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Opening Heaven's Door: What The Dying Are Trying To Say About Where They're Going



Synopsis

The first book by a respected journalist on Nearing Death Awarenessâsimilar to Near-Death Experienceâthis âfascinatingâ (Kirkus Reviews) exploration brings âhumor, sympathy, and keen critical intelligence to a topic that is all too often off-limitsâ (Ptolemy Tompkins, collaborator with Eben Alexander on Proof of Heaven). People everywhere carry with them extraordinary, deeply comforting experiences that arrived at the moment when they most needed relief: when they lost a loved one. These experiences can include clear messages from beyond, profound and vividly beautiful visions, mysterious connections and spiritual awareness, foreknowledge of a loved oneâs passingâall of which evade explanation by science and logic. Most people keep these transcendent experiences secret for fear they will be discounted by hyper-rational scrutiny. Yet these very common occurrences have the power to console, comfort, and even transform our understanding of life and death. Prompted by her familyâs surprising, profound experiences around the death of her father and her sister, reporter Patricia Pearson sets out on an open-minded inquiry, a rare journalistic investigation of Nearing Death Awareness, which Anne Rice praises as âsubstantive, eloquent, and worthwhile.â Opening Heavenâs Door offers deeply affecting stories of messages from the dying and the dead in a fascinating work of investigative journalism, pointing to new scientific explanations that give these luminous moments the importance felt by those who experience them. Pearson also delves into out-of-body and near-death experiences, examining stories and research to make sense of these related but distinct categories. Challenging current assumptions about what we know and what we are still unable to explain, Opening Heavenâs Door will forever alter your perceptions of the nature of life and death.

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Customer Reviews

Opening Heaven's Door begins with a deeply personal spiritual experience shared by Patricia Pearson's sister and Father, with its subsequent affect on her family. Her sister Katherine, suffering from metastatic breast cancer, is embraced by the presence of her Father at the moment of his unexpected death. This embrace leaves Katherine feeling elated for several hours before she gets the news that her Father has died. Katherine eventually succumbs to her cancer, but the spiritual elation she experiences in the process, and shares with the family leaves its imprint on those surrounding her. Not given to superstition, but unable to deny the authenticity of what she witnessed, Patricia Pearson set out to discover more, and write a book about it. One critical turning point was an encounter at a Christmas party with a University friend, with whom she tries to share the story of her dying cancer-stricken sister experiencing the crisis apparition presence of their Father, and the subsequent numinous experiences leading up to her sister's passing. The friend's response was coldly materialistic: "I don't mean to be unkind, but it is very likely your sister was imagining these things." Pearson was starting to see what she was up against. Researching historically documented events, as well as conducting her own interviews with friends, strangers and people referred to her while preparing to write the book, Pearson was struck by the fact that at least fifty percent of us (70 percent in Norway) have had encounters with the Divine, interpreted positively and negatively, yet we are almost universally afraid to publicly talk about them.

The power of this book comes from Patricia Pearson having one foot in her heart and one firmly in her mind. She expertly weaves the stories of those who have had extraordinary near-death experiences and those whose loved ones, including her own, have passed, with the illuminating insights of hospice workers and other palliative care givers. Then she provides a steady and dispassionate look at the copious scientific literature on death and dying to encourage a more open, understanding, and supportive holding of the widespread experience of many people that death is perhaps neither final nor terrifying. The most powerful parts of the book for me were the observations

on how so much of the scientific literature cannot explain much of the mystery surrounding death and/or near death experience in terms of brain function. There is less woo-woo here and more of just a clear and fascinating walk through the extensive literature of the last 100 years that simply cannot be consigned to a rigid rationalist box. This is thanks to the work of numerous psychologists, physicians, and neuroscientists who have been willing to allow evidence to speak for itself, and then to ask very difficult and important questions about the nature of consciousness and who we are. There is a wonderful detailed, and extensive, notes section that will guide the interested reader to a vast array of primary sources on this topic. The weight of clinical observation and scientific evidence that this book provides or refers to will give even the most skeptical reader an opportunity to reflect on how important it is to examine even extraordinary phenomena with an open mind when there is such a compelling literature documenting it.

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