

# Presenters, Speakers, Panelists & Moderators

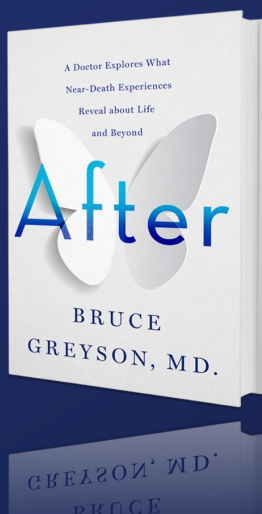


## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: BRUCE GREYSON, MD

Dr. Bruce Greyson is the Chester Carlson Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia. He was previously on the medical faculty at the University of Michigan and the University of Connecticut, where he was Clinical Chief of Psychiatry. Bruce has consulted with the National Institutes of Health and addressed symposia on consciousness at the United Nations and at His Holiness the Dalai Lama's compound in Dharamsala, India. He has earned awards for his medical research and was elected a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, the highest honor bestowed by that organization.

Bruce's interest in near-death experiences began just a few months after graduating from medical school, when he treated an unconscious patient in the emergency room who stunned him the next morning with an account of leaving her body. That event challenged his beliefs about the mind and the brain, and it ultimately led him on a journey to study near-death experiences scientifically, leading to more than a hundred publications in medical journals. He co-founded the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS), an organization to support and promote research into these experiences, and for 27 years edited the *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, the only scholarly journal dedicated to near-death research. Through his research, he has discovered common and universal themes in near-death experiences that go beyond neurophysiological or cultural interpretations, as well as patterns of consistent aftereffects on individuals' attitudes, beliefs, values, and personalities.

Bruce is the author of *After: A Doctor Explores What Near-Death Experiences Reveal About Life and Beyond*. The book challenges our everyday ideas about our minds and our brains and offers key insights on how we can begin to live a more meaningful and fulfilling life. Bruce is also prominently featured throughout the first episode of Netflix's *Surviving Death*, which focuses on near-death experiences. [brucegreyson.com](http://brucegreyson.com)



## Ryan Pferdehirt, DBioethics, HEC-C

Dr. Ryan Pferdehirt received his doctorate from Loyola University Chicago. He joined the Center for Practical Bioethics in June 2019 as the Director of Membership and Ethics Education. His work focuses on developing and growing competencies of member ethics committees, individual consultants, and the general public. Ryan previously served as the department chair and bioethicist for MultiCare Health System, a multiple hospital health system in the Seattle/Tacoma area, and in-patient relations at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. He also worked as the philosophical bioethics expert for a local bioethics startup company. His research areas include moral philosophy, end-of-life ethics, philosophy of language, and advance care planning ethics. [practicalbioethics.org/about-us/staff.html](http://practicalbioethics.org/about-us/staff.html)



## Janice Miner Holden, EdD, LPC-S, ACMHP Researcher, Professor Emerita, Author, JNDS Editor, IANDS President

Dr. Janice Miner Holden is a retired professor of Counseling and chair of the Department of Counseling & Higher Education at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. For the past 30 years she has researched NDEs and related phenomena; on these topics she has over 50 refereed journal publications and 100 national and international presentations. Jan is currently President of the International Association for Near-Death Studies and Editor of its academic *Journal of Near-Death Studies*. She served as lead editor of the 2009 *Handbook of Near-Death Experiences: Thirty Years of Investigation* and co-edited the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling's 2017 *Connecting Soul, Spirit, Mind, and Body: A Collection of Spiritual and Religious Perspectives and Practices in Counseling*. [JanHolden.com](http://JanHolden.com)





### **Mary Jo Bulbrook, EdD, RN, CEMP/S/I, HTCP**

Energy Therapy Practitioner, University President

Dr. MJ Bulbrook's life platform is multi-dimensional from an in utero NDE, to hearing voices as a teenager, receiving voice messages from the other side, blending a family psychotherapy practice with energy therapies, and now serving as President of Akamai University, an online internationally accredited university dedicated for over 19 years to transforming health and healing of individuals, students, and organizations. How does this range of integrated life paths make sense to follow? A staunch advocate of ethical boundaries, MJ had to embrace new territory to walk this innovative life journey. [globalhealingalliance.com/mary-jo-bulbrook-support-help.html](http://globalhealingalliance.com/mary-jo-bulbrook-support-help.html)

### **Diane Corcoran, PhD, RN, US Army Col (Ret)**

*Veteran, Writer, Lecturer, Educator, Counselor*



Dr. Diane Corcoran is an International expert in the care and support of people who have had near-death experiences (NDEs) and is especially interested in service members and veterans who have had NDEs. She has published and presented on a variety of topics related to NDEs, management, and grief. For over 40 years, she has lectured nationally and internationally on the importance of health care professionals understanding NDEs. In addition, she has lectured on the implications of NDEs for the military and nursing professionals and has provided training in areas such as supporting terminal patients, grief and bereavement, SIDS deaths, and other issues related to death and dying. Diane initiated a research fund to explore NDEs in the military and how to better serve these individuals and has published numerous articles on specific to combat NDEs. She continues to counsel people who have NDEs and assists with developing and providing resources and professional workshops on these topics. [CorcoranConsulting-nde.com](http://CorcoranConsulting-nde.com)

### **Chase Skylar DeMayo**

*US Air Force Veteran, Near-Death Experiencer*



Chase Skylar DeMayo is a U.S. Air Force Veteran who died in 2008 but was sent back to earth to spread light, love, joy, and laughter throughout the world. Initially, Chase kept his near-death experience (NDE) private for 12 years, fearing judgment and retribution. In October 2020, however, Chase attended a Veteran's Mental Health Retreat that reopened his NDE and created a newfound passion for helping fellow Veterans and their supporters. [ChasedeMayo.com](http://ChasedeMayo.com)

### **Elaine Drysdale, MD, FRCP (Psychiatry)**

*Psychiatrist and University Professor*



Dr. Elaine Drysdale is a Clinical Professor and clinician in the Faculty of Medicine at U of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada. Her major focus has been to help people with life-threatening illnesses cope with their medical, psychological, social, and spiritual challenges, and she has taught for thousands of hours the staff and patients on medical and psychiatric wards and emergency departments, and in palliative care and hospice settings. She has been the Psychiatric Consultant to the Leukemia/Bone Marrow Transplant Programme of BC for over 25 years, was on staff at the BC Cancer Hospital for 25 years, and has been a consultant in Palliative Care. As part of a research study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, she co-led a weekly group for six years for women with terminal cancer—and felt honored to give eulogies at many of the funerals. She has taught about NDEs for over 25 years to seriously ill patients afraid of dying, to bereaved family members, to depressed patients feeling a lack of purpose in their lives, and to health care professionals in North America and Europe. In 2019 she was an invited presenter in Israel at the 4th Global Meeting in Spirituality and Mental Health sponsored by the World Psychiatric Association, spreading the word about NDEs to health professionals from around the world.



### **Norma Edwards, DDiv**

*Reverend, Near-Death Experiencer, Therapist, CEO, NLP Life Coach*

Dr. Norma Edwards is a near-death experiencer, spiritual therapist, and Certified NLP Life Coach. She is also the CEO and Founder of Reprogram Your Life LLC (RYL), a minority-owned business with the mission to raise humanity's consciousness levels and seed 21st century energy here in America. Born in Guyana, South America, Norma has traveled the world and studied under the tutelage of eight spiritual masters, spanning seven countries. She received the prestigious Linowes award from the Community Foundation in Washington, DC, for her work in prison re-entry and community development. [reprogramyourlife.org/biography-1](http://reprogramyourlife.org/biography-1)

### **Karen E. Herrick, PhD, LCSW, LMSW, CADC, ACMHP**

*Ordained Minister, Therapist, Author*



Rev. Dr. Karen Herrick has shared her clinical expertise for 30 years in her private practice by lecturing throughout the US on dysfunctional and addictive homes, dissociation, and grief and loss from a Jungian perspective. From this perspective, she has discovered that visits to mediums greatly help people in chronic grief to continue happily in their lives. Her ministry is to be actively involved in Spiritual Psychology, specifically in naming spiritual experiences. Her books are available through Amazon.com, Kindle, and soon Audible. She is available for private therapy in her office, on Skype, and FaceTime. She is interested in hearing about your spiritual experience(s). [SpiritualExperiences.info](http://SpiritualExperiences.info)

### **Debbie James, MSN, RN, CCRN-K**

*Nurse, Manager, Educator, Author, Lecturer, IANDS Board Member*



Debbie James has worked in the Adult Critical Care arena for over 43 years. Positions she has held include clinical nurse, nurse manager, nurse educator, and Clinical Nurse Specialist. She is an Assistant Clinical Professor at the University of Texas School of Nursing in San Antonio. Debbie lectures throughout the country on multiple topics including critical care nursing, death and dying, bioethics, and palliative and end-of-life care. In 2009, Debbie co-edited and -authored the first compilation of research on near-death experiences, *The Handbook of Near-Death Experiences: Thirty Years of Investigation*. She has also received many awards and appointments in various organizations over her illustrious career.

### **Scott Janssen, MA, MSW, LCSW**

*Hospice Social Worker, Author*



Scott Janssen works at the University of North Carolina Hospice and has been a hospice clinical social worker for almost 30 years. In addition to his interest in NDEs, he is trained in working with patients struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and is a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization's Trauma Informed Work Group. Scott's articles on end-of-life transpersonal experiences have appeared in numerous publications, including *Social Work Today*, *American Journal of Nursing*, *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, and the *Washington Post*. His novel [Light Keepers](http://LightKeepers.com) is a metaphysical adventure about connecting with the transpersonal realm and learning to choose love over fear.

### **Lesley Lupo, BA, BFA**

*Near-Death Experiencer, Therapist, Author, Reiki Master*



Lesley Lupo is a highly sought-after Intuitive therapist at the famed Canyon Ranch Resort in Arizona where she served for three years as the Spiritual Programs Coordinator. Lesley is also a certified neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) therapist and a Reiki Master. She now serves on the Steering committee of the Tucson IANDS and is the vice-chairman of the Spirituality Leadership Council for the nonprofit Eternea. Lesley also guest lectures for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality class at the University of Arizona. She teaches a bi-weekly workshop at Canyon Ranch called "Science of Near-Death Experiences." [LesleyJoanLupo.com](http://LesleyJoanLupo.com)

**Diana (DiFranco) Marquez Lyons, MCSW, LCSW, LSW, ACMHP**  
*Psychotherapist*



Diana Marquez Lyons is a bilingual English/Spanish-speaking psychotherapist. She is certified by the American Center for the Integration of Spiritually Transformative Experiences as an ACISTE Certified Mental Health Provider (ACMHP). Diana has expertise in spiritually transformative experiences (STEs), helping individuals to validate and integrate these experiences in their lives. STEs include near-death experiences (NDEs), near-death-like experiences (NDLEs), out-of-body experiences (OBEs), visions, spiritual emergencies, awakenings, kundalini experiences, higher states of consciousness, exceptional human experiences (EHEs), pre-birth memories, past-life memories, nearing death awareness (NDAs), after-death communications (ADCs), empathic or shared near-death experiences, peak experiences, and mystical experiences. [DianadiFranco.com](http://DianadiFranco.com)

**David Maginley, MDiv, CSPC, ATTT**

*Minister, Near-Death Experiencer, 4x Cancer Survivor, Counselor, Photographer, Author*



Rev. David Maginley is Lutheran minister; chaplain with the cancer, palliative, and intensive care programs at the QEII Health Sciences Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia; and award-winning author of [\*Beyond Surviving: Cancer and Your Spiritual Journey\*](#). Although David has degrees in philosophy and religious studies, his real education came from surviving cancer four times. This experience resulted in a profound near-death experience and explorations in the nature of consciousness. He is featured in the documentaries *Here Right Now* and *When You Die*, and he speaks internationally on spirituality, cancer, and NDEs. [DavidMaginley.com](http://DavidMaginley.com)

**Elke Macartney, BA**

*Ordained Minister*



Rev. Elke Macartney is a long-time spiritual teacher and counselor. After her husband's numerous NDEs, Elke has learned about the aftereffects of caring for a hugely changed person, as well as caring for herself. She's here to support both NDErs' and caregivers' ongoing journey in their new lives. She lives in the beautiful Pacific Northwest US. [ElkesPage.com](http://ElkesPage.com)

**Roberta Moore, MA, MBA**

*Videographer, Writer, Speaker, IANDS Vice President*



Roberta Moore specializes in presenting spiritual topics through her videos, writing, and speaking. Her video interviews may be seen at [NDEvideo.com](http://NDEvideo.com). Since the 1970s she has studied near-death experiences, and she is currently vice-president of IANDS. In partnership with IANDS, she has produced two training videos about NDEs, one for healthcare providers and another for military veterans; both are freely available on [YouTube.com/c/NDEvideo](http://YouTube.com/c/NDEvideo). She is a former professor of English at Florida Southwestern State College, where she taught for 20 years.

**Danny Moorjani**

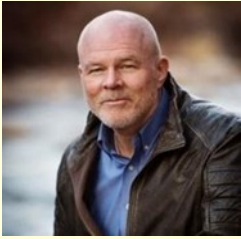
*Husband of Near-Death Experiencer*



Danny Moorjani is the husband of Anita Moorjani, a near-death experiencer, international speaker, and author of the New York Times bestseller [\*Dying to Be Me\*](#). In 2006, after a four-year battle with cancer, she fell into a coma and journeyed into her NDE. Danny and Anita were married prior to Anita falling ill, and they remain married to this day. [AnitaMoorjani.com](http://AnitaMoorjani.com)

## Jeff O'Driscoll, MD

*Physician, Author, Shared NDE Experiencer*



Dr. Jeff O'Driscoll practiced emergency medicine in a level-one trauma center for 25 years and served as department chair for eight years. He received his training at the University of Utah School of Medicine and completed his residency in Salt Lake City, Utah. He is board certified in internal medicine and is a fellow of the American College of Emergency Physicians. Jeff recently stepped away from practicing medicine to pursue consulting and to write. His recent books include a novel, [Who Buried Achilles?](#), a series of children's books about Muck the Duck and friends, and his award-winning memoir, [Not Yet](#), focusing on his spiritual encounters in the emergency department. [JeffO-driscoll.com](http://JeffO-driscoll.com)

## Spencer Olsen, BA

*Son of NDEr, Bit Brothers Big Sisters Volunteer*



At the age of 7, Spencer Olsen survived a horrific car crash that took the lives of his mother and year-old brother. He had no NDE, but through other means—including the NDE of his father, Jeffrey Olsen, chronicled in the books [I Knew Their Hearts and Beyond Mile Marker 80](#)--Spencer learned the significance of life, death, and human connection. He has worked with young people in after-school programs as well as volunteered with Big Brothers Big Sisters. He now presents with his father around the world both virtually and in-person. Spencer is pursuing a career as an electrician and enjoys playing music on the side. He is happily married to his wife, Ashley. With their two dogs, they enjoy traveling, hiking, and other forms of memory- and meaning-making.

## Marieta Pehlivanova, PhD

*Researcher*



Dr. Marieta Pehlivanova is a researcher at the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia. Her work at the Division focuses on near-death experiences, children reporting past-life memories, as well as other unusual experiences. Marieta holds a doctorate in experimental psychology and a bachelor's degree in statistics. Prior to her academic work, she pursued a career as a statistician in medical research.

## Nancy Rynes, BSc

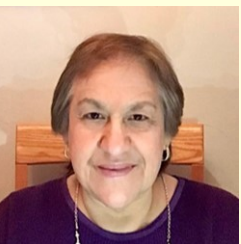
*Former Atheist, Scientist, Near-Death Experiencer, Author, Speaker, Artist*



Nancy Rynes is an inspirational speaker, artist, and author of [Awakenings from the Light](#) and [Messages from Heaven](#), both books detailing the lessons she learned from two NDEs. Nancy is also a leading voice for bringing eternal, spiritual wisdom into our lives on Earth, developing our heart-centered intuition, and living a life of inspired creativity. Known for her fun, lighthearted, girl-next-door demeanor, she loves teaching others how to live a more purposeful, joyful, creative, and spiritually-inspired life. Her new book, [Walking in the Light](#), helps readers more easily incorporate the wisdom from NDEs into their daily lives. [NancyRynes.com](http://NancyRynes.com)

## Lilia Samoilo, BS

*Mental Health and Spiritual Counselor, Minister*



Lilia Samoilo is a Veteran NDE Project associate, NDE Advocate and Educator, and the Associate Producer of IANDS NDE Radio. Neologist of the Medical and Spiritual Gap of Care for NDErs, Lilia was a major contributor and commentary author for the Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics NDE Symposium published in MUSE by Johns Hopkins University Press titled, Closing the Medical Gap of Care for Patients Who Have Had a Near-Death Experience. Since 2013, she has been raising awareness about IANDS and NDEs worldwide to healthcare professionals and clergy regarding specific ways to close the "Gap of Care." Lilia has had three NDEs and has had a lifetime of STEs and shared NDEs. [NDE-GOC@outlook.com](mailto:NDE-GOC@outlook.com)



## **Penny Sartori, PhD**

*Research, Nurse, Author*

Dr. Penny Sartori worked as a nurse in a British hospital for 21 years, 17 of those in Intensive Care. She is highly experienced and skilled in her role as an intensive care staff nurse and has conducted unique and extensive research into the near-death experiences (NDEs) of her patients. In 2005 she was awarded a doctoral degree in nursing for her research into NDEs. Penny's work has received worldwide attention and media coverage. She has spoken at many conferences both nationally and internationally, and her work has received international attention. [DrPennySartori.com](http://DrPennySartori.com)

## **Eloise Schaerlaken-Sneeden, BA**

*Social Work Graduate Student, Vocalist, Pianist, Guitarist, Visual Artist, Daughter of NDEr*



Ms. Schaerlaken is daughter of near-death experiencer Yvonne Sneeden. Eloise is featured in the film-documentary "Back From the Light," co-produced by Yvonne Sneeden and Robert Neal Marshall, focusing on NDE aftereffects and changes in relationship with family and friends. Eloise composed and performed the song that accompanies the end credits of "[Back From The Light](http://BackFromTheLight.com)". She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Work. [linkedin.com/in/EloiseSchaerlaken](https://www.linkedin.com/in/EloiseSchaerlaken)

## **with Yvonne Sneeden, BA, MT**

Yvonne's near-death experience was a profound and powerful life changing event, during which she visited a part of the place she calls 'Heaven,' transcended her faith, and heightened her understanding of Love, Compassion, Goodness, Kindness, and Acceptance of all. Since her profound experience, Yvonne is striving to bring the elements of the NDE into her daily life and her interaction with others. She feels it is important to share what she learned and bring it together for the common good of all, thus helping each person live a better life here...in the now. [LiveHeaven-Now.com](http://LiveHeaven-Now.com)



## **Rebecca S. Valla, MD**

*Psychiatrist, Recent IANDS Board Member*

Dr. Rebecca Valla is a Board Certified Psychiatrist with a holistic focus, integrating mindfulness with traditional psychiatry methods. The goal of this approach is to help the client discover life purpose and attain a state of wholeness and self-love. Rebecca has been in full-time practice since 1990. She trained for three years through Yale University and one year through the University of California, Irvine. [RebeccasVallamd.com](http://RebeccasVallamd.com)

## **Lee Witting, DMin**

*Reverend, Radio Host, Near-Death Experiencer*



Rev. Dr. Lee Witting is the host of NDE Radio, which he produces on behalf of the International Association for Near-Death Studies. He earned his doctorate in NDE Studies from Bangor Theological Seminary and served for 15 years as chaplain at Eastern Maine Medical Center. There, Lee personally interviewed hundreds of NDErs and worked with others who recounted other forms of personal mystical events, including shared-death experiences, prophecy, and after-death communications. His recently-released novel, *Beneath the Phoenix Door*, recounts a story inspired by real NDEs and what they tell us about our role in the creation. [talkzone.com/NDERadio.html](http://talkzone.com/NDERadio.html)

## **Karen Wyatt, MD**

*Hospice Physician, Best-Selling Author*



Dr. Karen Wyatt is the bestselling author of the books [The Tao of Death](http://TheTaoofDeath.com) and [7 Lessons for Living from the Dying](http://7LessonsforLivingfromtheDying.com), which contains stories of patients she cared for as a hospice doctor and the spiritual lessons she learned from them at the end of their lives. Karen also hosts End-of-Life University Podcast, which features conversations with experts who work in all aspects of end-of-life care. She is widely regarded as a thought-leader in the effort to transform the way we care for our dying in the US. In addition, she is valued for her application of spiritual principles to illness and healthcare and teaches that in order to live life fully we must each overcome our fear of death and embrace the difficulties that life brings us. Karen's journey into the realms of spirituality began with the suicide of her own father, after she had graduated from Medical School. Her compassion and loving-kindness is authentic and experience-based. [KarenWyattMD.com](http://KarenWyattMD.com)