

Helpful Definitions of some possible Spiritually Transformative Experiences (STE)

After-death communication (ADC): This is a spiritual experience that occurs when a person is contacted directly and spontaneously by a family member or friend who has died.

Bliss episodes: Experiences of profound bliss, all-encompassing love, awestruck wonder at the profundity of the universe, or overwhelming feeling of devotion to the Divine, all of which are often accompanied by spontaneous tears of joy.

Deathbed Visions or Near-Death Awareness: These are visions or spiritual experiences that happen as a person is dying. They are similar to those reported by near-death experiencers and frequently observed by loved ones or hospice careproviders.

Empathic Experiences: One person “becomes one with,” “takes on,” or “witnesses fully” the spiritual experience of another individual. These events are not superficial but are occurrences that involve all the senses. They can be so intense that those that experience it undergo a major life change following the event.

Expansive Episodes: A sense of dramatically expanded consciousness in which the individual point of perception seems to expand from its normal to a much greater size; the sense of expansion may stop at a few feet beyond the head or move outward until it seems to encompass the entire earth or even the cosmos.

Illumination: A sudden, profound insight into the nature of the universe or absolute truth; a spontaneous intellectual revelation that is beyond the bounds of normal, analytical reason and that brings with it new insight or new knowledge for humankind.

Ineffable: That which is incapable of being expressed or described. The term recognizes that some things are simply inexpressible, unspeakable, and unutterable. The further implication is that to even attempt description is to somehow defile or nullify the enormity of what was witnessed or experienced.

Integration: Integration is a process of incorporating the experience, its values and meaning into one’s life. It is ideally achieved when the experience, its meaning and its aftereffects have been incorporated into one's life to a degree that is assuring to the experiencer and when accompanying challenges, stresses and disruptions are reduced to an acceptable minimum. When integration is complete, experiencers recognize that their STE is now an important part of their lives, congruent not only with their attitudes but also their actions.

Kundalini Experience: A Hindu term for energy that lies dormant at the base of the spine until it is activated, as by the practice of yoga, and channeled upward through the chakras.

Mystical Visions: Visions of deities, saints, gurus, spiritual archetypes, or important figures from the world’s religions, including Buddha, Christ, Krishna, Mohammed, Moses, and the Virgin Mary.

Near-Death Experience (NDE) / Near-Death Experiencer (NDEr): Similar to above, but the person was near-death, clinically dead, in a trauma state, fearing or wanting death.

Near-Death-Like Experience (NDLE) / Near-Death-Like Experiencer (NDLEr):

An STE which did not involve being close to death.

Out-of-Body Experience (OBE): A person has the sensation of suddenly separating or floating away from their physical body and being able to view it from a place apart.

Past Life Experience: An apparent recall of another incarnation as another person in the past.

Pre-birth Experience (PBE) or Birth Experience: A pre-birth experience is one in which an individual has clear memories of existence before birth. This may include their actual birth, memories that in most cases are later verified by the mother.

Spiritual Rebirth: A sudden, profound spiritual awakening; a spontaneous religious conversion; a dramatic reorientation of spiritual beliefs; a sense of “dying” or having shamanistic type of encounter with the dark side that is followed by a profound experience of spiritual rebirth.

Spontaneous Recall: The emergence of memories long hidden or locked away in an individual’s mind. These memories or memory fragments can surface in unusual ways or can be triggered by casual and unexpected associations. In cases of forgotten near-death experiences, the most frequent point of recall occurs after reading or hearing about someone else’s episode that “feels” familiar.

Spiritual Transformative Experience (STE) / Experiencers (STER): Many such experiences involve being out of one’s body and/or and immersion into a different or more lucid reality. Features may include being out-of-body, visions or communications with deceased loved ones, religious figures, God, the light, angels, beings of light, or other nonphysical beings. Many contain a profound feeling of peace, love, compassion or forgiveness. Many of these experiences contain messages, guidance, premonitions, or reviews of one’s life. Some experiences can be frightening or distressing.

Spontaneous Spiritual Awakening: This is an STE that occurs without an apparent physical, emotional or meditative circumstance. These can occur while people are conducting ordinary activities.

Unitive Experiences: A feeling of unity with God, the universal consciousness, or with the universal life energy; an experience of the oneness of all things; a feeling that one’s self is united with the entire universe or merging with all creation.

Veridical NDE or STE: During the experience, a physically unconscious experiencer may observe life events such as seeing people attempting to aid the experiencer, or they may see objects being moved or hear conversations that - upon returning to consciousness - are verified by witnesses present.