

Research Request: Details of Physical Interactions during NDE OBE

by Robert and Suzanne Mays

Research on the NDE relies heavily on experiencer narratives. The NDEr usually relates the basic elements of the experience and the aspects which are most important to him or her. NDEs have a myriad of details and the NDEr must decide which details are important or of interest to the listeners. Generally, the level of detail provided in these accounts is adequate to classify the NDE, but researchers frequently need more details to explore specific aspects of the NDE.

Our research is a case in point. We are studying how the *self-conscious mind* appears to separate from the body in an NDE, and yet still appears to interact with physical processes. These physical interactions occur during the out-of-body (OBE) portion of the NDE, when the person still perceives the physical surroundings. For example, during the OBE, the NDEr sometimes reports seeing physical light (the readings on a medical monitor, headlights of a car or a light bulb), hearing physical sounds (the beeping of monitors, the hum of fluorescent lights, the wail of a siren, or physical speech as opposed to telepathy), or less frequently, experiencing smells and tastes. On the other hand, many NDErs report seeing things, but hearing, smelling and tasting nothing.

Such physical interactions appear to be subtle. Almost always NDErs report passing easily through solid objects, but occasionally an NDEr will report feeling a slight resistance or friction when passing through a wall (Gabbard and Twemlow, 1984, p. 158). The NDEr may happen to pass through an “in-body” person and generally feels nothing, but occasionally an NDEr will experience a subtle consistency, such as “very rarefied gelatin that seemed to have an electric current running through it”, when passing through someone’s body (Moody and Perry, 1988, p. 9).

The NDEr also can’t be heard when speaking and is invisible to normal sight but sometimes may be “sensed” by animals. Jerry Casebolt recounted his NDE at age 7, where he hovered above and just out of reach of a dog on a playground, with the dog repeatedly wagging its tail, jumping up and barking at him (Corcoran, 1996, p. 81).

More remarkable is that the NDEr apparently can “touch” a person and be felt. For example, Jerry Casebolt playfully tickled another patient’s nose until the latter sneezed (Corcoran, 1996, p. 83). Even more remarkable are cases where the out-of-body NDEr “merged” with another person. During an NDE, a boy, age 5, who was suffering from meningitis, reported that he briefly “went into” his sister’s head and saw the world through her eyes (Morse and Perry, 1990, p. 177).

In “merging”, the NDEr apparently can see and hear and can also communicate information to the person. Consider the case of a 48-year-old man who was despondent and attempted suicide by hanging. During his NDE OBE he desperately sought help from his wife. She could not hear his cries, so he reported that he “went into” her body and could see and hear with her eyes and ears. When he made contact with her, he “heard” her exclaim, “Oh, my God!” Apparently she knew what was needed, because she grabbed a knife, ran out to where her husband was hanging and cut him down (Greyson and Bush, 1996, p. 223).

Such instances of apparent physical interaction during NDE OBE support our view that the mind can indeed be independent of the body, but can still interact with physical processes. If the mind can interact physically while out of the body, then it most likely can interact when *in the body*, as well, including with the physical electrical processes in the brain.

We are collecting reports of physical interactions during the OBE phase of the NDE. If you have had an NDE and experienced interactions with physical light (e.g., seeing as source of light like a light bulb or readout from a medical monitor), physical sound (e.g., lights humming, monitors beeping, or physical speech as opposed to telepathy), physical smells or tastes, physical touch (e.g., sensing the texture of a surface or sensations when passing through a physical object), or the body of another person (e.g., in touching or passing through a person), we would love to hear the details. Also, if you experienced interacting with a person during your NDE where the person “felt” the interaction in some way, or if you were able to “merge” with another person, we would love to hear that account. The identity of respondents will be kept confidential. Similarly, if you have read or heard an account of an NDE with one of these unusual physical interactions, we would also love to have a reference or a name to contact.

Please send your experiences via email to mays@ieee.org or by mail to Robert and Suzanne Mays, 5622 Brisbane Dr, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. If you would be willing to have a follow-up interview, please include some way to contact you (your email address or telephone number or mailing address). Thank you!

References

- Corcoran, D. K. (1996). *When ego dies: A compilation of near-death and mystical conversion experiences*. Houston, TX: Emerald Ink Publishing.
- Gabbard, G. O., and Twemlow, S. W. (1984). *With the eyes of the mind: an empirical analysis of out-of-body states*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishing Company.
- Greyson, B., and Bush, N. E. (1996). Distressing near-death experiences. In Bailey, L. W., and Yates, J. (Eds.), *The near-death experience: A reader* (pp. 207-230). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Moody, Jr., R. A., and Perry, P. (1988). *The light beyond*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Morse, M., and Perry, P. (1990). *Closer to the light: Learning from the near-death experiences of children*. New York, NY: Ivy Books.