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medium frequency

Can mediums really communicate with the dead? Bonnie Cleaver goes in search of some answers

It's the question we've all pondered at some stage – what happens to us when this life ends? Often, it's the loss of a loved one that makes us wonder if death is really the end, or whether the soul of the person lives on. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of research into what mediums do and where exactly they are getting their information from. We spoke with three top mediums and a scientist to find out what's really going on.

What science says...

Science first began to analyse mediumship about a century ago, but it dropped off until the last decade when a renewed interest has seen research pick up again.

Dr Julie Beischel, co-founder and director of research at the Windbridge Institute in the US, is an expert in the field. She began studying the paranormal after losing her mother while completing her PhD in pharmacology and toxicology. "I like to say science is my religion, so when I had questions about what happens when we die, I turned to science," she reflects. "At that point, I didn't even know what mediumship was, but once I started to learn about it, I realised there was something to it."

As part of her work at the Windbridge Institute, one of the few groups in the world to focus

on afterlife research, Beischel runs a rigorous eight-step process for certifying mediums, involving numerous tests and blind readings to prove the accuracy of their statements. "From this, we have been able to show that certain mediums can report accurate and specific information about the deceased without having any prior information, receiving any feedback, reading body language or other cues, or using fraud or deception. Where they are getting their information from, however, is another story," explains Beischel.

Dead people, or dead information?

The big debate in parapsychology is whether mediums are able to communicate with the dead – which would suggest there is an afterlife – or whether they are simply

gathering information through a combination of psychic powers like telepathy (reading people's minds), precognition (looking forward in time to their feedback from the reading) and remote viewing (to see items such as death certificates and photos of the deceased).

Beischel's research compares the difference between mediumship and psychic readings. So far, results suggest mediums experience mediumship sessions as interacting with a dynamic personality still 'at large', rather than simply relaying psychic information.

Beischel's personal verdict? "From the mediumship readings I've witnessed, where they might giggle unexpectedly when the deceased says something funny or take on their characteristics, it just doesn't seem like they're reading stored or 'dead' ▶

information. That's why I'm leaning towards communication with the dead."

Speaking with the other side

Medium Deb Webber says there is no question that mediums communicate directly with the spirit world, although every interaction is unique. "Sometimes I can talk to the person as if they are standing in the room while other times they will build a picture for me with images or 'film clips'. I might hear voices or the spirit may jump into my body and I take on their characteristics, start talking like them and even feel their cause of death," she says.

Medium and founder of The Australian College of Mediumship, Kerrie Wearing, says: "Our job is to interpret energy, images, feelings and sounds, bearing in mind that each spirit has its own strengths and weaknesses of communication just like we do. So, those who were more touchy-feely might communicate through feelings whereas

others will send us more images, and we have to do our best to work with that, so we can give people validation that their loved ones still exist."

While mental mediumship, where the medium remains in a conscious state of mind to relay information from the spirit world, is the most common form, some mediums let the spirit take control of their mind – known as trancing or channelling.

Cheree, a trance medium, explains: "When I'm in a deep trance, I vacate my body and the spirit takes complete control. It can talk, open or close my eyes, and move my limbs, but I have no memory of the wisdom that comes through unless someone tells me about it."

What to expect from a reading

You may go into a reading hoping to contact a specific loved one, but it doesn't always work like that. "As mediums, we dial the phone but we can't control who picks up at the other end, and I'd be cautious of anyone who claims they can," says Wearing. There are many reasons for this: the energy of the medium and the person having the reading may not gel, the spirit may be still healing after death or learning how to communicate with the living, or it may simply not be the contact you need at that point, in which case another departed loved one or spirit guide may come through.

Spirit guides are evolved spirits who guide, teach and protect humans. Cheree works with several spirit guides and is able to convey, through their wisdom, advice on everything from relationship issues to career choices.

While readings can often be emotional, a good medium will know how to communicate delicate information with sensitivity, leaving you feeling positive and uplifted. It's also important to remember that while a reading can help your healing process, it's not a cure-all for grief. "When you lose someone it causes pain in the aura (energy field) that goes into the physical body and needs to be repaired. If you're struggling with grief, I'd advise going to therapy, having reiki, kinesiology or any sort of energy healing," says Webber.



FINDING A GOOD MEDIUM

Word of mouth is probably the best way to find a good medium. Once you've found one, don't be afraid to ask questions before you commit, and avoid paying upfront. "You should only pay them if they've done their job and were able to provide details that convinced you they were talking to the person who passed over," says Webber.

