

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 17

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Guest Speaker

William Peters - Death

Kim Fauskee 00:00

a near death experience is more about living than dying. In today's episode, we're joined by Best Selling Author and psychotherapist William Peters, whose own Near Death Events eventually led him to become the foremost expert in shared death experiences. I hope you'll join us was a fascinating hour long discussion that will have you thinking about death differently.

Dr. Dana 00:30

There are two basic motivating forces, fear and love. When we're afraid, we pull back from life. When we're in love, we open up to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance.

Fear Me Out 00:49

Coming to you from our studio in Santa Barbara, California. This is the fear me out podcast. We're not your typical Self Help Program. Our show takes a deep dive into those psychological issues that affect us on a daily basis. We hope to shift your perspective and have you experiencing emotions differently. Now here are your hosts Kim Fauskee. And Dr. Dana Saperstein.

Kim Fauskee 01:11

William, welcome. Thanks for being here on this beautiful Friday afternoon. So can you tell us as we saw here, what is a shared death experience?

William Peters 01:23

Yeah, thank you. Good to be here, Kim and Dana, thank you. So a shared death experience. A shared experience occurs when there's somebody dying. And a caregiver loved one, or bystander reports or expresses, they feel like they shared in the journey from this human existence into what is typically referred to as an afterlife, and usually a benevolent afterlife. So there's a journey that takes place that they either observe or in some cases, will participate in and accompany the die.

Kim Fauskee 02:00

Is that your death experience something that's been known for a while? Is this something that you've become an expert? Or are the one that has coined that term?

William Peters 02:11

Yeah, so the shared death experience, the term was popularized by Raymond Moody, with a book in 2010, called glimpses of eternity, the experience of itself fell under a variety of different names for the last 125 years in the, in the West, if you will, in the kind of modern world, modern Anglo world I should say. So Europe and North America, the earliest accounts that I've seen in the literature for the London Society of Psychical Research, and that was in the late 1800s. And they had these experiences but they had them lumped together with other apparitions. Primarily this would be considered a at death apparition. That's the name that went by, but there's other things that would fall into that general category beyond the shared death experience. There was a real seminal book done in 1926 by Sir William Barrett called deathbed visions. He has 57 accounts. And about 1718 of those are verifiable shared death experiences. You can read them say, he's got to share death experience, hear, the rest of them are, visions and visitations and things like that.

Kim Fauskee 03:25

So it's an interesting subject to get involved in. How did you get involved in the shared death experience?

William Peters 03:34

Yeah, I'm smiling. Because, you know, this is not something that in my teen years, I would have said, you know, I'm gonna go up instead of a shared death experience, it didn't even exist as a term as I just said, till like 2010. But I had a near death experience when I was 17 years old. And that, in that experience, I had a high speed skiing accident, I fractured my back and was catapulted out of my body and had a real classic, and D. So I saw my body on this, which is a near death experience. Yeah, exactly. Classic near death experience. I saw my body on the ski slope, I was moving away from it. I went into a beautiful realm galaxy that look just like the cosmos. I mean, just what you'd see from a satellite picture of Earth. I had a life review going on. As I was moving rapidly away from my body and planet Earth. I saw the light. Like I said, this is anyone who knows the near death experience, I had a full blown one. At some point. As I was approaching the light, I realized I was dying. And I really did not want to die. And I was very clear about that. And I started pleading with the light as if you know, I grew up Catholic. So to me, this was God. There was no doubt in my mind, I was talking to God. And as I get into the light, I was quite comfortable being in the light. But I stopped moving at this point and in that light, I was negotiating in a certain way saying let me go back. I haven't finished the work that I do. aim to do. I was very clear that I didn't want to die and have to go back and go through childhood again. It was very interesting. realization I had. So I came back.

Dr. Dana 05:10

You know, you remember coming back into your body?

William Peters 05:13

Oh, I do. Yeah, I remember. Yeah. So I wondered as I was, as I was going, pushing away from God, if you will. I remember I distinctly remember moving away and saying thank you. And then had this sense of not since I heard, make something of your life. That was a very, that's pretty poignant, pretty poignant. Yeah. And in a lot of ways, I think I've lived my life consciously and unconsciously, trying to live into that, in a certain way, make this life worth living in a certain way. Yeah. And I didn't know how I was going to get back into my body. As I started moving away. I was like, Whoa, how am I gonna get

back and then I started accelerating back to planet earth. I didn't even see planet Earth. And as I started moving away from the light, then it came into view. And I realized, oh, there's an intelligence here that's guiding me. And then as I came back into my body, I didn't have any feeling. I was like, boom, I had no feeling in my body. I'm like, God, don't let me be paralyzed. And I screamed, like, I mean, I was like, Oh, my God, I have no feeling I could feel like it feels cold and hard on the slope. And I remember my eyes, I had no vision in my head, I was covered in snow. But I was face up. And then gradually, as after that request, I felt like you know, a warm water in the shower, as that kind of warms across your body. I felt a feeling come back. Actually, it started from my extremities, it was just kind of strange. It started from my extremities and came back into my body, which was kind of reversed. But I was struck by the oh, I can feel my hands, my toes, and then it came back into the center of my body, which is interesting. And at that point, I forgot about that experience.

Dr. Dana 06:58

You forgot about the whole thing. Yeah,

William Peters 07:00

I don't, I don't remember, for the next 10 years. I might have thought about it and remembered it in dreams, I might have had it in dreams. But in my waking life, I don't ever remember sharing it with anybody. Because it was like 10 years later, that I was at home at my family, my family home. And I was just channel surfing. One night late, the sun was down, it must have been wintertime. And all of a sudden, I heard this guy say rib tunnel. And that's all I heard was ribbed tunnel. And then there's some music in the background. And they had some imagery. I go rib tunnel. I went through it, like, you know, scrolled through it, and I scrolled back to it. And he says rib tunnel, then there was the light, I went and then I got close to the light. And as soon as he as my body just had this huge, you know, those energetic kind of chills and tingles saying, truth here. I listen, I go, Oh, my God, this guy's had what I've had. Okay. And that's when I put it together. And then I realized he was talking about a near death experience. I think he was a famous actor. That's kind of why he was on one of these entertainment channels. But that's when I realized I had something that was somewhat known. And I didn't do much with it after that, either. No, no, I went upstairs and talked to a family member and said, You're not gonna please buy just for this experience. So and so. And it's like, you know, and my family member just looked at me and said, Okay, that's interesting. What do you want for dinner? So that was it. And I was just kind of like, you know, and this, by the way, is kind of indicative of the way that most people deal with the shared death experience, since that's really what I'm studying now, is that if you have this experience, in a almost any setting, medical included, they're going to look at you like you're under stress or you're crazy. They'll do a mental status exam, you know, if you're in a, like I said in a hospital or such,

Kim Fauskee 09:08

so you when you regain consciousness on the slope, yeah, I'm assuming that ski patrol came. Got you. You probably were taken to the hospital

William Peters 09:18

now. So that so yeah, that would have been a smart thing to do. But remember, I was 17 years old. I got up and I skied down the mountain. Good for you. That was just dumber than dumb.

Kim Fauskee 09:29

So were you injured? Yeah. I

William Peters 09:31

fractured three vertebrae. Okay. Okay. You Yeah, I woke up the next day. And I couldn't even move. Like everything seized up. I could not. I tried to roll out of bed and it was like, I don't know what's happened here. Like I never felt anything like that. I mean, the compression fractures and fracturing of the spine were bad enough. But I I ripped and tore a lot of the supporting muscles in my back.

Kim Fauskee 09:58

But again, no record Correction of that experience that you had while flying through the air.

William Peters 10:05

Oh, I had a recollection of flying through the air. Yeah. I mean, I can remember that. I mean, I can go back and do that. So I crossed up my skis. And then I went aloft, and I was moving pretty fast. And I was just sailing through the air. And I realized, firstly, no, this is exhilarating. But this isn't good. I'm up in the air and moving fast. And then when I landed, I crushed my spine. And my ski bindings didn't come off. And that was really bad too, because then I didn't have any space, if you will, didn't have any mobility to move away from the impact. I had a crunch and my spine was and then everything went dark. But I had in that darkness, I had an observing self, you know, observing witnesses consciousness, if you will. That was very clear. Everything was dark. I'm like, What is this? All the electricity went out of my body because at the same time, I went to zoom,

Kim Fauskee 11:05

no panic or panic.

William Peters 11:09

No panic, no panic. No, I was just like, Whoa, what is this and then all of a sudden, I started moving away from my body rapidly. And then I was enamored, I was in no pain. And then the journey began, I just shared it. I had, you know, moving away quickly enamored by the solar system, seeing Planet Earth far away was cool. I was, you know, it was interesting to look at, you know, the continents and oceans. I mean, it was fascinating. See the clouds on top of the Earth. It was like a satellite view. But it was real for me. And it was beautiful. Life Review going on at the same time. And I was realizing, whoa, everything else. Everything I've done in my life matters. And I mean, it matters in a big way. Like getting upset with that person or being mean to that person or saying something unkind. It kind of rippled through their life into their relationships. And countless ways. It was like, you know, it was a teaching and karma, cause and effect and the ripple effect. So yeah, and so that was going on, then I'm in the rib tunnel. And then it's translucent, so I can see the Galaxy through it. And then like I said, I saw the light. And that's when I panicked. That's when I panic, that's just, oh my god, I'm dying. I've been here hundreds and 1000s of times, and I don't want to die I did not achieve or fulfill when I incarnated.

Kim Fauskee 12:35

So it became apparent to that that what was happening. Totally, there

William Peters 12:39

was that point, I knew where I was in, in my soul's trajectory, if you will, you know, because I come to see, you know, whatever I call me, as you know, right now, I'm a soul spirit and incarnate and in a physical body, that's, you know, my body for this lifetime. But I don't, once I'm out of here, I'm gonna go on to something else. And I was aware of me being the deepest part of me, my essence moving through time and space, but not in this time and space in the earth realm somewhere else.

Dr. Dana 13:17

Why do you think he didn't remember any of it when you came to?

William Peters 13:21

I think there's, I mean, that's a great question. And this is something that I said, we really look at in the research as well, for these experiences. I think there's a state specific memory. Okay, I think when you're in certain states, you have a connection of memory, your memories are kind of organized together. So as soon as I got out of my body and into that other dimension, I realized I've been here before, I know what this is, like, by the way, a lot of people have talked about having guides, meet them and help them in this realm. There were no guides for me, I was doing this thing I knew where I was I was really kind of competent at it. I advocated for myself. I was Petrus you know, I think God was God was totally calm. Kind of taking it all in but you know, it was clear who was in charge wasn't me.

Kim Fauskee 14:22

So you were saying it was almost 10 years later when you got that kind of message or recollection with those keywords. And so when you saw that on TV and kind of jogged your memory a little bit did you get that full vision back of what happened to you and what that experience was like at that point or just just be bits and pieces came back to you?

William Peters 14:49

i That's a great question because I I connected with the main parts of it. But it wasn't like I sat down, as I did some time later, and really went back and looked at it, I remembered I'd had that experience. But at that point in time, I didn't know how to meditate. I certainly knew how to reflect and pray. Still, it didn't that experience did not catalyze a, let's take a deep look at this. It was more like I know what that is, I had something similar. It would take until probably 2000 456 That I when I started studying transpersonal psychology that I and non ordinary experiences and started meditating a lot that I really dived into the experiences. But I'll tell you, I'll share another experience. It's really interesting that's related to this, that I hadn't really thought about. I mean, I thought about it, but not in the way that I'm going to express it now. So I went on a three month Silent Retreat, insight meditation retreat in Bari, Massachusetts. That's the pasta meditation with some of the great teachers of the Western teachers, Western teachers and Buddhism, like, you know, Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Jack Kornfield, those are the three founders of the Insight Meditation Society. Well, they each year have this 90 day silent retreat in the fall. So I went there in 2001. About, I don't know, somewhere between 40 and 50, or 60 days into this retreat, I start waking up early in the morning, like, well, we're always waking up early, I don't know how early like you can't remember now. It's like, five o'clock in the morning, maybe just start your meditation. But I remember getting woken up. But when I woke up, I was in that same space

that I was during my near death experience, I was sailing through the universe. I was totally unencumbered. Like, I was just like a comet checking out moving into infinite infinity. And when I did it was almost like a pattern response. Like every morning, I'd wake up for like, I don't know, like, maybe a week straight. And there I am, I'm getting interrupted. And I'm in this same place in the galaxy. And I'm thinking this is identical to where I was in my near death experience. I'm seeing stars, I'm seeing planets. I'm just cruising, there's no end in sight. And I am really enjoying it. And I share that with my meditation teachers at the time. And you know, Buddhists are pretty let go of everything. And I like, you know, I was like, No, I really think there's something going on here. Like, this isn't anywhere in the suttas. Like, maybe it is but they weren't telling me. They were saying yeah, just let it go. It's a dream. You know, he's your mind and can do all sorts of things. I was like. Now there's something more going on here. Because in that state, I was so blissed out. I was so blissed out, I was so free. I was just a free consciousness moving at lightspeed. I guess I was I was a shapeshifter, too. I could change I can move around. It was it just felt so good. So I mean, the reason why I'm sharing is because you asked me like, how did you remember this experience? That experience was bringing into my present day consciousness that experience a new and like, wow, that's where I was. And then if I go back and unpack this, I think I think the near death experience was actually a lot longer than I remember. Because visually, no, probably no time or space out there anyway, right. So but I think that this was kind of a gift to me in a certain way, I don't really know, I could just put it in the rubric of the universe is a very kind and loving place. And they were gifting me with this experience and new and I don't know how to say it or that I just knew how to get there and my deep meditation because I was meditating. Like we all were in these retreats. I mean, 1214 hours a day. So my mind was, you know, at moments, very calm, very still. Certainly able to access a lot of my memories, and certainly able to access this experience. But it felt like I was doing it in real time. It was like it wasn't memory to me. I was doing it again. So anyway, I've gone into that quite a bit. Thank you for indulging because it's quite pleasurable.

Kim Fauskee 20:02

So you. So you had some of these reminders along the way they were decades apart that that these kinds of pieces started fitting together for you. Yeah.

William Peters 20:12

So I had the first near death experience. So I had a second one too. But the first one was in 1979. And this experience I had on this vipassana retreat was in 2001. Okay. Now, I had another near death experience in 1993. Is that right? I guess it would be Yeah. Yeah, 1993, somewhere around there. That I had blood and balance. It is idiopathic thrombocytopenia, it's a crushing platelet condition. Kind of like hemophilia, just I couldn't, I couldn't clot. So I was in danger for bleeding out. And I was in the ICU, and I just popped out of my body. And now I know why that happens. If your host, your physical body becomes dangerous, can't support you consciousness. And I have seen that. I've had that happen to me a number of times. And I've now when I work with people and share and share death experiences, they observe the experiences, observe the dying, do that just pop out when it becomes like that's it. This party, this row, this party's over the I mean that in a kind of way that, you know, the body can no longer sustain the spirit consciousness. It's out. Right. So that's what I experienced in 19. I guess 1993? Yes. In the ICU of Kaiser Oakland hospital. And so I floated about my body for hours. Once again, no, no identity, no, William, then I was in this listen to the nurses and the nurse's station. I was just above them looking down at them. And they were talking, oh, we got this guy in bed one this other

person bed too. They're all not doing well. And then there's then there's look at this young man in bed three who's 30 years old or so you know. And we don't know why he's here. He's got idiopathic thrombocytopenia, no known cause, which is why it's idiopathic. They don't know why I'm there why I've got this condition. But I move over and look at that person in bed three. And I realize, hey, that's me. So you didn't know at the time I didn't know I was an observing consciousness without any identity. To me. Anyway. I was content. For sure. Just floating around hovering around. I was curious. That's I mean, I was so curious about things. I was moving around the floor, just really curious. unattached. And then, you know, and so I saw myself said, Oh, wow, that's me. And I was shocked by that. Whoa, I was stunned. And then, but then I went back to being, you know, an identified you know, floating consciousness. So I cruised around somewhere. And then the doctor came in from UCSF, and he started tapping on my hand, I didn't feel it. I was just kind of somewhere else. And he said, Mr. Peters, Mr. Peters, then I heard that I go, Oh, that must be me. That's me, Mr. Peters. So I didn't start coming back because it'll actually slow down. So that's me. Then I said, um, should I go? Should I answer him or not? Should I stay up here? Should I go down there? I didn't really know how that would all work out. I was completely clueless about how to respond. What would happen if I did respond? Could I stay where I was and respond? I didn't really want to go back to that body. But I wasn't particularly you know, what I didn't want to go back in the body didn't I know I didn't want to go back in the body. But I was curious. So I said, Well, what if I answer him and see what happens? The minute I started answering him, I went back into my body, I started filling in my body kind of that same experience hadn't a ski slope or the kind of the, you know, warm water moving over your skin underneath the shower, and the energy started flowing through. And I also noticed something else. As soon as my eye started talking, I opened my eyes. Now I was looking at the doctor from that angle before I was above listening to him from above. Looking now, it was very clear to me that Oh, my God, my whole vantage point have changed. And that was profound. Like wow, just a moment ago, I was looking down now I'm looking up,

Dr. Dana 24:56

and it was their decision to live like First time,

William Peters 25:01

no, no, I went back into the body. And, and he told me what my diagnosis was and then he walked away. And he had a Colombo moment. As I say, it's called the Colombo moment. As you remember, the old Colombo shows where he's walking with a, he puts his hand behind his back. And he leans over and he turns, he kind of follows and turns around to his hand, and he, and he does a, you know, a 180 and walks back to the bed, and I'm like, Why is he coming back here? Like, because I was tired, I was really tired. I didn't want to talk to him anymore. Because Mr. Peters, something tells me I should tell you this, which was kind of an interesting response, because he was a scientist, not a very spiritual man at all. And I would deal with him afterwards, recovering from this condition. And he was very cerebral and not very emotional. And he said, to me, this is the only spiritual, emotionally kind of attuned comment he made. He said, Yeah, something something, something tells me I should tell you this, because most people would have died with the number of platelets you have, you only have like 12,000, platelets, and you're supposed to, like 20-24,000. So I was well below the survival limit. And I listened to him. And I said, Hmm, I didn't really have any strong feeling it didn't work like, but I did remember that later. I did remember that later. Because it seems like I wasn't meant to die at that point,

although I was on this occasion meant to have a profound brush with death. And that seems to be what I'm supposed to experience and deal with and hopefully help people with in my life.

Dr. Dana 26:50

Did it change your sort of ideas about that? That second experience?

William Peters 26:55

Oh, yeah. I mean, the big take home was, whatever I call myself or whatever I think I am, has nothing to do with my physical body. In terms of an enduring sense, it's a spirit, it's a soul. It's something, it's a consciousness that's, that is not dependent on a physical body at all. So yeah, you would think I would have learned that in the first one. But you're pretty young. I was pretty young. But this one nailed it. Just absolutely sealed at night, I grew up Catholic. So I believed in an afterlife and all that. But this just gave me a stomachache. It's kind of interesting to use somatic with a disembodied state. But you get what I'm saying. It gave me a felt sense of not being attached or dependent to physical body, survival of human consciousness beyond human death, for sure.

Dr. Dana 27:57

And did you launch a different career path for yourself at that point?

William Peters 28:04

That point I was teaching school in East Oakland. Because I lived in Latin America for a number of years.

Kim Fauskee 28:11

I was gonna say, right, they should lead you to another career path. Just being an East Oakland. Yeah. Now it will give you a lot of credit, though, for teaching in the east.

William Peters 28:20

Okay. Yeah, I was a part of Teach for America. And you're number two of Teach for America. And that was a hard job. And part of the reason I might have been in the hospital was because I was so rundown and stressed out from teaching seven different classes. Half of them I was teaching in Spanish, and a school that started the year with, I think, 500 students, and by the time we got to Thanksgiving, we only had like 300 left because of violence and suspensions. And God knows what, it was a tough experience for me. And I was one of the only teachers that spoke Spanish. So we had a mixed population of Spanish speakers and Pacific Islanders and of course, African Americans and all sorts of ages. I think we had like 27 different languages in the school. And they're all very under-resourced families and people and they're, you know, it was it was high crime rate and anyway, but I was fluent in Spanish. So when I was helping the principal it was during the first semester. Was there be gang violence all the time, and it happened on the schools, especially on Friday afternoons and so I'd spend Friday when they shut down the school at lunch for the next six hours with the principal translating as they brought in parents and guardians and to translate why their kid what they done and why they were being removed from the school. It

Dr. Dana 30:01

sounds horrible.

William Peters 30:03

They weren't, you know, it was a great experience in a certain way. I love my principal, Dr. Dorothy Ag who, I wonder if she's still alive. Now that was, that was a long time ago. That would be, you know, 27 years ago now. But she had trained with Carl Rogers. As you know, she was a psychotherapist or psychologist. And she ended up there because that was the community she came from, and she wanted to give back. And she was a great principal and such a big hearted woman and very Rosarian in her empathy and compassion in her ability to be authentically present with people even in the most grave as the situations. So I actually love being with her. And we had a very good relationship. She was an African American woman, and, and so very much a leader in her community to be running this school. And anyway, so I did not at all regret that stress. But it's hired me out. It really did. And I got into Pathak thrombocytopenia in January of the next year. And then I didn't, I didn't teach the rest of the school year. From what I remember, I came back. But not that school year started the next year.

Kim Fauskee 31:28

So So what led you to become a psychotherapist? Because I would have thought, yeah, in chronological order, and these near death experiences and shared death experiences and stuff, that it was just a natural parallel for you to become a therapist.

William Peters 31:45

I think so. So I became a serial meditator because of my spinal injury, I had chronic pain. And then I really, I went to graduate school. Back east, you know, I went to Harvard Graduate School of Education, which was quite a prestigious school. And I went because Dorothy AG, it's kind of insane. We're talking about this, I wouldn't have not anticipated the conversation would have gone this direction. But it's very interesting, because she convinced me that I should be a superintendent. Because I was fluent in Spanish. I really did understand from cultures. I did. I lived in Belize, Guatemala, Peru, worked with a lot of indigenous people as well. And the community liked me. Because I could speak their language. And I listened and I cared. And I was curious. I mean, it was like, I was genuinely curious about these people. I mean, these are immigrants are fascinating people for me growing up, you know, and suburban. How did you get here? You kidding me? That's how you got here. I mean, the journeys these people took to get here. Absolutely spellbinding. And fascinating. This, these are fascinating people. And I want I go over to their homes and ask if I could talk to the grandmothers and otherwise, so. So I was genuinely interested in helping. And so I went to graduate school, in a superintendent program training program was actually a master's in administration, school administration. But I learned very quickly that this ivy league school had none of the solutions for education that I was experiencing. They're all about school reform, and this that the other thing and I said, you don't get it, you can all of your great pedagogical programs and learning this in that I got into I realized I gravitated into programs that were kind of cross graduate schools that did with dealt with human relations, power dynamics, isms, all the isms, you know, like, you know, sexism, and, you know, all the isms, all the stuff that is kind of the societal pain in our bodies. And I was lucky because we had some of the greatest teachers on the planet right there at that time, because Harvard was trying to take this on. It was a failed endeavor, because quite frankly, Harvard is a traditional Ivy League school with 90% of their faculty are white males, at least at that time, and they didn't want to look at themselves. So

they did not tenure, these teachers, these professors who'd come in from all over and they were spectacular, but I got to get to training with them. So I thought I was gonna go back to education. But I realized there was no solution to the problem. I didn't learn anything that could help these school districts and I just didn't want to be there grinding away getting nothing done. There was nothing I could do. And I read that it was an intuitive thing. I realize I'll go back if I can truly help but I can't help and I'm already in a lot of pain for my spinal injury. So what I did was I took some time off after graduate school to travel around Latin America a bit more, and came back. And I was going to start doing human relations work. And then a friend invited me to an open house at California Institute of integral studies. And she's just come with me, I want your, you know, your your good about assessing programs and things like that. And you'll tell me, it's a good fit, and we can talk about it. I went, and I thought, oh, my gosh, here's a psychotherapy training program, essentially, that was working with spirituality and non ordinary states of being and not well beyond mental health. They did mental health, but they did these other spiritual aspects of being human. And I said, Well, I'm not sure if I really want to be a psychotherapist. But this can really help me work with people and understand myself. And so I joined. So I started in and I fell in love with it. I love clients. I love working with people. I love doing group work. I mean, I like doing group work more than anything else. So that's how I got into psychotherapy. And then I got into hospice work at the same time. At the same time I was working, getting my Master's in Counseling Psychology. I was working in Zen hospice project in San Francisco. And that's where I had my first shared death experience. The first one that I actually had some others, but that one was full on. So like, I was working with a client and well, I can't even call them a client. I was just working with a patient. And I was reading him a story and I popped out of my body. And there I was, hovered above his body and my body. And this is a space I had already, I was already familiar with, because I had it during my ICU experience with idiopathic thrombocytopenia. So here I am, and I'm looking at RON and RON is looking at me, and I'm feeling that similar sense of non weight. And looking at Ron He's got big, beautiful eyes. He's got a physical Miss to him, although a little more ethereal. And that was my first shared death experience, first SDE, but no, there had no terminology for it. Talk to my supervisor, and he knew nothing about it.

Kim Fauskee 37:19

So back then the near death experience was still the more common. Absolutely,

William Peters 37:26

yeah. And I, by the way, doing that program put me in the program at sea is the Counseling Psychology program. One of my good friends was doing his kind of final project, if you will just kind of thesis on the near death experience. Oh, I went, so I started talking to him about this. That was the first time I really dove into it. And I read Raymond Moody's book, probably life after life. But that's a good book, but it's kind of not very deep. He was doing deep research on it. And so we would have conversations about the experience. And he asked me about my experience. And so yeah, so but no one no, no shared death experience at this point in time.

Kim Fauskee 38:09

So when did it become your passion? Project? shared experience? Yes.

William Peters 38:13

So I met Raymond Moody, in 2009, at a conference, and I thought I was going to hear him talk about the near death experience, because at this time now, I'm really interested in learning more about my near death experience and hearing being with others. And

Kim Fauskee 38:28

so you're doing it on your own not part of a psychology program or anything, it was just something you were interested in, I wanted them

William Peters 38:34

I was a clinician, I had a practice. I was in Santa Barbara. But I really wanted to do more of my spiritual work. And I was curious, you know. And so I went to this conference, and he said, I'm going to talk to you guys about the shared death experience, which is a sister experience to the near death experience, like, oh, well, that's very interesting. And then he proceeds to describe this experience, where, as I've already said, somebody dies. And a caregiver loved one, or bystander reports that they shared in this journey into a benevolent afterlife. And I'm like, my whole body lights up. I know all about this. So I went over and talked to Raman and Raman. Raymond, I end up talking a lot about it because I said, I wanted to research on this. And he said, Well, that's great, because there's no research on this at all. And I'm like, wow, really, because well, I have some, you know, old stuff, but no systematic anything. And so he became a real advocate of my research. And, you know, as I'm sitting here right now, I'm teaching a class with Raman. We are doing the first online course ever on the shared death experience. And, we have 280 students. That's amazing online, and they're absolutely soaking it up. And I'm like, wow, I wish I had had this course when I because it's I mean, I'm, I mean, we're both teaching it, but I'm the primary teacher more because Raymond is pretty old. And, and not really technologically savvy. So I'm doing PowerPoints and guided visualizations for everybody. And it's Yeah. So I'm interested to know out

Kim Fauskee 40:13

of those 280 students that you have, yeah. How many have had that shared death experience? Or how many have just heard of it? And we're interested in just wanting to know more?

William Peters 40:23

You know, that is a great question, because we're just getting the course started right now.

Kim Fauskee 40:26

Because it is, like we talked about from the get go, it is a bit of a nuance and not typical dinner table conversation.

William Peters 40:34

No. And you know, now that you bring that up, Kim, I'm going to ask, I'm going to ask the students because, you know, we're going to, yeah, I'm going to put it out in the email, it would be really interesting. It'd be really interesting. New people have had the experience. Yeah, I'm sure there's a lot who have had the near death experience. Sure. Who are there? But yeah, I'm gonna check that out.

Dr. Dana 40:56

How many shared death experiences have you had? If you know, how many have I had? If you don't mind? My question?

William Peters 41:02

Yeah, I've probably had a couple dozen. Yeah. Yeah. You know, and so I'll say this. You know, once you learn how to, you know, not that that's a conscious learning, by the way, once you're taught how to leave your body in a certain way, do it gracefully, without trauma. I think it's pretty easy to do. I mean, okay. When you're around a death as when I'm around a death, there is an energetic field that opens up, you know, I don't, the term I'm going to use is a little bit harsh, but I think it fits, there's a death vortex. There's a whole energetic constitution, constellation that invites and pulls on, on the soul of the dying to leave. But if you're sensitive, and you're okay with it, you can go with it. And you can come back. You just know, you're you have to know, you don't even have to know your limits, because they're not gonna let you go before your time.

Kim Fauskee 42:08

So would it be correct to state that we all have shared death experiences? We, but we just don't know what they are?

William Peters 42:16

That I don't know. I mean, I? I don't think so. I think I think that's a good question. I don't have a sound yes or no to that. And the only

Kim Fauskee 42:31

the reason I was thinking about that is when Dana asked you that question. He said, Well, I've had a couple of dozen. I'm thinking, Hmm, I don't think I've ever had a near death experience or a shared death experience. But then when you said that you had to be kind of taught, you had to understand or experience those. I thought, Oh, maybe I have had

William Peters 42:50

well, or not, the most common experience, when I share a lecture on the shared death experience is Oh, my God, I had that. But I didn't know it until I heard you recount and share about it. And now it's like coming back from people's memories.

Dr. Dana 43:11

So it happens more than we realize. Yes, absolutely.

William Peters 43:15

I'm one of those people was Raymond Moody. Here, I'm listening to talk he starts talking about the shared death experience, like oh, wait a minute, I've had that. Yeah.

Kim Fauskee 43:22

Well, then you've been on the threshold. I have almost not a couple of times. Yes. So I mean, what William is talking about, I mean, does this resonate with you, at any point?

Dr. Dana 43:37

By both of my experiences, one of them. I was on the water surfing and I had a heart attack. Animals died. It was pretty intense. And I thought for sure I was dying. Luckily, my friends could save me and I got to the hospital in time, and they were able to revive me. But I didn't have any of what you're talking about. That didn't, that wasn't part of the deal. I was so busy trying to figure out how to breathe because my heart was pumping blood properly. That all I could feel was the desperation of trying to get a breath. So I didn't get the pleasure. Sounds fun. Actually, you don't go far enough. Now. The second time it happened. I had a stroke. It was really because I had two strokes. Both of them were pretty severe. The second one, I thought for sure I was dying. I felt myself going off into a really quiet, really beautiful place. And then all of a sudden I just woke up.

William Peters 44:36

Yeah, but that going off into a quiet place would be an out of body experience. Yeah. So that would be a near death experience. Yes.

Dr. Dana 44:44

Yeah. I don't know if anyone shared it with me. What's that? I don't know that anybody shared it with me. At the time. My wife was there. But yeah, she was in a panic about losing her husband, I think at that moment, so

William Peters 44:56

yeah, well so you have a you had a near death experience there, but the description you're giving,

Dr. Dana 45:03

that's what it felt like I felt myself going away. But I don't remember necessarily asking to come back or anything I just all of a sudden,

William Peters 45:12

well, that's also common with the near death experiences that you can be moving away and then all of a sudden, something shifts and bam, you're back in your body. Okay, that's actually the most common element. There's, there's oftentimes, you'll be told this is not your time. Okay? When you go back, by the way, most people, unlike me, I'm very rare. In my near death experience, most people are out there, they don't want to come back.

Dr. Dana 45:43

I mean, it was very pleasant. I will say, they're the absence of pain was pretty cool. Yeah, absence of pain. That was really nice. I like apple.

Kim Fauskee 45:53

That's a pretty shared experience, though. I've had a few friends that have had these near death experiences. And I think almost every one of them in a lot of them were from accidents that they were involved in, said that same thing all of a sudden, there was just no pain. It was just calm, there was no more pain. Yeah. And it felt so much better.

William Peters 46:15

Well, let's see, yeah, you leave your body. And your body has a certain sense of pain and pleasure.

Kim Fauskee 46:27

So go ahead. Go ahead.

Dr. Dana 46:29

I'm really curious about something. I've had a number of experiences of people coming to visit me after they've died. And I'm just wondering if when you have a shared death experience with someone and they die, do they ever come to visit you afterwards? Is there any acknowledgement of your presence in their death process that comes hours or weeks or whatever, afterward?

William Peters 46:57

I've had a few of those. I'm just thinking. Yes. So what you're talking about would be a post death, vision or visitation? Yes. By the way, I studied those two, that's part of my I have a shared crossing spectrum of end of life experiences. So because a lot of times people would come in, and they want to share a shared death experience, but it's actually not it's visitation or something. But they're all fascinating experiences. But I have had a lot of posts of visitations. Especially when I help people at the end of life, they'll come back and visit me. Yes. But I didn't have a shared death experience with a lot of these. So you did or did not? It did not. So I'd help someone die, then all of a sudden, I'd see them. Usually I get them when I wake up just when I wake up in the morning. They call that the hypnopompic. State, you know, just as you're waking up, yeah. Our could be hypnagogic. One is when you're going to bed and others when you're waking up. But I get some early in the morning, and I you know, there's times in my life when I have them all the time. People come to me, Oh, you're dead? Or or you die. I know you died. You're coming back to me. What do you want from me? What do you want? They come with a message for me to deliver? Yes. And so I take the message and I give it to whoever it's for. Because usually I've helped the family or helped a friend or somebody die, they die. They come back and they tell me something. And I'm usually a messenger for something. So yeah, that's pretty common.

Dr. Dana 48:33

Okay. Yeah. I mean, to me, they came in dreams, but with a message. They did what they came in my dreams. Yeah. Oh, yeah. They can be in your dreams. And with a message for Yeah. And the couple of times that had happened, they were people that I wasn't really that. It's not like I was their best friend or whatever. I was just open to give the message.

William Peters 48:54

Yeah, I'd said I, there's a time when I got really frustrated because I'm like, you know, they wake you up with this powerful dream and want you to give a message. I'm like, oh, geez, you know, I don't want to be this. I don't want this job. I don't want to be the mailman. But there was a time that I was doing that overtime regularly. Like I just felt like I was in the airport. Okay, so but I cut that I limited that I really made a decision I learned how to close up manage my boundaries and my psychic spiritual boundaries. And now I don't get them as much anymore. I can get on when my father died a year and a half ago. And he came twice, not right away. But he came a couple times. I got his messages.

Dr. Dana 49:44

I was just kind of curious. I was just wondering if there's a relationship that develops when you're having that shared death experience, and the person wants to come and Yeah, show you some gratitude for helping them sort of in a time that they might have needed a company or whatever and that you are present with them in the process.

William Peters 50:02

Yeah, that can happen. Well, I'll say this. What's interesting about having the shared death experiences, if you have the shared death experience, you're about 60% of the time. The experiencer will have another post death visitation or after death communication. So they definitely open a portal. But this is what I've said all along, because I think all these experiences teach us to be less rooted in our body or less stuck here like we can, we can go into other dimensions more easily drop our body and, you know, explore,

Dr. Dana 50:43

right? So um, did you did this feel to you like there's a purpose behind all this for you specifically, as a person?

William Peters 50:56

All this in terms of my journey, I mean,

Dr. Dana 50:58

your connection in the world and with death, and with your death and all that? pretty unusual? I'm assuming you know that. I mean, not everybody has these experiences, and most people are terrified, even though I feel

Kim Fauskee 51:13

that I feel left out in the conversation right now.

Dr. Dana 51:17

I mean, I'm just curious about whether you feel like there's purpose behind it in some way that serves you as a person in the world?

William Peters 51:26

Well, I mean, definitely I'll say this, I was resistant to really pursuing my near death experience for a long time. Even when I became a psychotherapist. I was interested in transpersonal things, spiritual things. But the near death thing was always a little far out. For me. I went to some groups that wasn't particularly didn't gravitate to people so much. And I was reluctant to go into this. But then when I heard Raymond Moody talk, it changed everything. Because then I realized, oh, there's this experience that nobody knows about. There's no one's talking about letting people know about it. And then I realized in that moment, I mean, I just really felt it in my body. This is my life purpose. This is what I'm here to do. This is what I came back for. It was this Chang ching ching, ching ching. And really, the truth of the matter is, I've been really guided and supported him all my work, you know, yeah. You know, people

have been generous in supporting the nonprofit research project, which is really hard to do. Really hard to do is to have a not for profit research project. That's never going to make any money. Because you know, he just can't really sell anything out of it. I mean, I do education and programming, but we try to make it so that people can do it not so that we make a killing at it. Right. So. Yeah, I'm pretty sure I'm doing the work I'm supposed to do here.

Kim Fauskee 52:57

A couple months ago, we talked about the fear of death on the show. And we had two people from hospice one happens to be Dana's wife, who was a longtime hospice nurse, and hospice grief counselor. And one of the questions that we talked about quite a bit was the preparation for death. And, and how all of us are, most of us look at it as a negative thing in grieving and the black cloud and how it can actually be a positive thing. And there were stories that not only Susan Toba dureena also told about people's passings and even children passing and how it actually became a beautiful thing in experience for the family, and so on and so forth. Guessing again, and this is probably a rhetorical question, because I think your view on death is probably much different than a lot of ours, because you've had these near death experiences that that have not not only been good for you, but has kind of led you into this, this whole life's work for you as well. So we want to talk about how again, how life or death I should say can be a positive thing. And maybe you don't view it. I don't know if you view it that way for the general population or not. But I'm guessing from 280 participants in your program, probably most of them don't fear death.

William Peters 54:39

Yeah, well the question

Kim Fauskee 54:42

or at least fear death in the way that we Yeah, most of us fear death.

William Peters 54:46

So you're right. Most of the people who are taking my classes or groups or work with me, they know that this is a preparation for death. They're gonna discuss death and get ready for it. So My people aren't good subjects for the norm in the United States. That being said, they are very comfortable with death. And I'm very comfortable with that. I mean, I have a lovely daughter and good friends and, you know, family members that I don't necessarily want to leave. But I'm not going to, I'm not going to fight to stay here. I mean, I'm totally economist, I mean, like, if I go, sitting right in this chair, then I'm sorry, I didn't get a chance to say goodbye to those people, but there's not gonna be resistance, you know, I'm at peace with death. And, and I see it as a wonderful thing that we can, that we should prepare for, as you said, and really talk about, and there's so many good experiences around death and dying. And I mean, good. I mean, it's not good for the, you know, the close loved ones. But for the rest of us the good to go, if you can, if we made death, more community event, and talked about our experiences around it, it would radically transform our relationship to death and dying. And that's really what I'm about more than anything else is that these experiences will help people reshape their view of death and die and embrace it. And in so doing, they'll embrace and they'll embrace life, too. I sort of see, I see that in the literature all the time, I see that in literature, I see that in my work with people, people do my deaf training classes over the weekend or something, and they'll write back on like, two or three days or

weeks later and say, since your class, I've just had a renewed sense of appreciation for my life and all the rest of it. And that, you know, that's a profound experience to be able to get a renewed appreciation for our life. So anyway, but I do think preparing for death is really important. You need to have conversations with people, some people won't do it. But most well, he said to be skilled about it, you got it, you know, don't watch. Don't don't focus on the blood and gore, focus on, you know, what do you think's gonna happen?

Kim Fauskee 57:18

So we're coming to a close in this fascinating conversation over the last hour. But I've learned a lot from well, is there one or two things that you would like to leave our listeners with about the shared death experience that that they'll remember from this conversation going forward?

William Peters 57:37

Yeah, I mean, I think the important thing to realize is that death is easy. You know, death is easy, the actual art of transition. Die, can be really hard. Because we have this great medical system that can keep us alive. And I don't think it's a good thing for a lot of people who are elderly, to be getting all the interventions to keep them alive. Just doesn't seem like they've a lot of times they don't even want it. But yeah, it's what I would say is this, like, you know, death is a beautiful, easy experience. And you don't need to, you don't even need to prepare for it, per se. But one thing you could do is not resist it. And if you're if you're not going to resist it, you've got to work through resistance now, resistance now, which means you got to talk about it. In our culture, that means talking. So

Kim Fauskee 58:39

one thing we didn't get to, but we'll definitely put in the show notes so people can reference it is that that you have a book out now called at heaven's door. So if people want to look at that book, get that book, we'll have that show notes as well and your nonprofit project. We'll also put a link in there to the show notes. But, William, thank you. It was great having you here today.

William Peters 59:05

Thank you, Cam. Thank you, Dana. Thanks for having me. I really enjoyed the conversation. So great. Thank you.

Fear Me Out 59:11

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