

**Inside this issue:**

*Healing Body and Soul*

Interview with **Yvonne Kason, MD**

— as told to **Louisa Peck**



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**Seattle IANDS—International Association for Near-Death Studies**

## ***Healing Body and Soul***

Interview with **Yvonne Kason, MD** — as told to **Louisa Peck**

Among the earliest and most prominent leaders of the growing worldwide movement toward spiritual awakening is Yvonne Kason, MD. The past-president of IANDS and current president of Spiritual Awakenings International, Yvonne coined the phrase “Spiritually Transformative Experience” (STE) in 1994 to encompass not only Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) but also mystical experiences, Kundalini awakenings, psychic phenomena, past life recall, and other spiritual experiences. Yvonne herself has had five NDEs and multiple STEs.

“I first became aware there was more to life than what I’d learned in my Christian upbringing when, in 1976 during my last year of medical school, I took a meditation course to help with studying and exams. After about three months of meditating regularly, I had what I now know was a Kundalini awakening: I felt this energy rush up my spine and out through my head, and I went out of body, looking down from above. My consciousness expanded to fill a tremendous space and transformed into a force-field of love. Afterwards, I had no idea what had happened to me, but, being extremely focused on my education, I put that experience away in the back of my mind.

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“I’ve since realized, though, that this STE was predated by two NDEs I had as a child, though in childhood I never framed them as ‘paranormal.’ The first NDE happened the summer before kindergarten, when I was with my parents at a train station in Europe. I saw someone jump down from the platform and cross the tracks, so I decided to do the same. But in the midst of my jump, time stood still. I went out-of-body, perceiving this frozen frame from above with my thoughts still going. From there I could see an oncoming train, and I felt completely calm at the prospect of being hit. Then suddenly the motion picture of my life resumed and a hand reached out and pulled me back onto the platform, so the train whisked in front of me. The way I interpreted this experience as a child was that I could fly; I remember trying to fly later and being puzzled when I couldn’t.

“My second NDE happened when I was eleven and my family was in a terrible car accident. Several of us were injured when the car rolled down an embankment. I was unconscious with a head injury, but clearly remember floating above the accident scene, watching my dad cry out, ‘My daughter!’ because no one had found my body. I remember watching from above as my

body was brought into the ER, looking down upon the top of the big, round overhead lamp. I was unconscious in the hospital for three days. Once I woke up, I didn't consider my experience paranormal; as a child, I thought it was just 'what happened.' But as an aftereffect, I developed an ability to see ghosts, which went on for almost a year. I made my parents move my bed in with my younger siblings because I thought our house was haunted.

"We now know, of course, that people who have NDEs often get blown open psychically and often have such mediumistic or clairvoyant experiences after.

"When I was 26 and in the last year of my medical residency, I took part in a medevac via plane in a remote area of Northern Ontario. The plane flew into a blizzard that froze over the air filters and stopped both engines. While the plane was falling, I felt intense terror, and what leapt from my heart was, "God, help! I'm going to die!" Right then is when my Near-Death Experience started—before the plane hit. I felt a force field of peace descend on me, literally pushing down and away all the fear. I felt completely peaceful. Then I heard an inner voice that said, Be still, and know that I am God. I am with you, now and always. Those words sent a vibration of peace and comfort through me; I was totally unafraid. Our pilot managed to crash land the plane on the surface of a partially frozen lake, but as soon as we slid to a stop, the plane broke through the ice and rapidly sank. I managed to get out, the pilot and nurse got out, but we were unable to pull out the patient in time. Then, in order to reach land, we had to swim about 200 yards across open water with a powerful current. I was weighted down with winter clothes, but a voice in my mind kept urging, Swim to shore, swim to shore.

"While swimming, I suddenly heard a whoosh! and my consciousness split. A minor aspect of it remained with my body, but the majority was viewing that body from about twenty or thirty feet above. The main part of my consciousness continued to rise higher until I encountered something I had never heard of, though today so many describe it: the light. Yes, it was beautiful, but the most powerful aspect was the love—such profound, unconditional love! It was the most perfect, beautiful, complete love that I'd ever experienced. I also knew things—as if they were suddenly obvious. I knew this love came from what I'd been raised to call God, yet this experience was not at all like the image of God I had been taught. This higher power was a universal force, one interpenetrating and underlying the entire universe, infinitely intelligent, and inside every one of us—we're like drops of this ocean. I also understood that I would live on whether that body below reached the shore or not.

"Of course I did make it, but only after ER workers re-

warmed me in a hot whirlpool bath from extreme hypothermia did my consciousness re-enter my body. I felt like I was being sucked down abruptly from an expanded state, through the top of my head into my tiny body, almost like depictions of a genie getting sucked back into a very small bottle.

"I had no idea what to call what had happened to me, but I was drunk with love for weeks—thank goodness I was off work to recover! Love had changed me. I was able to reach out to my dad, whom I'd been estranged from for years, and heal our relationship. I started having clairvoyant experiences. My spiritual views were completely transformed; I understood that our higher power loves us all and I became hungry to read and learn about diverse spiritual traditions.

"As a young doctor, I wanted a word to describe what had happened to me, but in 1979, there was none. I was told I didn't 'qualify' for an NDE because I hadn't seen a tunnel or been dead. My Kundalini awakening didn't 'qualify' because I wasn't an experienced yogi. I couldn't discuss my experiences with my medical colleagues, or if I tried, they dismissed them as hallucinations. Eventually, it was in the yogic books that I found a model that fit – the spiritual transformation of consciousness. This research eventually led me to coin the term, Spiritually Transformative Experience.

"For many years, I lived a double life, publicly as a medical faculty member at the University of Toronto, and privately as a mystic—studying, meditating, and even going to India to get guidance from Gopi Krishna. It all came together in 1990 when I was invited to speak on Kundalini awakenings at a conference put on by the Spiritual Emergence Network in California. Facilitating a sharing circle there, I heard nightmare stories from STE Experiencers who'd been mislabeled, pathologized, dismissed as crazy, condemned by their church, put in psychiatric wards, given electroshock, and rejected by their loved ones. They were crying; they hugged me. That MD after my name meant the world to them, just to finally find a medical doctor who believed them.

"I was walking on the beach afterwards when I had another STE, my 'calling' mystical experi-

ence. I was ‘called’ to come out of the closet and start advocating for STE Experiencers. I had to speak out because the medical profession and public were doing harm by labelling Experiencers crazy. So I went back to my university department chair and said, ‘I’ll resign if you want, but this is what I plan to specialize in.’ My guardian angels must have touched him, because he not only consented, but even gave me some pointers on how to set up what became the Spiritual Emergence Research and Referral Clinic.” As the first Canadian medical doctor to validate NDEs and STEs, Yvonne caught the interest of the media and made many appearances. She half-jokes that she was “the Eben Alexander of Canada” from the early ‘90s into the 2000s.

“In 1995, I had another NDE in a near-miss plane incident—a failing aborted landing. People were crying, screaming, throwing up. Facing death, I suddenly found myself out-of-body, rapidly rising up a dark tunnel toward the light. I had a life review, of 3 peak STEs. I re-experienced my NDE of 1979, then my calling experience of 1990, and finally an intense mystical experience of 1994. I then moved upwards toward the light when my path became blocked by a blue translucent being of light, half male and half female, with four arms and one leg uplifted—something like the dancing Shiva. It felt like a messenger of sorts and it conveyed to me, It’s not your time. Whoosh! Suddenly, I was back in my body.

“When I awoke the next morning, I was in an expansive, unitive state of consciousness, of oneness with the Higher Power. I’d found my way home. It was perfect. I told no one; I just led my normal life in this profound unitive state 24/7—for two months. My intuition was incredible—I’d know what was troubling a patient before they even opened their mouth. It’s not a grandiose experience, but humbling; it’s a oneness with every living thing. After it faded, I pursued my spiritual life more fervently than ever.

“Then on November 8, 2003, I slipped on black ice at Niagara Falls, fell, struck my head on rock, had a brain hemorrhage, and died. I instantly felt myself whisked out of my body and rising through dark space to the realm of light.

But this time I was welcomed into the light by two beings of light that I recognized instantly. They explained telepathically that I’d died. I felt tremendous love and joy. I then suddenly perceived vast amounts of information all at once, including my past lives. I saw how perfectly they fit together: this wasn’t my first life full of NDEs and STEs! Finally I understood why my life was so weird! The beings of light later reappeared and gave me the choice to serve God by either reincarnating as a baby or returning to the injured body. When my heart asked them, ‘Please guide me,’ they suggested I return to the injured body. And at the very instant I accepted, I revived in my cold, dead body.”

Yvonne’s traumatic brain injury disabled her: she suffered severe chronic fatigue and debilitating cognitive challenges for twelve years, despite seven years of neuro-rehab. Then February 24, 2016, her traumatic brain injury was miraculously cured in a spontaneous healing as she was meditating: “I inwardly perceived a volcano of light erupting in the center of my brain, lighting what had been dark. She felt the sensation of waking up from twelve years’ slumber. I was inwardly told, ‘Pass on what you have learned.’”

Yvonne has done her utmost to fulfill this directive. At the 2017 IANDS conference, her first post-healing speech received a standing ovation. She became president of IANDS in 2019, and in 2020, moved on to co-found Spiritual Awakenings International. You can learn her full story in her newest book, *Touched by the Light*. “All of us are connected to this vast ocean of consciousness, though most have a veil that prevents them from knowing it. For me, that veil, those shutters have opened.”

*Seattle IANDS © P.O. Box 84333 / Seattle, WA 98124*

## Seattle IANDS—Meetings

Second Saturday of every month — 1:30–3pm

**Zoom** meeting—please see—[www.SeattleIANDS.org](http://www.SeattleIANDS.org)