

## Editor's Foreword

The mission of the International Association for Near-Death Studies is “to advance global understanding of near-death experiences and related experiences through research, education, and support.” A theme of this issue is novel, “out-of-the-box” approaches to such experiences.

In the opening article, Julie Beischel, PhD, director of research at the Windbridge Research Center (WRC) in Tucson, AZ, and her colleagues Adam J. Rock, PhD; Ronald J. Pekala, PhD; and Mark Boccuzzi, BS, address the question, “For a medium, does providing a mediumship reading about a deceased person *feel* different than providing a psychic reading about a living person?” They also explored the relationship between how these readings feel and the accuracy of the readings as well as any specific differences in the two types of readings with regard to the feeling of love. Research of this type is quite complex and nuanced, requiring an out-of-the-box methodological approach, and this research team has accomplished the task laudably. In fact, I would venture to say that the best research on mediumship is now coming out of WRC; readers interested in a short video detailing the activities of the Windbridge Institute, founded in 2008, and the Windbridge Research Center, founded in 2017, can find it at <https://youtu.be/LWW7RiVYTpM>. Returning to the article at hand, the team’s hypotheses were mostly confirmed, and readers interested in the phenomenology of psychic mediumship will be rewarded with the rich data that this study yielded.

Next, Patrick Brissey, PhD, lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the University of South Carolina, critiques John Martin Fischer and Benjamin Mitchell-Yellin’s out-of-the-box interpretation that near-death experiences (NDEs) are not actual events but are powerful yet metaphorical phenomena. To support his argument, Brissey draws from research in the field of near-death studies as well as philosophical argument, and he concludes that a merely metaphorical interpretation of NDEs does not adequately account for the totality of the data—indicating that novel interpretations of NDEs are interesting but not always supported empirically or philosophically.

In the first book review in this issue, psychiatrist Rebecca Valla offers her impressions of the book *Beyond Surviving: Cancer and Your*

*Spiritual Journey* by Canadian minister and chaplain David Maginley. She points out how Maginley, himself a four-time cancer survivor as well as an extensively experienced chaplain for patients facing life-threatening illness and death, was in a unique position to weave personal and professional experience into a one-of-a-kind book for those confronting cancer. She encourages potential readers that although they might expect a book about cancer to be depressing, Maginley's work is "brimming with enthusiasm, wonder, and gratitude . . . uplifting and hopeful."

Next, transpersonal psychologist Jenny Wade, PhD, of the California Institute of Integral Studies, addresses the very topic of out-of-the-box thinking in science with her review of Joseph Jordania's book, *The Human Story Behind Scientific Discovery*. She reports that Jordania addressed matters ranging from the personal characteristics of great scholars to the wholesale process of scientific revolutions. Despite certain shortcomings of the book, she concludes that it "should be required reading for anyone considering a career in near-death studies, paranormal phenomena, or transpersonal psychology."

This issue closes with a Letter to the Editor from Scott Janssen, MSW, LCSW, clinical social worker at the University of North Carolina Hospice. Janssen reports on experiences dealing with the COVID pandemic using both conventional, as well as out-of-the-box transpersonal, therapeutic strategies. Illustrating the latter approach, he provides a compelling case example involving a patient's after-death communication and thereby demonstrates the unique benefits of such an approach. Although history suggests that the current pandemic will pass eventually, it also indicates that future pandemics are inevitable, and Janssen's Letter provides timeless advice that will be equally useful to healthcare providers facing those future inevitabilities.

Although on the face of it the articles in this issue may seem quite eclectic, each in its own way addresses novel, out-of-the-box approaches in the field of near-death and related studies. It is my hope that readers find this collection informative and stimulating.

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