

The Light and the Dark Side of the Sky - The Wonder and Trauma of Contact

Originally published in "The Edge" Newspaper 2000, Revised 2003, 2006

On a beautiful afternoon, I sometimes find it to be a wonderful experience just sit on my front porch and stare at the deep blue of a cloudless sky. As an avid skywatcher, I love the sky - deep blue by day, dark and infinite by night. But to some, the sky has a deeper, more sinister meaning - associated with things less friendly. It can be a source of wonder and of menace, of a phenomenon which periodically visits them - frightening, unpredictable, and uninvited.

For many in society, an undercurrent of encounters with the unexplained pervades their lives. The recent Roper poll of unusual personal experiences estimated that this occurs to about one percent of us. It is a long-standing thread of unexplainable events which colors one's relationships, alters one's views of the world and changes one's very health.

To some it is just a series of interesting mysteries and strange half-remembered events, a barely discernable blip on the radar screen of life. But to others it is a source of pain - an encounter with events beyond one's understanding and outside of one's control. To them, contact with an extraordinary is a curse - a cross to be borne every day of life. Bryant and Seebach's book "Healing Shattered Reality" describes the latter as "Post Contact Syndrome" (abbreviated as PCS), the shattering of one's personal reality due to an encounter with the extraordinary.

There are many potential indicators of the phenomenon in one's life. But some of the most telling are:

- Missing Time, or a sudden, unaccounted for change in location - often betrayed by the question: What happened? How did I get here? This can be, but is not necessarily, associated with a UFO sighting.
- A consistent theme of anomaly sightings - ghosts, UFO's, Monsters - which permeates the life of the experiencer
- Fear of, or obsession with, a particular location. This might be a stretch of road, an open field, or similar place. There is often a simultaneous sense of fear and fascination with this particular place, and a sense that something extraordinary occurred there.
- A sudden, unexplained change in beliefs, behavior, thought patterns, or health - changes with no discernable cause. Often they seem to be of external, and perhaps mysterious origin.
- A deep, over-riding sense of mystery or menace, often associated with the sky, or with late-nights.
- Fear of, or obsession with topics, such as life on other worlds, astronomy, the environment, UFOs and Aliens. One experiencer described how she got cold chills any time she saw the cover of the book "Communion", by Whitley Strieber, with its picture of an alien face on the cover.
- Sudden onset of psychic abilities and/or paranormal activities

No one knows what the phenomenon really is. Perhaps it is mental, metaphysical, or spiritual in nature. Or perhaps it is a physical presence on Earth of entities from elsewhere. We don't know. At today's level of understanding, the best that can be done when beset by this wonder/curse, is to somehow come to terms with it. And one can come to terms with it and heal the darker side of its effects.

The quickest way to come to terms with possible contact is to associate with others who have experienced the same thing. Often this can be done by attending UFO interest groups, such as Minnesota MUFON, or the local CSETI (Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence) chapter. This can help to alleviate the sense of isolation that many experiencers feel. The experiencer is not alone - others share his/her beliefs and experiences.

In addition to attending UFO and contact interest groups, the experiencer may wish to find individual assistance in healing with the effects of contact. This can be done in many ways, including sometimes simply finding an understanding, trusted ear in many ways. The most understanding ear

available sometimes can be that of the UFO researcher - especially if that person focuses on the close encounter phenomenon. Research organizations such as the Intruders Foundation, MUFON, etc. can help you find a researcher in your area. In the best of cases, the researcher may be a trained or certified therapist, with an active interest in the phenomenon.

Contacting a researcher can have the benefit both of helping to heal, and of providing the research community with valuable data to help understand the phenomenon. Depending upon your degree of comfort with sharing your experiences, you will probably want to insist on either anonymity (withholding the experiencer's name) or confidentiality (strictly between experiencer and researcher) regarding any research data that results from your experiences. Many counselors, psychologists, and therapists are very understanding regarding the effects of the unexplained. A professional, trained in dealing with the inner workings of the human psyche can be a valuable aid in coming to terms with contact effects. However, one needs to be aware of the degree to which the therapist is open to the phenomenon. Be discerning, but be open to whatever help they can offer.

Contact trauma often responds well to healing modalities such as hypnotherapy. The biggest benefit that this can offer is to help the experiencer to overcome the fear, and to open their encounters up to the light of understanding - allowing the experiencer to come to terms with them in his/her own way.

Each of us has our own perceptual filters, and in some cases, some of the negative post-contact effects may be the result of the subconscious ways in which the mind perceives an experience. A particularly meaningful example is a case with which I was involved a couple of years ago, in which an experiencer had developed a number of fear reactions subsequent to a series of close encounters. This person had undergone a series of classic UFO events, clearly remembered close-up UFO sightings and a partially remembered scenario in which she had been removed from her home by entities. She filed a UFO sighting report with MUFON and was interviewed by MUFON field investigators, which provided a large amount of valuable data on these events. In the process of describing her encounters, she also described a number of cases in which she found herself fearful of things that in some way reminded her of them. We conducted a hypnotic regression in order to help her better understand these events. However, each time her mind approached the events, she found herself paralyzed by fear.

During followup hypnotic work, other factors, not directly related to her experiences, emerged as contributors to her fear reaction. A part of her mind, associated with normal childhood memories and religious beliefs, perceived the close encounter phenomenon as evil - a thing to be feared. In trance, we were able to use a series of hypnotic techniques that helped her to reduce this fear factor. This permitted her to get past this obstacle and continue with the regression. As a result, she was able to uncover and explore the long and very meaningful series of close encounters that had permeated her life. With the new understanding, which emerged from these regressions, and her now greatly reduced levels of fear, she has experienced a wonderful healing that has continued to grow to this day.