



Healing Relationships with the Dead – therapy that opens the door to the other realm?

Sue Bayliss

Sue opens up a fascinating area and technique to which other practitioners may wish to respond.



A mother was weeping in my consulting room. Her baby had died only 10 days old and the doctors had told her it was due to 'maternal antibodies'. She felt to blame for the child's death and was racked with guilt as well as grief. I suggested she invite the child to visit her so they could talk about what had happened. I asked Mary (name changed) to relax, close her eyes, breathe deeply and focus on her lost baby.

After some time she opened her eyes and reported that the baby had come to her. Mary had said how sorry she was to have caused her death and how sad she was. The child told her that she was fine now and that she loved her and there was nothing to forgive and no blame at all. I suggested that my client take the connection she felt with her daughter into her heart with the knowledge that she was loved. When mother's day came around Mary went out for the day with her husband and little boy instead of lying in bed crying for her lost daughter as she had done previously. She said: "It was OK as she was in my heart so she was with us."

Grief counselling used to focus on helping clients sever their ties to the deceased and move on. Now it is known that the people who do best after losing someone are those who feel a sense of connection to them. There are, however, some kinds of connection that are not so helpful which I will illustrate later in this article.

A lovely young woman was recommended to see me to deal with her post-traumatic stress syndrome. Her father had died suddenly in a motorbike accident and, a year later, her sister had hanged herself. Sarah (name changed) discovered her in her bedroom. For eight years she had tried every type of therapy with no effect on her flashbacks and nightmares which happened most nights. She was also depressed.

I used Eye Movement Neurointegration (another eye movement therapy that I have developed myself) to release the trauma lodged in her limbic system, and after that first session all her PTSD symptoms disappeared.

No more flashbacks or nightmares and no more depression. She dreamt again of the house where she had found her sister but this time there was no fear and the bedroom was empty when she went inside.

On the next appointment I asked her if she would like to resolve anything with her father. She told me that she had just failed her driving test before he died and, although they had been close, she was afraid that he might have felt disapproving and been disappointed in her. This was a very distressing feeling for her. I took her into a relaxed state and asked her to invite her father to come and talk to her. She said she could see him in front of her and he was fine and told her that he totally loved her and was proud of her. She was immensely reassured and had no further worries about him. She felt that their relationship had been healed and renewed.

We did the same thing the next session with her sister who explained that she had wanted to join their father and was in a good place now. Sarah was relieved and could feel a great sense of peace and resolution. She no longer felt guilty for not having been able to stop her sister who had been depressed without anyone knowing. She now respected her sister's decision to die and could rest assured that father and sister were happy together and were watching over her with love.

In both cases the clients could have simply imagined their encounters with the dead but the power of those meetings was enough to heal their distress completely. They were surprised and delighted with what was said and had not anticipated the messages they were given. Mary was hugely moved by her encounter with her lost baby and cried for some time afterwards as the relief set in. I do not believe that an imagined scenario would have the power to heal so completely. I regularly use visualisations to help clients and their effects are not as dramatic or long lasting as these encounters were.

Allan Botkin

Some time after these sessions I was excited to read a book called *Induced After Death Communication* by Allan L. Botkin. He is a psychologist who has worked with many veterans suffering from PTSD based at a Veterans Administration hospital in Chicago and in private practice. He learnt the eye movement technique, EMDR, and found (as I have) that it rapidly dispels post-traumatic symptoms. What he had not expected was that it also helped his clients connect with those they had lost and experience profound healing. He used the EMDR to help the client create a 'receptive state' in which an IADC (induced after death communication) could occur. The client had been focused on the sadness associated with the loss prior to the 'appearance' of the dead person concerned.

He taught this technique to his colleagues and they found they were getting similar results. In every case the dead person or people appeared looking fit and healthy, often surrounded by light and reassured the client. The client has their eyes closed during the experience. In some cases people who had been killed by the client appeared and told them that they were forgiven. One man had wiped out an entire family in a car crash and they came to him to say that they were fine had been waiting for the chance to tell him that they forgave him completely.

Some patients who had worked on their 'issues' for years in psychotherapy were healed in one session when they connected with their dead comrades or relatives. There are clearly similarities between what clients are experiencing in IADCs and Near Death Experiences. Communication is often telepathic and the deceased are often seen in beautiful landscapes with radiant light and a feeling of peace and serenity.

Those who have NDEs find them life changing, and the healing that those who have IADCs experience holds up over time. Allan Botkin has done follow-ups on his patients and found that years later they have not relapsed and also no longer fear death.

I have now experimented with using eye movements to facilitate IADCs and can report that at my first attempt my client sensed the presence of a beloved dog she had lost. She opened her eyes and said: "She was there, I felt her with me."

Letting Go

Reconnecting with loved ones can be enormously healing but sometimes we need to let go of an identification or enmeshment with the dead. A client who featured in the BBC documentary about my work had seen a motorcyclist come off his bike and ran over to him. He died in her arms and she later suffered from PTSD symptoms with a particular fear of driving. I suspected that her energy had become entangled with his whilst he was dying and I invited Suzanne to let go of her attachment to him. After this her confidence in her driving increased and in the BBC film she is calm behind the wheel even when a motorbike appears behind her on the road. (To view the short programme visit www.sulisconsulting.com therapy page.)

Another client feared driving as her best friend had died in a car. She told me: "We did everything together." I helped her enact a ritual where I stood in for the deceased friend and she handed back her 'fate' to her. I usually have the client hand me (as the other person) some kind of object to symbolise the 'fate' that is being returned to its owner.

A nurse who had been requested to help her mother die and felt guilty about it started to live in her parents' old house where she had grown up. She came to me feeling depressed. She told me during one session: "I am looking at everything through my mother's eyes." I helped her to enact a separation in which she thanked her mother for everything and expressed her feelings at having helped her to die. The mother acknowledged her and let her go. From that day on she lived her own life and embarked on a variety of new projects relating to her inherited farm. She never again had the strange feeling of looking through her mother's eyes.

In these scenarios we devise and act out a ritual to symbolise the letting go of some kind of unhealthy attachment to a deceased person. This is a different kind of experience to the induced after death communication which occurs spontaneously and is directed by the dead person or people. I feel that on an energetic level a separation occurs that frees up the client to form a healthier relationship to the deceased. In this case the client is the prime mover and gives back something to the dead relative or friend. This also has a profoundly healing effect which is immediate and long lasting. Although I am standing in and speaking the words for the dead person it feels very real and I feel guided in what I say.

A Dramatic Case

The most dramatic of these scenarios was with a man who had killed a suicidal cancer sufferer who rushed out in front of the lorry he was driving. Matthew was in a desperate state, blaming himself although he could not have avoided the accident. I used Eye Movement Neurointegration to deal with the trauma he had suffered but I realised that the relationship between driver and victim had to be healed. The police had enabled Matthew to meet the man's family and had discovered that he had wanted to die after attempting other methods of suicide that had failed. He was in great pain and distress. In spite of understanding the man's motivation, Matthew was very angry with him for ruining his life, as he put it.

I facilitated a dialogue between Matthew and Jeremy (name changed). I stood in for Jeremy and explained how I needed to die and was sorry to have caused so much distress to Matthew. This helped, but something more was needed for Matthew to find inner peace and self-forgiveness. I asked him if there was a mentor he would like to invite into the consulting room. He nominated Dicky Bird and I asked him to 'be' the commentator giving Matthew some good advice. As Dicky Bird he spoke eloquently for about five minutes telling Matthew that it was not his fault and that he was a good man and could let go of all self-blame etc. When Matthew stepped back into being himself he was a changed man. All the stress and distress had left him and he breathed easily.

"I'll go home and play with my boy", he announced happily and suddenly started to look forward to Christmas. Since the accident he had refused to relate to his five year old son because he felt so ashamed of what he had done. Tears filled my eyes witnessing this healing and I cried all the way to the car park.

During his follow up session he told me that he was glad it had happened to him. He said someone elderly might not have been able to cope. He had reframed the incident from seeing himself as a killer to realising that he had facilitated Jeremy to leave this life and gain peace at last. When I met his wife some years later she confirmed that he had continued to feel positive about his experience.

With hindsight and knowledge of Allan Botkin's method, I might now use eye movements to facilitate a spontaneous encounter with the deceased man, but, as family constellation work demonstrates, people can 'stand in' for others both alive and dead in an effective way if they are open to receive their 'energy'. Rupert Sheldrake's morphic field theory could explain the ability to 'tap into' another's intentions and feelings.

What matters to me ultimately is that people achieve deep healing and can go on to lead happy and fulfilled lives knowing that their connection to a loved one is healthy. I'd be interested to hear from other therapists who have facilitated such encounters and I currently offer training in EMN, which includes instruction in facilitating healing with the dead.

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