

Close Encounters – The Meaning We Bring With Us

Craig R. Lang MS CHt crlang@m.com

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The close encounter can be either a terrifying experience or a wonderful event. For many, it is a time when one is confronted, overpowered, and taken against one's will by unexplainable, unearthly beings for reasons that they can not hope to comprehend. It is a dark and sinister force in the world of the experiencer. But the close encounter can also be a moment of contact with a power greater than one's self. It can be a time of communion and enlightenment – a chance to meet face to face with a wonderful source of light in our universe.

Some see the encounter phenomenon as dark, and some as light. Yet, in most cases, the events described in encounters are quite similar. So what makes the difference? Could the emotional nature of the experience be affected by our own consciousness? Does this show that our perceptual filters profoundly affect the good/evil-ness of the phenomenon? Can we, using a healing modality such as hypnotherapy, resolve the good-evil polarity that often comes with close encounter experiences?

In this article, we will look at some cases which show that the phenomenon has both positive and negative elements – a mixed bag that seems to defy the good-evil duality. These cases are taken from my own case files with names and key details altered to protect the anonymity of the experiencers. They are representative of those which I have studied, and which fill researchers' files. In these, we can see that the experiencer's consciousness can do a lot to frame the reality of an encounter, for good or ill.

“Evelyn” – Managing the Fear

One case, which most graphically illustrates fear resulting from the phenomenon, is that of an experiencer I will call “Evelyn”. Evelyn has had many close encounters – both physical and metaphysical in nature. When I first interviewed her, an extensive chronology of events emerged - along with a deep sense of fear. As she described her many experiences, the fear seemed to grow until it became an almost-physical presence in the room. Its effects on her life were causing her difficulty. She found herself becoming anxious at times when she was alone in the house, and at other times which reminded her of the UFO topic.

Our initial field investigation had occurred before I had begun my study of hypnosis. Some time later when I had become certified as a hypnotherapist, we arranged a session. As we began the first hypnotic work, the fear again showed itself with its full brutal force. I could only admire her courage as she, despite a look of terror on her face, told me she still wanted to continue with her regression. Evelyn wanted to get to the bottom of her experiences, to put them to rest once and for all. We decided that in the next session, we would try to manage the fear she felt, and then continue on with regression work.

Parts and the Fabric of the Mind

The human mind can be thought of as being made up of a large number of parts (also referred to as ego states).^{1 2} Each is built around thought complexes, feelings, memories, ideas, etc. - and together, they interweave to form the fabric of consciousness. At times, however, individual parts can behave independently, and sometimes can even come into conflict with one another.

During deep hypnosis, parts can be addressed individually, and issues between them can be resolved. In this case, once Evelyn was in a deep hypnotic trance, an inner child aspect of her mind-scape came forward which had learned from childhood religious schooling that the unknown was evil – a thing to be feared. This part had done its job well. Whenever Evelyn would have significant thoughts or memories related to the UFO phenomenon, this part would inject fear into her awareness.

Conversely, with Evelyn still in deep trance, another part of her mind emerged which was inquisitive and deeply spiritual, and which very much wanted to explore her experiences. Having built a rapport with both parts, it was now possible to address the concerns of the “Fear” part, fostering an agreement between it and the “Spiritual Explorer”. Once a deal was struck, as long as both parts kept their end of it, the fear should no longer be an issue. Both parts agreed, and Evelyn felt them merge back into the overall tapestry of her mind - and I eagerly waited to see the results.

It worked – even better than I had hoped. The fear that had plagued Evelyn for so long quickly abated. In subsequent sessions, she was able to explore her experiences extensively. What had seemed like a dark scenario could now be looked at much more objectively. As with any aspect of life, there were both positive and negative elements to her encounters. But from now on the phenomenon would be objective and manageable to her, yet would still be a deeply meaningful part of her life.

“Mark” and “Terry” – a Frightening Night Drive

Another case with profound implications for the emotional understanding of UFO encounters, involved two teenagers whom I will call “Mark” and “Terry”. Part of a middle class rural family, they were ordinary kids who were about to have an extraordinary evening. They were driving through the countryside some time after sunset, heading home after a day in a nearby city. Mark suddenly pointed out a distant light in the sky. It seemed to just hover there, far ahead of their car. As they watched, it slowly descended toward the highway. Then a turn in the road hid it from their view.

When they next saw the object it was huge, and it was close. It seemed to hover just above the treeline to the right of the highway. Both of them were frightened. Terry, who was driving, floored the gas pedal, and they sped off down the highway toward home. As they did, Mark observed that the object seemed to be following them, always just over the treeline to their right and slowly descending. They were now in a state of near panic as they passed a clearing, which they observed to be brightly lit. Eventually they reached a small town close to their home, and the object was lost to view. A few moments later the two visibly shaken teens pulled into the driveway of their home.

I learned of this case from a friend who lived in the region, who had talked with Mark and Terry a few days after their sighting. She had notified our state MUFON team. I then contacted the witnesses and interviewed them. As I investigated, it became apparent that the object resembled a type of small aircraft, but as seen under unusual conditions. The route which the car had traveled passed near a small airport, which was out of sight of the highway. The object's path and the description, and the geometry at each stage of the sighting, corresponded closely to this aircraft on approach to the landing strip. (Note: As with most UFO sighting cases, one can never say with absolute certainty what had occurred, but this was our best hypothesis).

In most sighting cases this might have been the end of it. However, one interesting aspect of this case was the fear that the witnesses described as they observed the object. As I interviewed the family, it turned out that their history contained many suggestions of possible close encounter events. The witnesses and several other family members described events and perceptions similar to those which fill books by Budd Hopkins, David Jacobs, Whitley Strieber, etc. It appeared that this case might be more than just a single "misidentified airplane" sighting – perhaps a lot more.

One thing that investigators routinely ask sighting witnesses is how much they had read or heard about the phenomenon. In this case, the family members had had very little exposure to information about UFO's or close encounters. However, what they had learned was largely from a televangelist, who taught that the UFO phenomenon was demonic. Could this continuous exposure both to the phenomenon itself, and to the admonitions that it was evil, have combined to generate a fear scenario in their minds?

"Jim" – Positive on the Surface, Dark Beneath

One group of nearly identical experiencer cases can be characterized by the story of someone I will call "Jim", who has had unexplained experiences since childhood. As far back as his memory goes he had been accompanied by a friendly little "cartoon character" companion. This friend would appear to him at irregular intervals, playing and telling him stories, and taking him away on wonderful adventures. Jim often found his little friend to be a welcome refuge from a challenging world.

As Jim grew up, his cartoon companion seemed to disappear, to be replaced by other events which left him with a deepening sense of mystery. However, his overall view of his encounters was generally positive. He enjoyed life, and said that he also enjoyed his interaction with the phenomenon.

I have noted that sometimes, just as when excess fear is involved, an overly optimistic view of the phenomenon may suggest that all is not as it seems. Jim's experiences were no exception. At several points as he described his "fun" experiences to me, he broke into tears – not tears of joy. Could his "cartoon friend" have been just one side of a polarity? Was there a darker side to his experiences as well?

At Jim's request we began hypnotic sessions. In deep trance he began to examine his "cartoon friend". The first "crack in the wall" for him was that his friend had large black eyes. This, along with other factors, seemed to suggest some type of screen memory.^{3 4} He continued on to describe his companion as a small two-legged creature, about four feet tall, with no hair, a big head, and big black eyes, a classic "small gray". His fun and companionship now seemed to have become a classic alien encounter.

As we continued, he recounted a lifetime of abductions, very similar to what Evelyn and many other experiencers have described, and which permeate the UFO literature. His description of them initially had a very dark, frightening tone to it. However, as he continued to describe his encounters - and to examine the world view through which he saw them - Jim increasingly spoke in more objective terms. His polarity of feelings - the joy of his "companion" versus the darker tone of his encounters - was steadily changing into an increased understanding and resolution, losing the innocence of his "cartoon character" friend but healing the pain beneath. The phenomenon was increasingly beginning to fit into his life in a more manageable way.

Conclusion

In these cases - and in many more which fill my files and the files of other researchers, we see that the experience (both positive and negative) of the phenomenon tends to be greatly affected by one's world view. If these factors are extreme in one way or another, they can increase the polarity with which the experiencer views an encounter. However, as one better understands one's own perceptual filters this polarity can heal and one can deal with the phenomenon more objectively - on a more level playing field.

Is the phenomenon physical, metaphysical, or (para)psychological? I believe that we do not yet know - nor do we understand its motivations. It is not clear whether the intelligence behind it means us good or ill, or if it even has a specific intent. What we do learn from working with experiencers is that close encounters can be either positive or negative, or sometimes both - a mixed bag of trauma and growth⁵. Perhaps, rather than simply being good or evil, close encounters might be subject to a scale that, like the rest of the phenomenon, we do not yet understand.

Endnotes:

¹ Watkins & Watkins "Ego States, Theory and Therapy"

² Hunter, "The Art of Hypnotherapy"

³ Bryant and Seebach, "Healing Shattered Reality"

⁴ David Jacobs, "The Threat"

⁵ John Mack, "Passport to the Cosmos"