



“Well, actually...”

Responses to Common Misconceptions about Mediums

by **Julie Beischel, PhD**

Director of Research, Windbridge Research Center

It's not surprising there's a lot of misinformation about mediums out there. It's a controversial topic that is often in conflict with various worldviews, religious beliefs, neuroscience, and, seemingly, common sense. We weren't taught about mediumship in grade school even though it has been practiced in cultures all over the world for eons. As far as I know, there are no Small Persons-type toys that are mediums like there are for cowboys, farmers, police officers, firefighters, carpenters, plumbers, pirates, and even angry gentlemen with hats. The popular media doesn't help matters with its regular misrepresentations and sensationalism. So, whenever I encounter errors in thinking about mediums, I try to do what I can to correct them.

For example, when I spend time with my uncle Harold (say, at a holiday dinner table) his first question is always, “Now, what is it that you do again? You talk to dead people?” This is often accompanied by eye-rolling and a smirk. Then I explain that I am Director of Research at the Windbridge Research Center where I design and perform controlled research studies with psychic mediums, people who experience regular communication with the deceased. I remind him that I am not a medium, but I work with a team of scientifically tested mediums and study their accuracy, experiences, and unique characteristics. Harold then (say, after a couple of egg nogs) launches into a barrage of erroneous statements that I try to calmly correct. Below is an example of one of our conversations. And if Uncle Harold ever says, “Prove it!” or “Wait, what?” I point him to the resources listed as ‘To learn more.’*



You may have heard or will hear similar statements from people in your own life. Feel free to use my responses below as your own. (It is not recommended, however, that these responses be used to get in arguments with angry people with entrenched worldviews and overactive amygdalas from the Internet nor with individuals on whom you depend for a ride home.)

**I don't have an Uncle Harold. He is fictional and was created for the purpose of this document. The photo is clipart. Harold is an amalgam of people and opinions I've encountered. Please play along.*

Uncle Harold: “There’s no way science can study something like mediumship.”

Me: “Well, actually science is a set of tools that can be applied to nearly any topic. It’s not a body of knowledge; it’s a way to answer questions. Credible scientists have been studying mediumship and psychic phenomena since the 1880s.”

To learn more:

West, D. (2015). *Psi Encyclopedia: Society for Psychical Research*. <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/society-psychical-research>



Uncle Harold: “But all mediums are frauds and con-artists taking advantage of the bereaved.”

Me: “Well, actually, like most ‘all’ statements, that is not true just like it wouldn’t be true to say that all mechanics, plumbers, physicians, or psychologists are con-artists. There may be some people in any profession looking to take advantage of others but making a claim about all the people in any profession is simply illogical. And the accuracy testing that I’ve performed with 20 mediums in the US provides statistically significant evidence that they were able to report accurate and specific information about deceased people under controlled laboratory conditions. So, that refutes your ‘all’ claim.”

To learn more:

Windbridge Research Center. (2017). *Testing mediums’ accuracy under controlled laboratory conditions* [Fact Sheet]. http://www.windbridge.org/factsheets/WRC_accuracy.pdf

Beischel, J., Boccuzzi, M., Biuso, M., & Rock, A. J. (2015). Anomalous information reception by research mediums under blinded conditions II: Replication and extension. *EXPLORE: Journal of Science & Healing*, 11(2), 136-142.

Uncle Harold: “There’s no good evidence for mediumistic or psychic abilities.”

Me: “Well, actually, like I said earlier, I have performed accuracy testing with mediums that provided statistically significant evidence that they were able to report accurate and specific information about deceased people under controlled laboratory conditions. And regarding psychic abilities in general, there have been dozens of peer-reviewed journal articles published demonstrating the existence of psi (telepathy, clairvoyance or remote viewing, precognition, presentiment, and mind-matter interactions) and providing evidence supportive of the survival of consciousness after death. Back in 1996, university statistician Jessica Utts examined two decades of studies including government sponsored research and concluded that psychic functioning had been well established. In 2018, psychologist Etzel Cardeña reviewed recent/updated meta-analyses and also found cumulative support for the reality of psi.”

To learn more:

Cardeña, E. (2018). The experimental evidence for parapsychological phenomena: A review. *American Psychologist*, 73(5), 663-677. doi: 10.1037/amp0000236

Gober, M. (2018). *An end to upside down thinking: Dispelling the myth that the brain produces consciousness and the implications for everyday life*. Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA: Waterside Press.

McLuhan, R. (2010). *Randi’s prize: What skeptics say about the paranormal, why they are wrong, and why it matters*. Leicester, UK: Matador.

Radin, D. (2016). *Selected psi research publications*. <http://deanradin.com/evidence/evidence.htm>

Utts, J. (1996). An assessment of the evidence for psychic functioning. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 10(1), 3-30. http://www.scientificexploration.org/docs/10/jse_10_1_utts.pdf



Uncle Harold: “If mediums were actually real, they could win the lottery.”

Me: “Well, actually that’s not something mediums claim to be able to do. A medium experiences communication with the deceased and then shares the messages received with the living. Your statement is like saying, ‘If chefs were actually real, they could turn rocks into pies.’”

Uncle Harold: “If there was something to this mediumship stuff, more scientists would be studying it.”

Me: “Well, actually there are a lot of factors preventing more research. While mediumship has become relevant in the popular culture, it remains a taboo subject in scientific, government, social, and clinical circles. And effective and relevant research studies require funding, but parapsychological research worldwide, of which mediumship represents only a small portion, receives less than 5% of the support that grants for medical research or research in science and engineering provide. And because funding is limited and humans require pay for the jobs they do in order to secure food and shelter, very few individuals are currently performing mediumship research. Because of these stigma, funding, and personnel issues, fewer than ten research groups globally have carried out original peer-reviewed mediumship research in the last ten years.”

To learn more:

Beischel, J. (2018). *Psi encyclopedia: Mental mediumship research*. <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/mental-mediumship-research>

Uncle Harold: “How could life after death even happen? When the brain dies, that’s it. Game over.”

Me: “Well, actually the idea that the brain creates consciousness is just a theory. There’s obviously a relationship between the brain and consciousness just like there’s a relationship between a TV and its picture. If the TV gets damaged, the picture can be affected, and if the brain gets damaged, consciousness can be affected. But that doesn’t mean the TV is creating the picture. The picture exists separate from the TV and is received by the TV. Similarly, there’s plenty of evidence that consciousness is merely received by the brain. It seems that consciousness is separate from the brain and is not bound by space or time---that is, it is non-local---and continues to exist after the body and brain die.”



To learn more:

Gober, M. (2018). *An end to upside down thinking: Dispelling the myth that the brain produces consciousness and the implications for everyday life*. Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA: Waterside Press.

Kean, L. (2017). *Surviving death: A journalist investigates evidence for an afterlife*. New York: Crown Archetype.

Uncle Harold: “Then a medium should be able to tell me exactly what I want to know from my deceased loved one.”

Me: “Well, actually mediums receive rather than retrieve information from the deceased. A medium may receive information through all five sensory modes and then interpret those sensations and report those experiences and interpretations to you. Which people and which items come through are not up to them any more than what you hear when answering a ringing phone or see when reading an incoming text is up to you.”

To learn more:

Beischel, J., Mosher, C., & Boccuzzi, M. (2017). Quantitative and qualitative analyses of mediumistic and psychic experiences. *Threshold: Journal of Interdisciplinary Consciousness Studies*, 1(2): 51-91. <http://www.tjics.org/index.php/TJICS/article/view/17/15>

Windbridge Research Center. (2017). Receiving a mediumship reading: Recommendations for sitters [Fact Sheet]. http://www.windbridge.org/factsheets/WRC_sitters.pdf

Uncle Harold: “Everything the mediums on TV say is accurate so any medium I get a reading from should be 100% accurate.”

Me: “Well, actually what you see on TV has been recorded and edited. It doesn’t represent how mediumship actually works. Think about all the scene set-up, media release paperwork, and the number of cameras and crew members actually involved in any aired content. Expecting your reading to work like an edited TV show is unlikely and your unrealistic expectations will likely hamper the reading. In addition, there are things that you as the sitter can do before, during, and after the reading to optimize the reading process.”



To learn more:

Windbridge Research Center. (2017). *Receiving a mediumship reading: Recommendations for sitters* [Fact Sheet]. http://www.windbridge.org/factsheets/WRC_sitters.pdf

Uncle Harold: “I’m going to get a reading with a medium to prove my son is still around.”

Me: “Well, actually you shouldn’t really go into a reading with that mindset. Again, the medium can’t control what comes through. Her job is not to prove anything to you. It’s just to share what she’s experiencing. The best thing you can do is trust that your son will share with the medium what he wants you to know. And remember that you are also able to experience your son. If you are going to demand proof, ask your son to give it straight to you. Don’t put that burden on a medium.”

To learn more:

Windbridge Research Center. (2017). *Receiving a mediumship reading: Recommendations for sitters* [Fact Sheet]. http://www.windbridge.org/factsheets/WRC_sitters.pdf

Uncle Harold: "I'm worried about my friend Janice. She clearly has not gone through the five stages of grief after her husband's death."

Me: "Well, actually the idea that there are stages involved in grief is a myth. The idea stems from observations of terminal patients thinking about their own deaths. Grief is a natural process. And because people are not robots, grief is different for every person."

To learn more:

Konigsberg, R. D. (2011). *The truth about grief: The myth of its five stages and the new science of loss*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Uncle Harold: "Wow, Dr. Niece. I had no idea. This has all been so helpful! I've learned so much and I really appreciate it. How can I help support the work you do at the Windbridge Research Center?"

Me: "Well, actually that's super easy. The best way to make sure we can continue to perform rigorous scientific research and publish free educational materials is to visit www.windbridge.org/donate/ and make a one-time or monthly donation to the Windbridge Research Center, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit charity. We need your help because dying, death, and what comes next affects everyone but funding opportunities for controversial topics are limited. Your donation will support our experts' cutting-edge research and the creation of free educational materials. Committing to a monthly donation keeps our materials free for everyone. And, Harold, all major credit/debit cards and PayPal are accepted."



Uncle Harold: "That's so easy! I can definitely commit to a monthly donation so you can continue offering free, online, educational materials about dying, death, and what comes next."

Me: "Thanks so much, Uncle Harold! I really appreciate it. Could you please pass the green beans?"

Note: The format of this document was inspired by the superhero character "Inspector Well Actually" from the hilarious audiobook *Andrea Vernon and the Corporation for UltraHuman Protection* by Alexander C. Kane. The Inspector's superpower is his extensive knowledge on nearly any topic that can only be accessed in order to correct an inaccurate statement made by someone else.

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