

MYSTERIES OF THE MIND AT TIMES OVERWHELMING

Many people contact the Rhine Research Center to learn more about the psychic realm, or Psi, since that aspect of human consciousness has been our subject of study for more than 75 years. The majority want to know if their own personal experiences fit within the definition and criteria we have established for Psi, to better understand what it means, and how to further develop such a gift if possible. But what is lesser known is that a small but significant number of people contact us out of bewilderment, anxiety, or even burnout from what they describe as having too many psychic-like experiences intruding in their life. A typical example comes from a woman who for confidentiality purposes I will call Charlene who writes,

“Honestly, I am tired of the dreams and precognition I have. I would love to shut it down and live a normal life. Unfortunately, at this time I cannot. I want to be like other people and have happy dreams that do not come true. Not the vision of the USS Cole blowing up at the exact time it happened---My husband was there when I woke from this nightmare.” And she goes on to tell the shock and horror they both experienced as those events came true soon after her nightmare. She writes to me plaintively to try to understand why these things happen to her and adds, “I want them to stop unless they can be actually put to use to help people.”

My heart goes out to Charlene, whose accounts certainly suggest she is gifted with psychic ability that she cannot control. I cite one of her detailed precognitive dreams in my recent co-authored book, *The Gift: ESP, the Extraordinary Experiences of Ordinary People* (St. Martins Press). In the book I state the wish that science will someday know enough about premonitions like hers that they can be utilized by the US Navy and other governmental agencies to help prevent disasters such as the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000..

A recent correspondent describes how she has spent years “worrying” in advance about tragic events before they happened and even ended up in the hospital with a panic attack the night before the Oklahoma City bombing. “At times I have been able to shut it off, but it can be rather distressing and when I was younger I really couldn’t handle it.--- But lately I have been thinking maybe there is some reason for my having this ability. I don’t know how or even if I should develop this.”

While the RRC is not a counseling center, we do attempt to share as much solid information about Psi as we can, mainly via our many daytime and evening programs, a website, a professional journal, publications and products, as well as access to our specialized library. Our goal is to help the public realize that Psi is a normal and natural aspect of human consciousness, even though we don’t yet have clear-cut answers about how to develop the ability or turn it off in any consistent or reliable way. What we do know is that it is helpful for those who are fearful to become more acquainted with the facts that are known about Psi ability, and we can direct them to reliable sources including our own website, that of the Parapsychology Association, and others. There is a list of Suggested books and articles listed on these websites that can be quite helpful.

My own book *The Gift* was written to answer many of this type of concern. One woman found that after reading a portion of this book to her elderly mother, they were finally able to have a meaningful and healing talk about the younger woman's psychic dream that had warned of her brother's death but had been squelched since its occurrence in early childhood.

Whenever possible, I advise those who are worried or puzzled about their Psi ability to link up with other people who have had similar experiences, such as by attending our RRC programs or joining some other established group such as IONS that incorporates Psi in their belief structure. Sharing similar accounts with other people is one of the most helpful grounding experiences that a person troubled about Psi can have. In a Paranormal Experiences Group that the RRC sponsored for over five years, group members would often smile in sympathy when a new person routinely apologized for having "diarrhea of the mouth," the catharsis that came from someone at last being able to openly discuss these topics in a safe and nonjudgmental setting.

For some who seem unrealistic in their report of too much psychic ability, it sometimes helps to get an objective measure with a short simple test. I suggest that they guess the order of a deck of playing cards where the probability of success can be calculated. One person can be the Sender, who looks at the face of the card, one by one; while the other person serves as the Receiver who guesses the faces of the cards his friend is viewing. With playing cards there is 1 in 4 chance of the suits being guessed correctly and thereby allows some objective measure of psychic ability. This exercise usually works to help a person realize that they are far from 100% correct in their ability to read another person's mind. (An even easier test is by using the standard ESP cards, often called Zener cards, that are available from the Rhine Center).. The advantage of a simple forced-choice card test like this is that it can quickly gauge how psychic a person is at the time of test, which is often effective at subduing the fear of being too powerfully psychic.. For some people, this brings a sigh of relief.

There are many other approaches to help people feel protected from psychic intrusions that we hear about from the larger community of alternative and conventional healers, and that readers of InnerChange will recognize as general aids to remove negativity. They range from proven preventive health regimes of good sleep, good food and good exercise to more spiritual approaches involving centering prayers, Yogic breathing, meditation, imagining a protective light around the body, and so on.

Occasionally the RRC hears from people who need to be steered away from anything suggestive of Psi because an unhealthy obsession with mystical and paranormal topics is bringing them more pain than enlightenment. In this situation we may suggest they secure connections with understanding friends or relatives, move attention to healthy left-brained activities, and possibly seek a consultation with a sympathetic healthcare provider or spiritual advisor. On occasion we receive distressing reports of "pseudo-telepathy" where a chemical imbalance or neurological problem is likely to be involved. We always try to give information about what Psi is NOT in these cases and as gently as

possible try to redirect them to other resources where they can get the medical or other help they may need.

The majority of people who come to us with reports of fear or overload seem to want a reassurance that their Psi experiences are within the domain of the normal, even if bothersome. Our experience with these people is that with a little reassurance and education, they will come to appreciate that their Psi is not so much a curse as a gift, and with patience can become integrated and appreciated as any special talent should be.

In summary, the RRC on the basis of its years of research and case studies aims to provide accurate and relevant information to help people gain a balanced perspective on their own Psi abilities, both their capacities and their limitations. We are of the belief that this information can be liberating on a personal level as well as inspiring on the larger humanitarian level with its implications for human connectedness and for a broader view of human consciousness.

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Sally Rhine Feather, 2005. Dr. Feather is Director of Development at the Rhine Research Center, 2741 Campus Walk Ave., Building 500, Durham NC. Readers are invited to learn more about the center, the educational programs, or volunteer opportunities. Call 919-309-4600 to be on the RRC mailing list or check the website at www.rhine.org