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MIND EXERCISES THAT BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM



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TRUE CONFESSIONS

FORUM

By Pamela Weintraub

I have often dreamed of meeting my brothers on the ramp of a large, disc-shaped ship.

"The beings from space were light-haired and light-skinned, and there were subtle differences between their biology and our own."

"I have lots of memory gaps from my entire life. I think it's just my way."

The anecdotes above come from more than 2,000 *Omni* readers who filled out a December 1987 questionnaire. Its purpose: to uncover repressed encounters with aliens and UFOs. Developed in conjunction with UFOlogist Budd Hopkins, the questionnaire was designed to help researchers study the mysterious phenomenon of alien abductions, in which otherwise ordinary individuals claim they have been kidnapped by extraterrestrials. According to reports from hundreds of abductees, Hopkins says, victims are often taken aboard a craft, where large-eyed, gray-skinned, four-foot-tall aliens give them medical exams and confiscate their eggs and sperm. But what do these

claims imply? Are they merely hallucinations, or could they possibly be real? And whether or not the aliens are real, is the "abduction experience" widespread in our culture today?

To help him find out, Hopkins sent about 450 completed questionnaires to the Fund for UFO Research in Mount Rainier, Maryland. Upon receiving the forms, Don Berliner, a member of the fund's executive committee, coded answers on a computer-ready form. Physicist Bruce Maccabee, another member of the fund, then entered all the data into his computer. Finally, the data were sent to Robert Swiatek, the fund's "abduction czar," who analyzed the numbers to see what they might mean.

Of the people whose responses were analyzed, Swiatek explains, 75 percent had seen a UFO; 42 percent had experienced missing time (a period of amnesia during which abductions supposedly occur); and 33 percent reported unexplained wounds or scars. Other results were as follows: 39 percent reported strong but seemingly

unexplained fear of particular places; 31 percent said they'd experienced an odd displacement in which they'd found themselves in a different location than the one they'd been in only seconds before; 41 percent reported recurring dreams about UFOs; and 65 percent said they felt UFOs might well be extra-terrestrial in origin. Few fell for a trick question about the word *trondant*; only 5 percent claimed familiarity with the word, which Hopkins had invented.

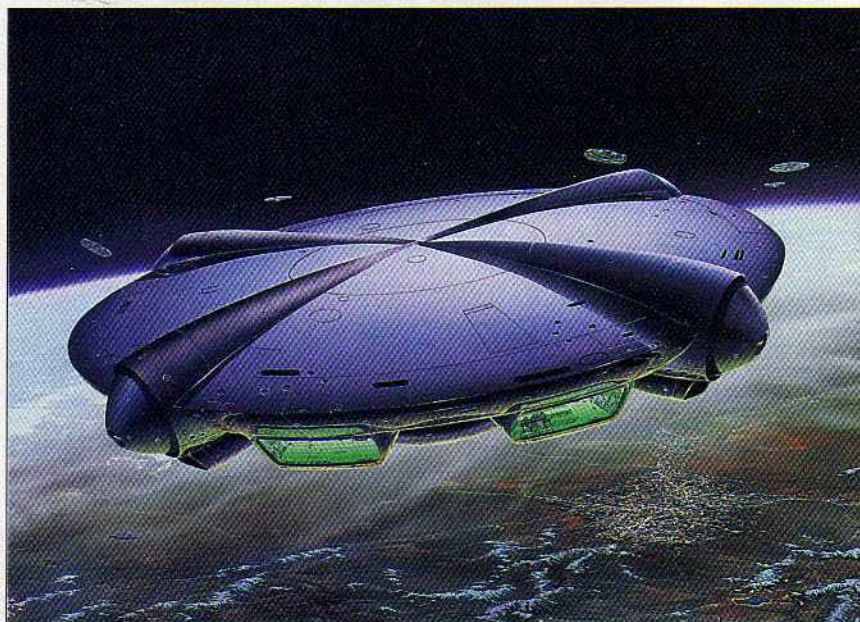
Perhaps most interesting to the UFO investigators was that many people attached typed or handwritten notes describing the abduction experience itself. How many of those claiming they'd been abducted might be for real?

"The bulk showed some evidence of what UFOlogists characterize as an abduction encounter," Swiatek says. "Four percent of the male respondents and eleven percent of the female respondents gave answers close enough to accepted abduction lore—including oddly placed scars, spatial displacement, or periods of missing time—to qualify as probable abductees."

To this select group, Swiatek sent a note along with a copy of a personal "primer"—a guide to anyone planning to embark upon the difficult process of investigating abduction experiences of his or her own.

"The decision as to whether or not you should investigate the origin of bothersome UFO dreams, memories, and experiences is of crucial importance," the primer (written by Budd Hopkins and fellow UFOlogist David Jacobs) warned *Omni* readers. "In fact, it could be the most important decision you will ever make. It represents one of those rare times when a single conscious choice can permanently alter the course of your life. If you learn that you actually have undergone UFO abduction experiences, there will be no turning back. Your relationship to friends and relatives and, indeed, to the world, will all have changed."

The primer also gave *Omni* readers some tips on choosing the right



Abductees: Are they remembering actual experiences or recalling archetypal myths?

FORUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

researcher to help their personal abduction investigations along.

- The researcher must be either a competent hypnotist or must work with one.
- The investigator and/or hypnotist must be well versed in the common patterns of UFO abduction.
- The hypnotist should be either a therapist or should work with one, in order to help the abductee deal with the memories that may be revealed.

If the process of finding competent abduction professionals seems intimidating, the Fund for UFO Research hopes to help *Omni* readers with that task, too. Sometime in the future, in fact, Swiatek and company hope to personally interview those who have filled out the questionnaire. "Even assuming these people are telling the truth," Swiatek says, "without talking to them one-on-one, there's no way to tell."

"Our goal," says Berliner, "is to work with investigators, mental-health professionals, and therapeutic groups around the country and the world. As more professionals join this network, we can supply them with names of possible abductees in their regions by going through the information given in the *Omni* questionnaires." Adds Maccabee, "Those with pet theories will now have data points to pit their notions against. Budd Hopkins has been criticized, but now the critics will have the chance to put their money where their mouths are by studying this mother lode of virgin cases in which most people have probably not been hypnotized or exposed to the bulk of material associated with abductees."

Yet some critics disagree, contending the questionnaire has no validity at all. Says UFO skeptic Philip J. Klass, "The *Omni* questionnaire reminds me of a poll that asks whether there should be a federal law against male homosexuals with polka-dot underwear. You will get responses only from those who are homosexuals or those who are opposed to federal regulations of personal matters. A questionnaire about abductions will get responses mostly from those who already believe in an extraterrestrial explanation for UFOs. The results will be biased. If the questionnaire indicates that people have been abducted, and if *Omni* puts any credence in those results," Klass adds, "then *Omni* should encourage the FBI to investigate what would certainly be the worst emergency this country has ever faced."

Even if the abduction scenario is nothing more than fantasy, the *Omni* questionnaire may help to prove that, too. Currently the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) in Illinois is studying abductees, including some who filled out the questionnaire, to determine how fantasy-

prone they are. "Four percent of the population is particularly prone to fantasy," says CUFOS's Mark Rhodigier. "Are abductees in this group? Our study will get at the answer, since fantasy-prone people can often be identified with a test."

Working on a similar theme, Ohio University psychologist Steven Jay Lynn is using the questionnaire to see whether the UFO abduction experience is rooted in modern myths. To do his study, Lynn tells his subjects that after they see some mysterious lights in the sky, they are driving down a road in a car when they become aware of an episode of missing time. Then he asks them to pretend they have been hypnotized as he records the yarn they spin. Half the subjects are shown the *Omni* questionnaire prior to the mock hypnosis session, and half are not. Lynn's aim is to see whether those who glimpse the questionnaire will come up with a greater number of UFO abduction scenarios than those who do not. "Can those given minimal hints spin out full-blown abduction stories?" Lynn wants to know. "If so, it would suggest that alien images are inherent in our culture."

Hopkins doesn't believe Lynn will prove his hypothesis true. The questionnaire, Hopkins says, has already "proved what I feared it would—that there are lots of people who seem to have genuinely had the experience and who have scrupulously avoided the trick question, which they were in no position to understand."

To judge for yourself, you might be interested in reading a written report produced by Swiatek and his fund. To obtain information, write to the Fund for UFO Research, Inc., Box 277, Mount Rainier, MD 20712. ☐

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