

**REINCARNATION:
How Past Lives Can Bring More Depth to the Present
Rev. Karen E. Herrick, PhD**

Does anyone remember the movie *Defend Your Life* (1991)? It begins with Albert Brooks taking a ride in his new car. He's driving and on the car radio the song "Something's Coming" is playing. He has a fatal accident in this car and ends up in Judgment City where he and others are told: "All of you should be from the Western half of the United States. You will sleep the night and tomorrow you will be raring to go. You will probably be here for the next five days; however the worse your life was determines that you will spend more days defending it. We want you to enjoy yourselves."

The type of hotel where they are sleeping is determined by the life that person has led. Albert is in a Best Western type. He meets a woman, Meryl Streep, who is staying in a luxury hotel and, of course, during much of the movie one is trying to determine if they will "go on" together.

One of the nicest things about Judgment City is that you can eat all you want and you will not gain a pound! Everyone wears caftans and sandals and Channel 3 on the televisions in their hotel rooms will tell them anything they want to know about the city. Also, on this channel is Shirley McClaine who directs you to the Past Lives Pavilion where you learn that you are limited to viewing five past lives only.

So often people who view these movies think that the concepts in the movies are made up by Hollywood rather than realizing that Hollywood does its research and models these movies on historical philosophies.

Reincarnation/Past Lives

Most of us know we have come from a lineage. We have ancestors, relatives, etc. that make up our life. But how many of us believe we have had other lives maybe with these same ancestors playing different parts and/or maybe with others we do not remember? Supposedly, life would be so much more of a burden if we remembered our past lives as we live this one. So, allegedly, a veil comes over us when we are born and we forget. However, sometimes information slips through the veil and one is given hints or clues about their other lives especially when one is paying attention.

Transmigration of the Soul

The philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism both believe in transmigration of the soul. This means that your soul travels or migrates across lives moving from body to body and from incarnation to incarnation. The soul retains the mind, knowledge, experiences, thoughts and inclinations exactly as it

had on earth. The soul is the real character of the Self and becomes visible upon leaving the body.

Karma, the belief that every action has a reaction, and dharma, a set of rules for your particular role in your life, both are tied into your soul transmigrating. You can stop this process of reincarnating when you have achieved what your soul needs to know. You can then go to Nirvana or the Christian heaven in a state of bliss having escaped the cycle of rebirth.

Christianity and Reincarnation

This belief was present in the early church. Origen, Syriesius and other church fathers believed in the preexistence of the soul. The doctrine of reincarnation was excluded from the Bible at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It is said that the cardinals who attended this council could control the people easier if they did not believe in another life because in this life the people kept saying: "I'll behave better next time, Father."

Reincarnation

Most countries outside of the United States believe in reincarnation. Americans are not inclined to do so. The Harris Poll, a few years ago, said that 27% of people in the United States believe in reincarnation. In the age group from 25-29 years, 40% believe in it. In my private practice, I hear about reincarnation mostly from the clients who are now in very meaningful relationships where they believe "I knew him/her before. It was an instant attraction when we met. We both know we've been with each other at another time." These relationships are usually made more difficult because each person is married to someone else; however, since relationships are developmental stages most people learn much from them.

Books that taught us about Reincarnation

For psychology majors, the psychologist Roger Woolger, PhD, a Jungian psychotherapist, wrote a book years ago entitled *Other Lives, Other Selves* (1988). Brian Weiss, MD, a psychiatrist, was taught about past lives as he explains in his first book, *Many Lives, Many Masters* (1988) by a client who came from an alcoholic home. In the beginning of his hypnosis with her, he told her to "Return to the origin of the problem." She immediately went to another life, visited "the masters" and returned to tell him things about his family that no one knew.

He since has become an expert on helping clients and others remember many of their incarnations. He did this a few years ago on national television on *Oprah* and said that one in every ten people would remember a past life on the first attempt of being hypnotized. (Information about our past lives is said to be stored in the Akashic Records, a universal memory bank that contains the entire history of every soul since the beginning of time.)

Ian Stevenson, a faculty member at the University of Virginia was the leading authority in the scientific world for years with regard to reincarnation research. He died several years ago but his work is being continued by others. His work was studied by Brian Weiss when he was trying to understand what had happened to his client.

A fascinating book, *Return of the Revolutionaries* (2003), proposed that many people in our world today were alive around the time of the American Revolution. Walter Semkiw, MD, stated he was John Adams in this past life. He had many photographs of those people he wrote about from the revolutionary times and now. For instance, he believes that Benjamin Franklin's wife, Deborah, is now living as Caroline Myss and that Shirley McClaine was Robert Morris who died penniless after the revolution.

Interestingly enough, In a recent book, *Lucky Me* (2013), Shirley's daughter, Sachi Parker, reports how very tight fisted her mother is now with money and was during her entire childhood. Certain traits follow us in our present life and our job is to use this information from past lives to fix whatever negativity we have brought into this life. One could assume that Shirley McClaine, apparently, did not do that. She does, however, believe in reincarnation. She reported on this in her book entitled *Out on a Limb* (1983)

Edgar Cayce, the American Psychic

Edgar Cayce, the American psychic, gave many readings to people throughout his forty-three year career and told many people about their past lives. In the beginning, once he came out of trance and was told he had reported on past lives, he decided to study about them since the concept was not in his belief system at that time. He eventually learned he had been a high priest in Egypt and his Association for Research & Enlightenment headquarters in Virginia Beach, Virginia, still provides guided tours to Egypt because of what he learned. I took one of these tours years ago and it was excellent.

Patterns Positive or Negative Help Us Remember

In remembering past lives, it's important that you can identify with the concept. Do you believe they could happen? Do you believe they could happen to you? Once you begin to believe, information will come to you to guide you on this journey of self-discovery. You'll meet someone, read a book, see something on television, etc. This is how it seems to be for most people who need to learn most information that was not present in their family of origin.

Patterns in your life are something you can learn to remember by asking some of the below questions:

1. What childhood interests did you have or what ones did you withdraw from?
2. What childhood games did you used to play?
3. What talents, interests or hobbies have you had?
4. What is your "gut" feel on what therapy issues you have now that you could have had in other lives?

5. If you study genealogy, what countries were your relatives from? Do you have any interests in these countries now?
6. What movies have you liked?
7. Do any particular museums call to you?
8. What are your favorite clothes in your closet? Why?
9. What are any favorite costumes that you've worn over the years?
10. What countries have you visited and why?
11. Are there any countries you definitely do NOT want to visit?
12. What attributes do you have now that could have come from a past life?

In order to show you how some of this ties together, I'm going to give you some personal examples of what I've learned over the years in my study of this subject. When I was about twelve years old, I lived in the country and I would babysit the children across the street. There were two sisters about ages seven and five and then a baby boy was born. The game I played with them was called "Queen Mother."

I was the Queen Mother and they were my princesses. The baby was our prince, of course, and he was usually napping when we played. We'd dress up in our beautiful ball gowns from the costume trunk and play for hours about this imaginary queen and her princesses. This game was very meaningful to me at the time. So much so, that in remembering playing it, I still evoke very fond memories of the children and I.

Now, at this time, we were all living in an upstate New York farming community and there was no rational reason why this theme would be in my life. Another fact that was "weird" at this time was that at this same age I became very interested in Queen Elizabeth I of England and Mary Queen of Scots of Scotland knowing *nothing* about European history. I asked for books about them for my birthdays and Christmases (There was no library in town and no Internet then). My truck driver father and housewife mother did not understand why I wanted these books.

Another interesting happening, was that one battle Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I were fighting was over the Catholic and Protestant religions. My parents were having that same battle in my house. My Catholic mother had given up her religion to marry my Protestant father. Her Catholic belief system was always present especially when she fixed fish every Friday of our lives even though we were, supposedly, Protestants.

Genealogy Research Helps With Our Stories

Years later in researching genealogy of the Herrick family, I learned that one of our Herrick ancestors may be William Heyricke, born 1557, and died 02 March 1652/53, buried in St Martin's Church in Leicester, England. "He first attached himself to the Court of Queen Elizabeth, by whom he was

commissioned on an important embassy to the Ottoman Porte, and as a reward for his singular diplomatic success with the hitherto intractable Turk, he was appointed to a lucrative situation in the Exchequer, which he held through the remainder of this, and the following reign of James.”

To explain that a bit, Sir William was sent to Turkey for eighteen months and he and four other men lived during that time (being called the infidels, I'm sure). While there, they negotiated the trade agreement between Turkey and England which is still in effect today. He then became a banker for Queen Elizabeth I and for James I. He was a goldsmith by trade and goldsmiths at that time were also bankers. He would have lived through Queen Elizabeth I having Mary Queen of Scots executed in 1587. When I learned this information, my childhood fantasy game made much more sense because it showed that some Herricks did live during a time period of kings and queens.

Another fact that “bled through” into this life was my father had a pet name for my mother. He called her “The Duchess.” It's important to realize they were living in an alcoholic marriage, fighting over his drinking most of their lives, at least until my teenage years. I was the quiet, shy one; however, one day since my mother acted more like a witch than a duchess, I asked him why he called her that? Where did that nickname come from? He said he didn't know but he had called her that since he could remember.

Upon visiting England and *Beaumanor*, the Herrick family home, which was purchased in 1595 by Sir William, I was told an interesting story. Apparently, Frances, the Duchess of Suffolk, had owned this house at one time. “The main, sumptuously furnished bedroom there was known as the ‘Duchess's Chamber’ right up until the time that the house was demolished in 1726 (Wessel, undated, p. 37).” (Another clue of when my father might have also known my mother.) This house stayed in the Herrick family for seven generations and the guide explained that members of the Herrick family told this story about the Duchess's bedroom throughout their lives.

It is important to note that when information “bleeds through” it isn't just an ordinary fact that you see during your daily life. For me, it hits me “in the gut” and I pay attention. It's something special that my psyche records as important and I feel it throughout my body. This is the only way I can explain how the information is received that makes it different for me.

Past Life Information “Bleeds Through” in many Forms

You can receive information on past lives in many ways. Perhaps some of you will email me about how it has happened for you. Many times clients report dreams that are very special. These dreams are more vivid in color and in tone. One is supposed to pay more attention to these dreams.

Interests Now Help Us Learn About the Past

I am now a member of the Herrick Family Association Inc., headquartered in Holt, Michigan. I had the honor of doing research for them at Bodleian Medieval Library in Oxford, England, years ago. There are twelve volumes there of the "Heyricke Papers," which I able to read through for a few days. It was fascinating.

So, I encourage you to take this leap of faith, if you haven't already, to begin to learn more about what possible past lives you might have had. Just let your imagination GO. There's nothing to lose and much to gain in making you more aware of your soul and the stories it contains.

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Bodleian Library: www.medieval.ox.ac.uk

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