



## ARTICLE:

# Death Bed Visions

By Carla Wills-Brandon

**D**eath Bed Visions come in all shapes and sizes. Some people receive visitations from deceased relatives while others encounter angels, or religious figures. Many of the accounts contained in Carla Wills-Brandon's research discuss seeing a wisp of "something" leaving the body of a friend or relative at the moment of a physical passing. This phenomenon is nothing new. It has been described over and over again, for as long as time can remember. Those who are about to leave will often talk about seeing beautiful landscapes on the other side or next dimension and then state this is where they will be after they crossover. In most cases, once one has had such a vision, death is no longer something to fear. Death Bed Visions or Departing Visions bring comfort not only to the physically dying, but to those who love them. In this article, Carla presents some Frequently Asked Questions about Death Bed, or Departing Visions.

### **What is a departing vision (often called a death bed vision)?**

Those individuals who have an open mind with regard to life after physical death may be aware of this phenomenon. Death is just another word for journey to the next dimension so the departing vision is viewed as a normal occurrence. Most Hospice workers are also very familiar with departing or deathbed visions, but for many folks these experiences are difficult to put into words.

A death bed vision or DBV is a powerful, comforting experience the dying and their family members often encounter just before physical death occurs. The dying will report visions of angels, deceased loved ones, or religious figures, moments, hours, days or even weeks before actual death takes place. These visions typically lessen the fear of dying and make passing an easier transition for all concerned.

Family members at the death bed of a loved one who are not familiar with the death bed or departing vision phenomenon will often ask healthcare workers and Hospice caretakers, "Couldn't these 'visions' just be the by- product of a dying brain?"

In the 1920s, 1960s and 1970s, several researchers asked these exact same questions. To try to understand the DBV these investigators decided to put this phenomenon to the test. What they discovered was astounding. The visions of the physically dying most often were those of deceased relatives. During the vision, deceased relatives would appear to the dying person to offer support, guidance and assistance as physical death drew near. Interestingly, in some deathbed vision accounts, the dying individual received visitations from relatives s/he did not know were already deceased. While scientifically investigating this phenomenon they also discovered that these departing visions have been reported by the dying for centuries. Even President Abraham Lincoln had a 'deathbed vision', just before his own assassination.

When DBVs are reported, Hospice workers and healthcare providers are often confronted with a number of questions from confused family members, such as "What about wishful thinking, related to a fear of death? Maybe my loved one is imagining all of this."

The above would be a simple explanation, but the DBV phenomenon is not that cut and dry. One researcher compared the DBVs of dying Americans with those of people in India. Thousands of nurses and doctors were interviewed and asked what they had witnessed as physical death drew near. DBVs were often reported. Except for a few religious differences, the DBVs of both cultures were incredibly similar. The consistency of the experiences between those dying in America and those in India has guided me to believe there is more to the DBV experience than wishful thinking.

Hospice workers and healthcare providers are also often asked, "How about medication? Medications can certainly induce hallucinations."

Many of the individuals who have reported these visions were not on medications and were, up to the moment of death, very coherent. Those who weren't on medications have also shared visions similar to those who were not on medications. Finally, well, alert, sober family members and friends of the physically dying have had DBVs. Along with this, Hospice workers and healthcare providers have reported DBV experiences.

### **Are the DBVs of family members, friends and healthcare professionals similar to those of the physically dying?**

Interestingly yes! These individuals can also receive visitations from deceased relatives (in some cases they too were not aware the dying person was actually preparing to pass), angels or religious figures. Like those reported by the dying, dreams of "heaven", other dimensions or the "over world", along with communication with other worldly figures also have been reported by those attending the dying. In many situations, loved ones of the physically dying will have a visitation from the person who is passing at the moment of death. In other words, a loved one at home may be awakened from a deep sleep by a feeling, or knowing that passing has occurred, or even by a vision of the dying person (who is at the hospital or in another location). Many of these individuals then receive a phone call minutes later confirming death.

### **As a clinician and seeker yourself, has understanding DBVs helped you assist those who are in grief?**

In many cases, bereaved individuals will come to me and say, "I had a rather strange experience just before Uncle Joe passed," or "While Mom was dying, she started talking to all of the dead relatives as if they were right there, in the room with her!" For those who have had such experiences, my own personal and professional involvement with DBVs validates their encounters. My sharing of my experiences and of those I have collected and reviewed (over 2,000), allows these individuals to feel "normal" about their experiences. Such folks usually walk away from my office feeling very relieved to have found someone who understands.

For those who are dying, DBV information offers them comfort, validates any visions they might have had or may have in the future, and lessens the fear of death. With individuals seeking answers to questions about death, DBV information often propels them into resolving their own issues around physical dying. Understanding this "life" is just one experience of our journey, and that there are other dimensions of existence "out there" can reshape how we operate in the "here and now" with our fellow travelers and the planet.

### **Why did you decide to investigate and publish about departing visions?**

I've written a lot of books, but this topic, the departing vision, is very personal to me in more ways than one. My son experienced a DBV when his grandfather died. I too had a DBV at the age of 16 when my own mother passed. Since then, I've experienced a number of afterlife communications from both relatives and

friends.

Over the last 25 years I have heard numerous accounts of DBVs not only from the dying, but also from those who love them. Sadly, I have often been the first person they've ever discussed these blessed events with. Aside from living in a very "death phobic" culture, fear of societal judgment keeps many of us silent and a lack of validation often creates confusions. My job as a seeker and healthcare provider has been to validate DBVs for those family and friends of mine. Professionally, when patients of mine who report them, I use them for processing grief and developing a sense of spiritual wellness. The lack of public awareness about the DBV phenomenon convinced me to publish in the topic. Out of my 12 books, two are on the departing vision and I'm working on a third.

DBVs are sadly a neglected source of peace and comfort for many of us. This must change. The information must be made more available to the public at large. Today, I have no absolute answers regarding life after death, but I do strongly believe the DBV experience must not continue to be ignored.

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*Carla Wills-Brandon a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and fellow seeker, is also the author of twelve published most recently Heavenly Hugs published by New Page Books. She has appeared on numerous radio (including Coast to Coast with both Art Bell and George Noory) and television programs. She has also lectured across the United States and the United Kingdom.*