near-Death Studies, paving the way for exploring these extraordinary experiences through scientific lenses.

“I first heard about near-death experience decades ago when I was in my residency training,” Long said, “and in one of the world's most prestigious medical journals, the Journal of the American Medical Association.”

“I was flipping through the journal looking for a cancer-related article, and totally by accident, found the phrase near death experience in the title of an article. I was puzzled because nothing I'd learned in medical school explained that. You're either alive or dead.”

The [article](#) was written by Sabom, a cardiologist who studied people who have survived cardiac arrest and coma. Some patients reported their consciousness came out of their bodies and observed what was happening while their bodies were unconscious, he wrote. What they described seeing was accurate down to the finest details.

Several years later, the wife of one of Long's college friends shared her detailed and remarkable near-death experience with him.

“During a surgery under general anesthesia, she went into cardiac arrest due to an allergic reaction, meaning her heart stopped,” Long said.

“At that point, she had an out-of-body experience, witnessing the chaos in the operating room and hearing the loud alarm from the EKG monitoring her heart. She briefly passed through a tunnel and found herself in a non-earthly realm where she encountered other beings. There, she was given a choice about returning to her life. She asked the beings for guidance, and after some conversation, she decided to return to her body. She was successfully resuscitated.”

Long wondered why more people weren't researching this fascinating phenomenon, so he began his journey to collect NDE cases. **He built a database of 4,000 cases. “By far the largest publicly accessible collection of near-death experiences in the world,” he told The Epoch Times.**

In a survey, he asked people directly about the reality of their experience, and nearly 95 percent of respondents said their experience was “definitely real.”

The 30 Failed Hypotheses

According to Long, people who are skeptical about NDEs have proposed more than 30 different explanations for these experiences.

“The reason that there are so many of these skeptical explanations—over 30 floating around—is very simple,” Long told The Epoch Times, **“Because none of the skeptical explanations explain anything during the near-death experience, let alone everything that occurs.”**

Hypotheses of hallucinations induced by hypoxia (decreased oxygen levels) and hypercarbia (increased carbon dioxide) were raised to explain why NDEs [don't fly](#). The reason is simple, “Medically, that results in confusion and diminished consciousness, not increased.” Long said.

[The Lancet](#) study studied hundreds of patients who were successfully resuscitated after cardiac arrest or clinically dead. Eighteen percent of those patients reported NDE. If cerebral hypoxia is the reason for causing

near-death experiences—and everyone clinically dead has hypoxia—then most patients should have experienced NDE, said the researcher. However, this was not the case.

Others have argued that endorphins—the brain’s naturally produced narcotic-like substance—might explain NDEs. However, endorphins continue to exert their post-event pain-relieving effect on the brain for over an hour, which is not aligned with NDE, Long said.

“With near-death experiences, the moment they return to their physical body—boom—there’s no relief of pain or anything; they’re instantly having pain.” Long said.

Others have talked about [seizures](#). Long said, “Seizures generally cause reduced or substantially altered consciousness, not the lucid, consistent experiences.”

Ernst Rodin, the former president of the American Clinical Neurophysiology Society, [commented](#), “In spite of having seen hundreds of patients with temporal lobe seizures during three decades of professional life, I have never come across that symptomatology [NDE] as part of a seizure.”

The Lancet study also concluded that patients’ medication treatments or fear of death were found to be not associated with NDEs.

‘Doubly Impossible’

Additionally, NDEs have even been documented under general anesthesia.

“Under general anesthesia, you should have no possible lucid, organized, conscious experience.” Long said.

Some people were under general anesthesia—and then their heart stopped—in this case, Long said, it should be “doubly impossible to have any conscious experience.” And yet, they’re still having the same typically hyper-lucid, hyper-alert, hyper-conscious experience that all other near-death experiences have, he added.

“That, almost single-handedly, refutes any possibility that NDEs are due to physical brain function.”

Beyond Cultures, Religion, and Age

Other hypotheses include the psychological model, which proposes that NDEs are caused by imaginations based on personal, religious, or cultural background. However, individuals often report NDEs that are inconsistent with their life experiences or beliefs regarding death.

Some people say NDEs are culturally determined. However, Long found that the experiences are “remarkably similar wherever in the world they occur.”

“No matter where on earth they happen, it doesn’t make any difference. Whether you’re, say, a Muslim in Egypt or a Hindu in India, a Christian in the United States, or even an atheist everywhere in the world, that near-death experiences occur, and whatever their prior belief system was or wasn’t, the content what happens during a near-death experience is strikingly similar.”

After the 1976 Tangshan earthquake in China, Chinese scientists observed a [similar pattern](#) of NDEs as the Western record.

Among the 81 survivors, 65 percent had heightened clarity of thought, **43 percent felt separation from their physical bodies, and 40 percent felt weightlessness.** The experience was similar regardless of age, gender, occupation, or health status before the earthquake.

Long studied a group of children 5 and younger, with an average age of 3.5—“practically a culturally blank slate,” he said. “The content of these very young children is strikingly similar to the content of near-death experiences of older children and adults.”

Meeting God

Moody, who started studying NDE more than half a century ago, has pointed out that many near-death experiencers describe encountering a radiant being of light known as “The Being of Light,” as Moody describes in his book, “Life After Life: The Investigation of a Phenomenon - Survival of Bodily Death.”

This light is often described as a brilliant and indescribable radiance that doesn’t harm the eyes. Most individuals perceive this light as an advanced being imbued with love and warmth, or God.

Vicki also reported that in her NDE, she saw a figure with extraordinary radiance; she recognized this being to be Jesus.

To further investigate the truthfulness of “God” in near-death experiences, Long conducted [research](#) about God between 2011 and 2014, based on 420 cases of NDEs from people of various professions and walks of life.

Before experiencing a near-death event, 39 percent of people believed in the “absolute existence of God.” After their NDE, this belief increased to 72.6 percent. The number of individuals who believed in the absolute existence of God increased by 86 percent, and their faith in God greatly intensified, he wrote in his book, “God and the Afterlife: The Groundbreaking New Evidence for God and Near-Death Experience.”

Long carefully examined 277 descriptions of encounters with God and found a significant consistency in their descriptions—an all-loving and all-gracious supreme being radiating love and grace.

Other common features of encounters with God described in near-death experiences include nonjudgment, acceptance of who they are and a sense of unity or oneness with God. Communication is essentially always nonphysical or telepathic.

Positive Message

Before delving into NDE research, Long was puzzled by questions such as “who we are,” he felt that we are much more than just how our physical brain operates.

Near-death experiences provide overwhelming evidence for the existence of a consciousness apart from the body—a more eternal existence, said Long.

We are not just constrained operating machines but lives with numerous possibilities beyond our current recognition.

This is “the most powerfully positive message” for all humanity, he added.