

TYPES OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL/EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES THAT OCCUR IN OUR WORLD

June R. Steiner, PhD, CHT

Assisting in the Understanding, Processing, and Integration of the Experience.

Some examples of phenomenological/extra-ordinary events are found in the UFO Encounter, the Near Death Experience, Spiritual Crisis/Emergence, Kundulini, and the Shamanic Journey. These experiences range from the ecstatic to the profoundly traumatic, and regardless of where they lie on the spectrum are generally life-shaking or changing. The individual requires a supportive, safe, and non-judgemental environment that allows time and space to recall, process, and integrate as much of the event as possible. This includes helping the person access, retrieve, and work with the physical, cognitive, affective and spiritual aspects of their experience and to reach their own conclusions within an environment of acceptance. Anyone having an experience different enough from the normal, everyday happenings of their culture that makes it difficult to understand, explain, or be believed by self or others generally needs trained help in dealing with the trauma that often follows. The quality of that help can enhance the depth of understanding and integration of the event or add to the confusion, fear, and/or inability to incorporate it into one's life in a healthy way.

Research does not exclusively concur, but seems to strongly indicate that people having these experiences do not have major mental disorders, but are dealing with post traumatic stress from the event itself. Even when the experiences are remarkably positive, the difficulty of being understood and believed afterwards and the challenge of integrating it into one's daily life brings about stress and trauma. Unfortunately, the emphasis on proving the event is "real" can overshadow the person's emotional and spiritual needs. The clash of scientific validation and psycho-spiritual understanding and integration can create additional trauma. In this process, the individual is often robbed of the experience and burdened with self-doubt. When extra-ordinary experiences are worked with as "real" events without the burden of first having to prove it happened, one can go deeper into the meaning/consequence of the experience and provide greater understanding of the workings of one's conscious and/or unconscious psyche. When one has some personal "context" within which he can approach his experience, time can be taken to focus on the origin of the event. These extra-ordinary experiences are clear examples of Spiritual Emergence and need to be handled with sensitivity and compassion.