

Dream Experiences of After-Death Communication (ADC)

Many bereaved people experience some form of contact with their departed loved ones. Although the traditional psychoanalytic model of grief views contact with the departed as problematic, the modern continuing bonds model views maintaining a relationship with the departed as normal and healthy (Klass & Steffen, 2018). This involves the bereaved recognizing that their relationship with a departed loved one continues but has changed to one involving a spiritual rather than physical connection.

ADCs

An experience of contact with or receiving messages from a departed loved one is termed an after-death communication (ADC; see also Windbridge Research Center, 2019). ADCs have been reported across the world since time immemorial. They are a ubiquitous human experience.

ADCs occur in all types of people regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, education level, income, type of death, duration of the relationship, time passed since the death, or socioeconomic or religious standing though an emotional connection seems to be an important component (Houck, 2005; Krippner, 2006; Streit-Horn, 2011).

ADCs are common and a natural part of the grieving process. Because people can be hesitant to share their experiences due to perceived social stigma, reports are likely underestimates but different research studies have estimated that 30-90% of adults have had at least one ADC (Krippner, 2006; Streit-Horn, 2011; Woollacott, et al., 2021). However, not everyone has one and “the presence or absence of ADCs does not reflect on the nature or quality of the relationship with the deceased” (Daggett, 2005, p. 205).

ADCs are often, but not always, positive and comforting. They may result in a decreased fear of death and an increased sense of spirituality. In addition to demonstrating a continuing bond with the departed, ADCs may also lessen anger, guilt, and anxiety and facilitate a belief in an afterlife. Negative ADCs may be the result of misunderstanding the experience, representing a conflict with an existing worldview, or adverse responses from others who are unaware of the healthy nature of ADCs.

Experiences termed *spontaneous* ADCs involve unexpected or uninvited contact. The two most common types of spontaneous ADCs are sensing the presence of the departed and visitation dreams.

It has been suggested that these “dream ADCs” might more appropriately be called “sleep ADCs” because, unlike REM dreams, they “typically feel subjectively real and persist vividly in memory for years” (Holden et al., 2018, p. 15; Streit-Horn, 2011). These dream or sleep ADCs or visitation dreams have common characteristics which are described below.

Dream ADCs

Experiences of after-death communication that occur during sleep can involve:

- details that remain intensely vivid and impactful for years
- an opportunity to say good-bye, address unfinished business, and/or advance the relationship
- the departed speaking or not speaking; the exchange of ideas occurring with or without words
- the departed appearing as if in the prime of their physical life

While the bereaved can request contact, dream ADCs appear to be initiated by the departed. Repeated or excessive demands for contact may serve as obstacles to communication.

ADCs may evoke strong emotions. Consider working with a mental healthcare provider to process any distressing experiences.

View a video sharing a personal dream ADC experience at: <https://youtu.be/fUuQTScC69c>

References and Further Reading

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