

## Abstract

This exploration of the experience of three therapists and a counsellor during their close encounters with death, borrows from phenomenological, heuristic and anthropological models and as such is set within the qualitative tradition. Data was collected from transcribed interviews and analysed in the spirit of heuristic research, using the intuitive understanding of the researcher, who also has personal experience of coming close to death and includes snippets of this.

Two of the data sample experienced profound visions and sensations such as travelling down a tunnel or through darkness to a place of great love and peace. A third just saw bright light and felt an amazing peace, as did the researcher. The fourth had profound mystical experiences in the aftermath of her experience. This data resembles that of previous research into 'Near-death Experiences'.

Like previous research study groups, the interviewees also felt transformed by what they had experienced, becoming less afraid of death and more interested in deep contact than 'triviality', suggesting that their 'interruptions to contact' had decreased. This contradicts notions that death anxiety increases as psychological defences are relinquished and provides evidence for ancient mystical notion that facing the void is the way through to something richer.

My interviewees reported that their transformations were due to a belief in a wonderful, peaceful, love-filled afterlife and a sense of connectedness to others and the earth, though whether these perceptions came from something 'out there' or 'in there' is unclear.