

# UNCANNY COINCIDENCES AND TELEPATHIC DREAMS:

On the Use of Spirituality, Intuition and  
Synchronicity in Clinical Practice



Wheeler

CONNECTICUT  
Clearinghouse

a program of the Connecticut Center  
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

May 15, 2025  
By Anna Yusim, MD



# DISCLOSURES

- Chief Medical Officer of Conscious Health, a California-based mental health clinic which integrates evidence-based scientific treatments with age-old spiritual wisdom.
- Medical Lead of SuperMind, a Miami-based startup focusing on advanced psychiatric coaching through tailored approaches that incorporate binaural beat meditation and EEG biofeedback to treat depression, anxiety and PTSD.
- Board Member on various Boards including Being Health, Mental Health TV Network, Plaey, Pause+Purpose, and Botano.

# EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Describe the clinical application of spirituality, intuition, and synchronicity in psychiatry and mental health treatment
- Discuss how intuition operates on various levels of awareness and influences therapeutic dynamics
- Understand spiritually-informed complexities within the therapeutic setting, from unconscious communication and thought transference to the potential pitfalls of toxic spirituality, psychic addiction, and religious OCD





# AGENDA

1. Spirituality and religion may reduce mental and physical illness
2. Spirituality and religion may increase mental and physical well-being
3. Intuition as a bridge between science & spirituality
4. Three types of intuition with case examples
5. Synchronicity as a psychodynamic construct
6. Several cases of synchronicity in clinical practice
7. Examples of toxic spirituality and potentially destructive new-age beliefs
8. How to integrate the positive aspects of spirituality and religion in your clinical practice



# SPIRITUALITY IN THE U.S.A.

- 93% of the population holds belief in God or a Higher Power (Gallup, 2011)
- The words "In God We Trust" appear on every bill and coin produced by the U.S. Mint



# SPIRITUALITY

- Universal dimension of human experience
- Can be intimately “inner,” immanent and personal
- Can be wholly transcendent and beyond the self
- Experienced as being of fundamental importance
- Concern with purpose in life, truth and values

--Christopher Cook, MD PhD,  
British Professor of Religion and Theology



# RELIGION VS. SPIRITUALITY



- **RELIGION** refers to participation in or endorsement of practices, beliefs, attitudes, and sentiments that are associated with an organized community of faith.
- **SPIRITUALITY** refers to connecting to something greater than yourself, in either religious or secular ways. Examples of secular spirituality include meditation, yoga, journaling, breathwork, spending time in nature, and engaging in creative pursuits, among other things.

## Most Americans Identify as Religious or Spiritual

Which of the following statements comes closest to describing your beliefs -- you are religious, you are spiritual but not religious, or you are neither?



"Both" is a volunteered response.

[Get the data](#) • [Download image](#)

GALLUP®



REPORT | DECEMBER 7, 2023



## Spirituality Among Americans

*7 in 10 U.S. adults describe themselves as spiritual in some way, including 22% who are spiritual but not religious*

BY BECKA A. ALPER, MICHAEL ROTOLO, PATRICIA TEVINGTON, JUSTIN NORTEY AND ASTA KALLO

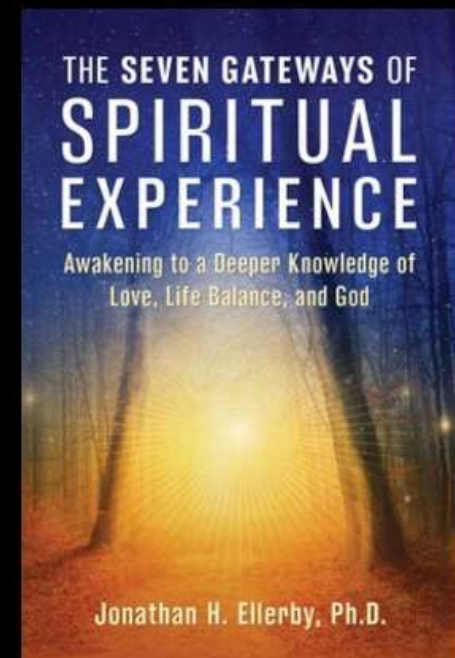


Pew Research Center

- ❑ 83% of all U.S. adults believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body.
- ❑ 81% say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it.
- ❑ 74% say there are some things that science cannot possibly explain.
- ❑ 45% say they have had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world.
- ❑ 38% say they have had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was communicating with them from beyond this world.
- ❑ 30% say they have personally encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force.

# 7-TYPES OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

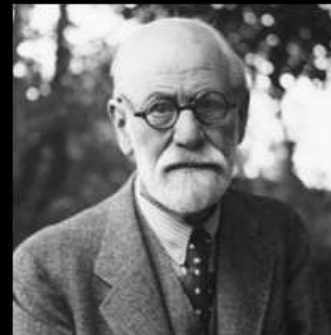
1. Experiences of Truth and Beauty
2. Experiences of Ordinary Magic
3. Experiences of the Spirit World
4. Experiences of Divine/Subtle Energy
5. Experiences of the Cosmic Self
6. Experiences of Formless Spirit
7. Experiences of Pure Consciousness



# THE HISTORY OF SPIRITUALITY IN PSYCHIATRY

- **SIGMUND FREUD**

- Belief in God is delusional
- Religion is a "universal obsessional neurosis"



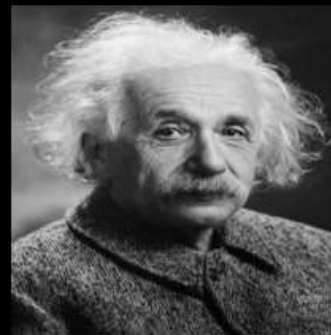
- **CARL JUNG**

- A spiritual connection is the central core of human experience
- Life has a spiritual purpose beyond material goals, which entails fulfilling our deep innate potential



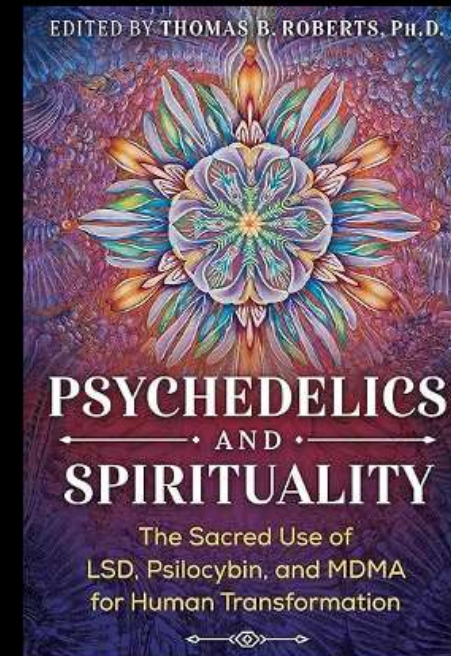
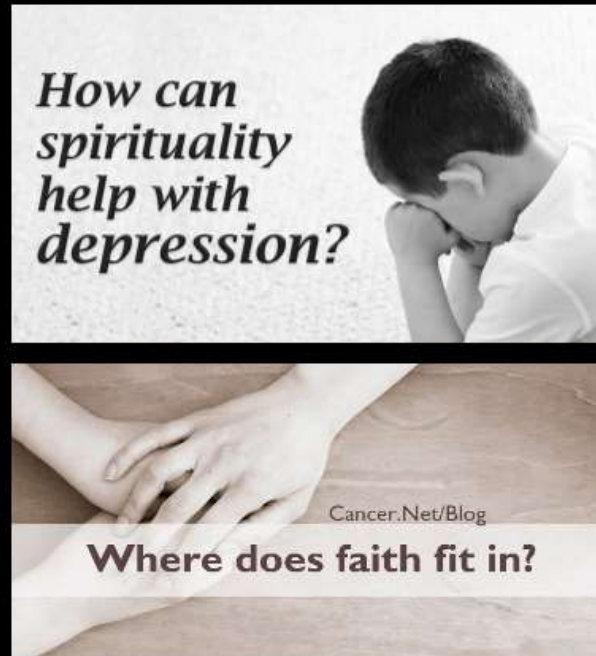
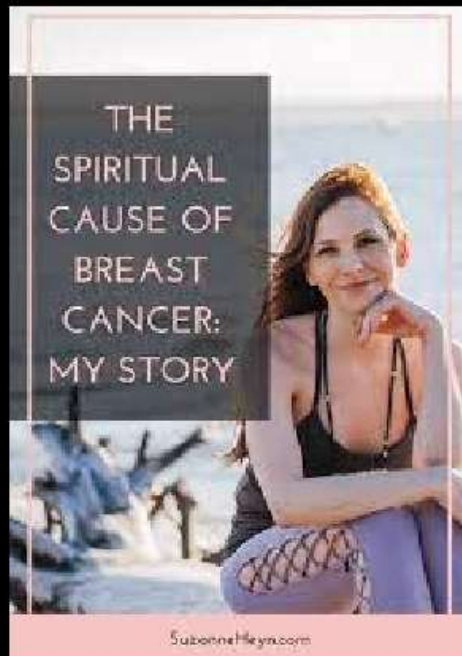
- **ALBERT EINSTEIN**

- "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind"





# SPIRITUALITY CAN IMPROVE MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH



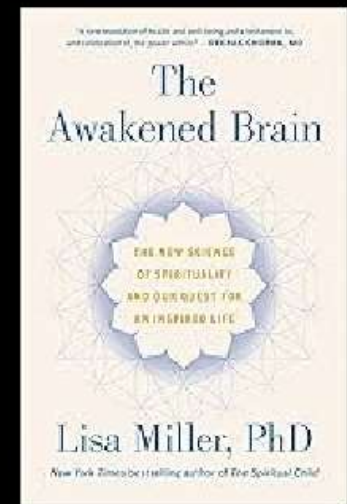
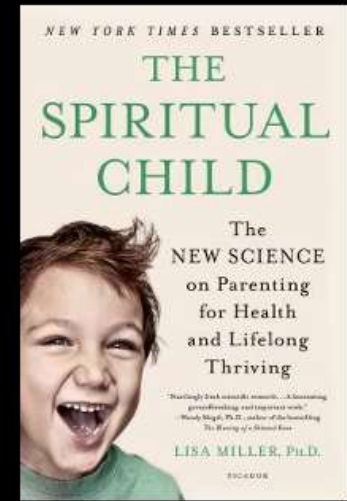


# SPIRITUALITY & YOUTH



**SPIRITUALITY MIND BODY INSTITUTE**  
Teachers College, Columbia University  
The Science of Spirituality

1. Children have an inborn capacity for spirituality—a sense of connection to something greater than themselves. This isn't necessarily tied to religion but can include awe, wonder, and a search for meaning. Studies suggest that children who cultivate spirituality (through nature, prayer, meditation, or community) are more resilient against depression and addiction later in life.
2. Spirituality is associated with thicker brain cortex regions linked to awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation. Teens with a strong spiritual foundation are 40–80% less likely to suffer from depression, substance abuse, and risky behaviors.
3. Parents can foster spirituality by modeling curiosity about life's big questions, encouraging mindfulness, and creating space for reflection (e.g., through nature walks or family rituals. Validating a child's spiritual experiences – rather than dismissing them – builds resilience.



# THE TWO PLACES IN MEDICINE WHERE A SPIRITUALLY-BASED MODEL IS THE MEDICAL STANDARD OF CARE

## **The Spirituality Of Addiction**

*"Spiritus contra spiritum"*



Carl Jung's contribution to the formation Alcoholics Anonymous



**SPIRITUAL CARE**  
at the End of Life

# ON THE OTHER HAND...

On the other hand, spiritual struggles such as anger at God or religious guilt can exacerbate or even facilitate the development of psychiatric symptoms.





# SPIRITUALITY & SUICIDE

> [JAMA Psychiatry](#). 2016 Aug 1;73(8):845-51. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2016.1243.

## Association Between Religious Service Attendance and Lower Suicide Rates Among US Women

Tyler J VanderWeele <sup>1</sup>, Shanshan Li <sup>2</sup>, Alexander C Tsai <sup>3</sup>, Ichiro Kawachi <sup>4</sup>

Affiliations [+ expand](#)

PMID: 27367927 PMCID: [PMC7228478](#) DOI: [10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2016.1243](#)

[Free PMC article](#)

In a study of 90,000 women followed for about 20 years, those who attended religious services weekly were 5X less likely to die from suicide compared with those who did not attend.

In a similar study of 100,000 men and women, weekly service attendance predicted 68% lower risk of 'deaths of despair' (suicide, drugs and alcohol) among females, and 33% for males.

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WHAT MIGHT ACCOUNT FOR THIS  
TREND?



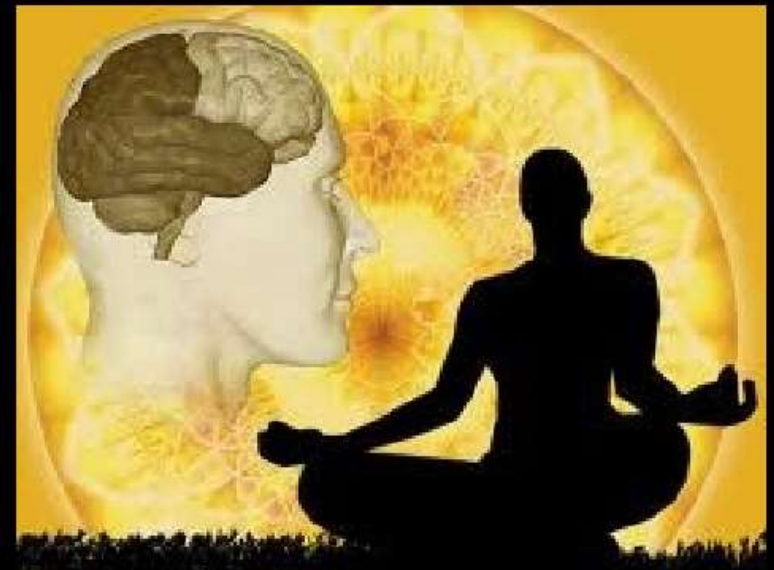
# SPIRITUAL MECHANISM OF ACTION

- Being a member of a supportive religious or spiritual community may provide consistent and positive human connection that alleviates one's feelings of shame and guilt.
- Religion and spirituality connect people to something greater than themselves, including a higher purpose.
- Healthy spiritual practices and beliefs may include messages about healthy living, life-affirming attitudes, and encouragement during difficult times.

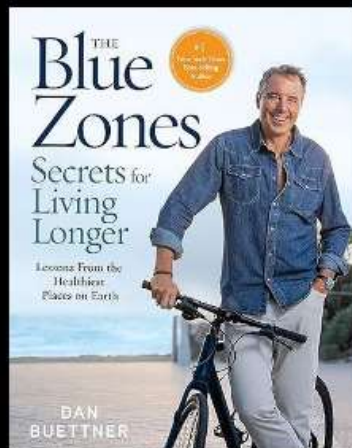


# WHAT IS SPIRITUAL HEALTH?

- Thoughtful emotional reactions even to life's great challenges
- A healthy ability to feel and express emotions where appropriate, especially when dealing with grief or loss
- Daily practices to help process hardships, changes, and emotions
- An ability to deal with the challenges posed by other humans with kindness and understanding
- Flexible beliefs that can adjust as needed to new circumstances or information
- Mindfulness and presence when eating, exercising, working, and enjoying time with loved ones
- The ability to explain one's inner state to others, if necessary or desired



# EFFECTS OF SPIRITUALITY ON LIFESPAN AND HEALTHSPAN



## THE BLUE ZONES



- What began as a National Geographic expedition, led by Dan Buettner, to uncover the secrets of longevity, evolved into the discovery of the 5 places around the world where people consistently live over 100 years old, dubbed the Blue Zones.
- Dan and his team of demographers, scientists, and anthropologists were able to distill the evidence-based common denominators of these Blue Zones into 9 commonalities that they call the Power 9



# WHY DOCTORS SHOULD INQUIRE ABOUT PATIENT'S SPIRITUAL NEEDS?

## ORIGINAL INVESTIGATION

### Do Patients Want Physicians to Inquire About Their Spiritual or Religious Beliefs If They Become Gravely Ill?

John W. Ehman, MDiv; Barbara B. Ott, RN, PhD; Thomas H. Short, PhD; Ralph C. Ciampa, STM; John Hansen-Flaschen, MD

**Background:** Recognizing that many Americans draw on religious or spiritual beliefs when confronted by serious illness, some medical educators have recommended that physicians routinely ask about spirituality or religion when conducting a medical history. The most appropriate wording for such an inquiry remains unknown.

**Objective:** To examine patient acceptance of including the following question in the medical history of ambulatory outpatients: "Do you have spiritual or religious beliefs that would influence your medical decisions if you become gravely ill?"

**Methods:** Self-administered questionnaires were completed by 177 ambulatory adult patients visiting a pulmonary faculty office practice at a university teaching hospital in 1997 (83% response rate).

**Results:** Fifty-one percent of the study patients described themselves as religious and 90% believe that prayer

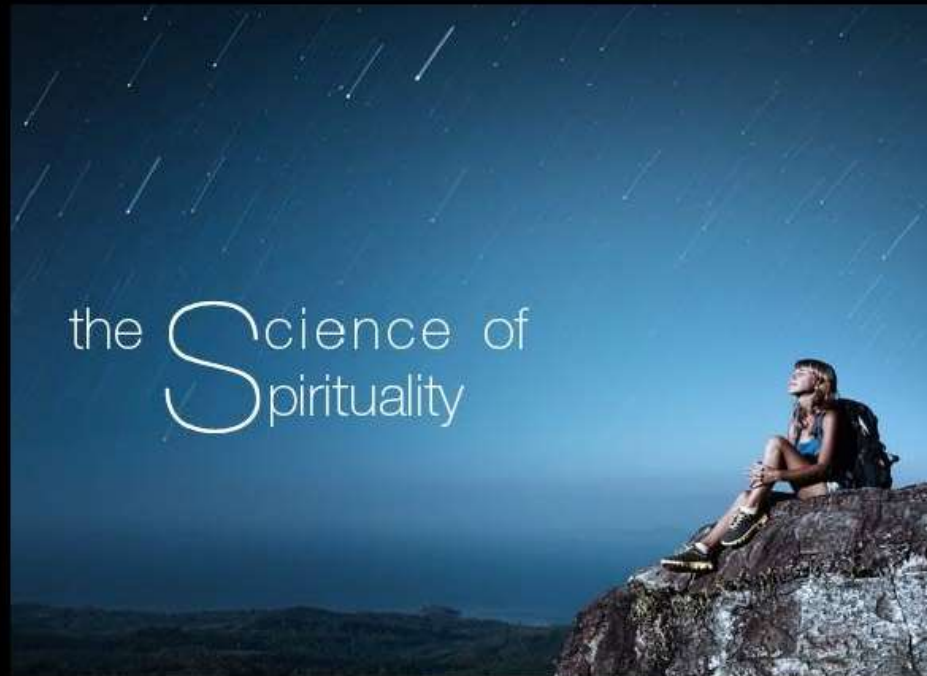
may sometimes influence recovery from an illness. Forty-five percent reported that religious beliefs would influence their medical decisions if they become gravely ill. Ninety-four percent of individuals with such beliefs agreed or strongly agreed that physicians should ask them whether they have such beliefs if they become gravely ill. Forty-five percent of the respondents who denied having such beliefs also agreed that physicians should ask about them. Altogether, two thirds of the respondents indicated that they would welcome the study question in a medical history, whereas 16% reported that they would not. Only 15% of the study group recalled having been asked whether spiritual or religious beliefs would influence their medical decisions.

**Conclusion:** Many but not all patients surveyed in a pulmonary outpatient practice welcome a carefully worded inquiry about their spiritual or religious beliefs in the event that they become gravely ill.

*Arch Intern Med.* 1999;159:1803-1806



# INTUITION IS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY





WHAT IS INTUITION?



blink

*by the author of* THE TIPPING POINT

Thin-Slicing, Snap Judgments,  
and the Power of Thinking  
Without Thinking

Malcolm Gladwell

WHAT IS INTUITION?

INTUITION

*is the*

WHISPER *of the* SOUL.

- J. Krishnamurti -



# KNOW THYSELF



# SO WHAT IS INTUITION REALLY?

- A hunch or gut feeling
- The ability to acquire knowledge without proof, evidence, or conscious reasoning
- Knowing something without necessarily knowing how that knowledge was acquired
- Direct access to the unconscious mind
- A sense of calling or overpowering certainty
- An awareness of a knowledge that is on the threshold of conscious perception



# A PLACE FOR INTUITION?





# SYNONYMS FOR INTUITION

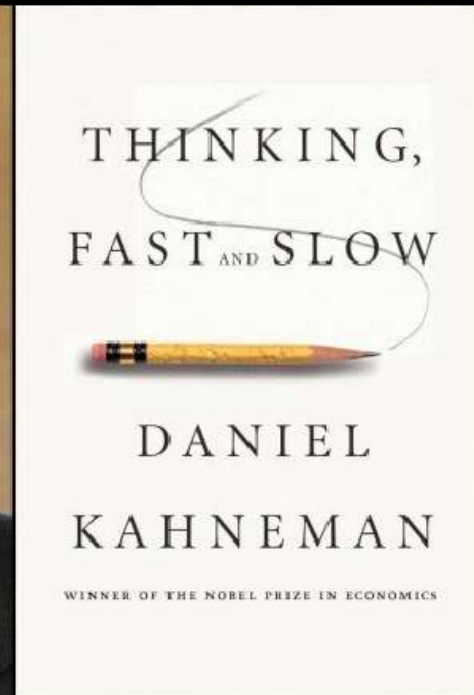
extrasensory perception (ESP)  
the soul's whisper  
clairvoyance  
precognition  
second sight  
gut feeling  
sixth sense  
divination  
telepathy  
instinct





# 3 TYPES OF INTUITION

- Type 1
- “instinct”
- Pattern recognition



## TYPE 2: SUBTLE ENERGY

The ability of our nervous system to detect and respond to environmental signals such as electromagnetic fields

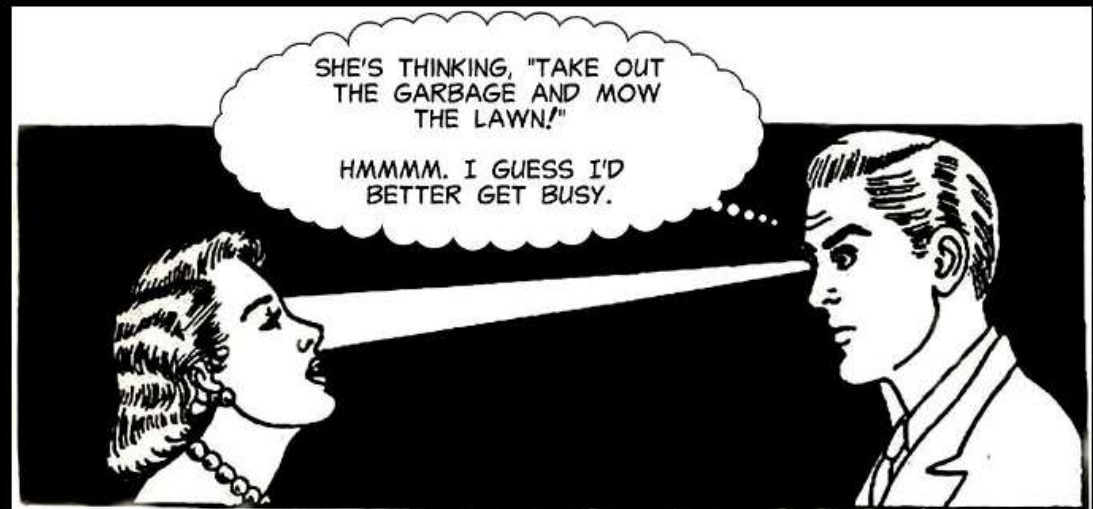
- Examples:
  - Staring
  - Human communication
  - Empathy
  - Being in "flow"
  - Heart-focused living

Electromagnetic Field of the Heart



## TYPE 3: NONLOCAL INTUITION

- The knowledge or sense of something that cannot be explained by past or forgotten knowledge or environmental signals
- Examples:
  - A mother senses something happening to her child, who is many miles away
  - Twin telepathy
  - Psychic abilities

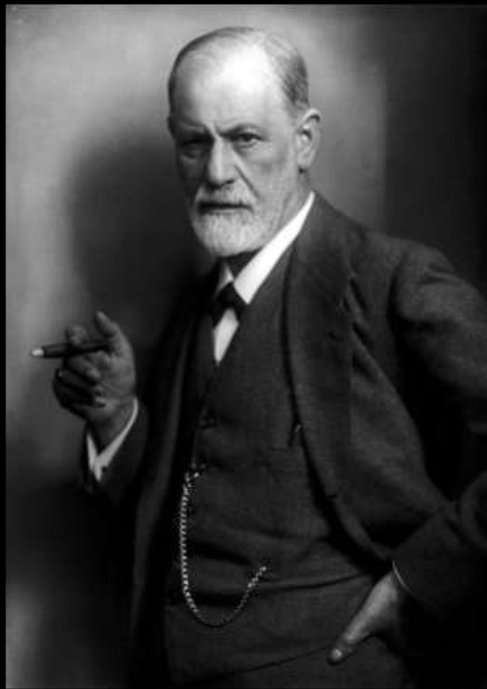


# CLINICAL CASE : HANS THE VIOLINIST





# “THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE”



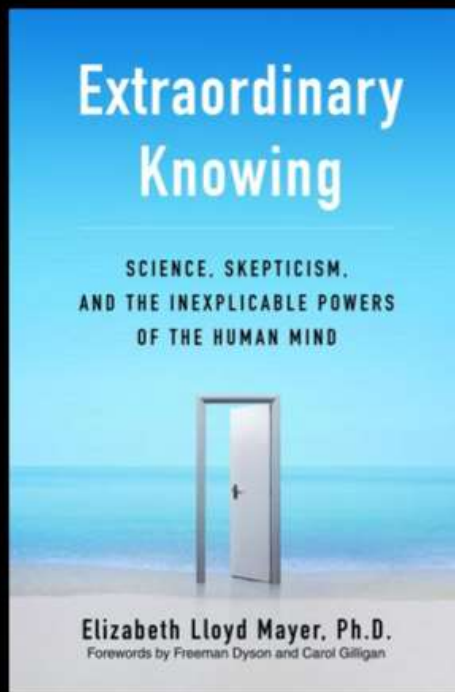
“Mental processes in one person—ideas, emotional states, impulses—can be transferred to another person through empty space without employing the familiar methods of communication by means of words and signs.”

--Sigmund Freud, *Dreams and Occultism*

## CASE #2: MARK THE PRIEST



# UNCONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION



"We cannot reach these new sources of information simply by "tuning in" to something new; paradoxically, we must also "tune out" much of the ordinary information that continually bombards our senses."

*Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 26:156–174, 2016  
Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC  
ISSN: 1048-1885 print / 1940-9222 online  
DOI: 10.1080/10481885.2016.1144978



## Uncanny Communication and the Porous Mind

Janine de Peyer, L.C.S.W.

*New York, NY*

In this paper I examine the phenomenon of “uncanny” unconscious communication and the plausibility of “telepathic” interconnectivity between patient and therapist. While reexamining long-standing psychoanalytic reluctance to engage with the topic of the “uncanny,” I present clinical examples of seeming anomalous transmission, followed by discussion from contrasting perspectives of psychoanalysis, neuroscience, quantum physics, and parapsychology. The patient’s and analyst’s reactions to these uncanny moments are explored, along with the potential clinical value of nurturing receptivity to this “frequency” of unconscious attunement.

“Perhaps the only limits to the human mind are those we believe in.”

Willis Harman (1988)

President of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, 1977–1997

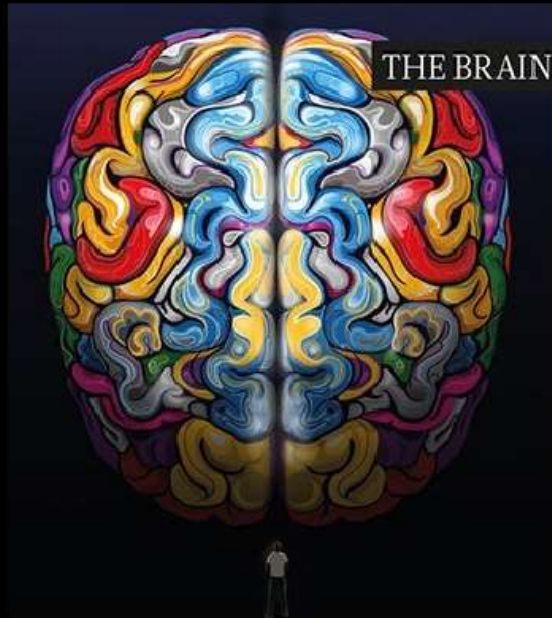


# REGRESSION AND PSYCHOANALYTIC TRADITIONS OF “TUNING IN”



- Freud (1912): free association, lying on the couch
- Ferenczi (1932): “dialogue of unconsciousness”
- Bion (1962): “O: the unknown and the unknowable”
- Searles (1973): “dissolution of boundaries”
- Bromberg (1996): a “twilight space where “the impossible becomes possible”
- Stern (1997): “unformulated experience”
- Bollas (2002): “unthought known”
- Ferro (2006): “waking dream thought”

# A NEUROBIOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE?



- Buck (1994): “conversation between limbic systems
- Schore (2003): “right amygdala to right amygdala communication”
- Gallese (2007): “mirror neuron systems

# INCREASED CAPACITY FOR TELEPATHY



- Believe telepathy is real
- Artistic / Creative
- History of telepathic experiences
- Likely to meditate
- Open to the unknown
- Emotionally receptive



# COINCIDENCE? I THINK NOT!

## **synchronicity** · *noun*

1. the experience of two or more events that are apparently causally unrelated or unlikely to occur together by chance, yet are experienced as occurring together in a meaningful manner.

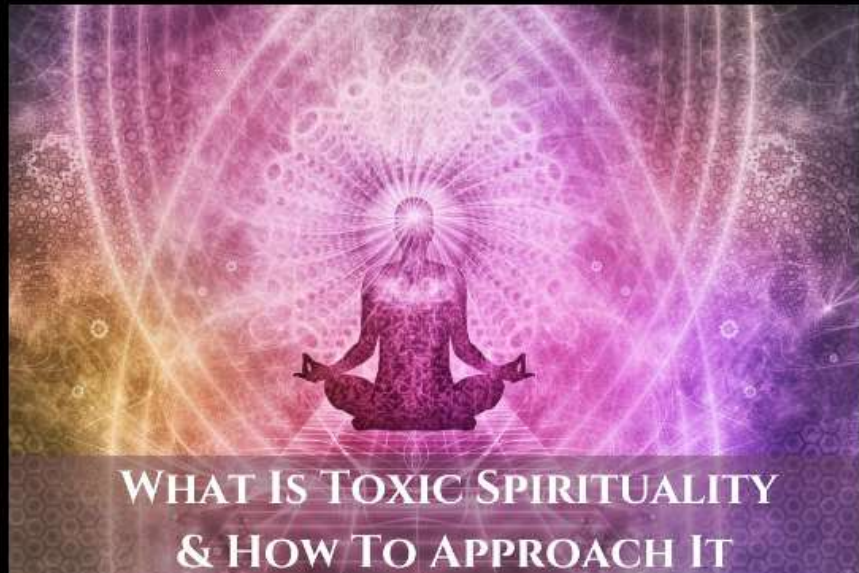


## 2 CASES OF BEREAVEMENT



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# FORMS OF TOXIC SPIRITUALITY



- Potentially Destructive New Age Beliefs
- Spiritual Bypassing
- Religious / Spiritual Cults
- Excessive Dependence on Psychics and Astrologers
- Religious / Spiritual OCD
- Religious Delusions

# POTENTIALLY DESTRUCTIVE NEW-AGE SPIRITUAL BELIEFS



- 1. You are 100% responsible for your circumstances
- 2. The ego is an enemy that needs to be eliminated
- 3. Reacting with anger is a sign you need to 'do more work'
- 4. Meditation is a purely beneficial experience
- 5. Control your thoughts to manifest your reality
- 6. Rising above our emotions is a sign of spiritual maturity

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Citation: What Toxic Spirituality Sounds Like by Lee McKay Doe





## SPIRITUAL BYPASSING

Spiritual bypassing is the practice of denying and suppressing the darkness within you and plastering it with a sparkly feel-good bandaid.

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# RELIGIOUS / SPIRITUAL CULTS



- Cult leaders make promises that are totally unattainable
- Many join cults because they believe they are being offered solid, absolute answers to life's difficult questions
- People join cults if they are waiting to be rescued
- Many people who join cults have experienced religion at some point in their life and rejected it
- Cults promote an us vs. them mentality
- Cult leaders are masters at mind control
- Cult members often spend years overcoming the emotional damage incurred during their time in the cult

# EXCESSIVE DEPENDENCE ON PSYCHICS & ASROLOGERS

'I pay for half an hour of  
*escapism* in the hope  
that life *might suddenly*  
MAKE SENSE'



'I don't trust *my own*  
*instincts*; they've failed me  
TOO MANY times'

# RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUALITY OCD

## COMMON SCRUPULOSITY SYMPTOMS

FEAR OF LIVING IN SIN



FEAR OF HAVING  
BLASPHEMOUS THOUGHTS

BELIEF OF BEING  
UNWORTHY OF GOD'S LOVE



FEAR OF NOT PRAYING  
HUMBLY OR SINCERELY


FEAR OF NOT READING  
THE SCRIPTURES ENOUGH



CONSTANT VISITS TO  
PLACES OF WORSHIP



# A NEW PARADIGM?



We are not human beings having a  
spiritual experience, but are spiritual  
beings having a human experience.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

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# IN SUMMARY...

1. While spirituality and psychiatry were strange bedfellows in the days of Freud, there is growing scientific evidence suggesting that spirituality and religion may reduce mental and physical illness, while increasing mental and physical well-being, and longevity
2. Intuition, of which there are three primary types, is a powerful bridge between science & spirituality, which may operate on various levels of awareness and influence therapeutic dynamics
3. When appropriate, topics like spirituality, intuition, and synchronicity can be effectively integrated into clinical treatment and provide a unique lens into a client's inner world
4. It is important to understand spiritually-informed complexities within the therapeutic setting, from unconscious communication and thought transference to the potential pitfalls of toxic spirituality, cults, addictions to psychics, and religious OCD, to name a few





*That's all Folks!*