

1

00:00:00,321 --> 00:00:12,321

South Wing Code Blue, South Wing Code Blue, South Wing Code Blue.

2

00:00:12,321 --> 00:00:18,322

Code Blue. An emergency call used in hospitals all over the country.

3

00:00:18,322 --> 00:00:25,322

Code Blue alerts a special team of doctors and nurses that a patient has died.

4

00:00:26,322 --> 00:00:32,322

A resuscitation attempt will be made. If it is successful, the patient is brought back to life.

5

00:00:32,322 --> 00:00:43,322

In some cases, they have amazing stories to tell about what it is like on the other side.

6

00:00:43,322 --> 00:01:02,323

Dr. Thomas Rockwell is on intimate terms with death. As head of the emergency room at Santa Monica Hospital in California,

7

00:01:02,323 --> 00:01:07,323

he treats over 90 patients a day who are on the outer edge of life.

8

00:01:08,323 --> 00:01:16,323

Rockwell is one of many doctors caught in the debate over what is the end of life.

9

00:01:16,323 --> 00:01:22,323

The medical definition of death has been challenged by the advance of science.

10

00:01:22,323 --> 00:01:32,324

We're all composed of billions of cells. These cells depend on each other for their survival,

11

00:01:32,324 --> 00:01:36,324

but each of them has a lifespan of its own.

12

00:01:46,324 --> 00:01:54,324

In the past, death has been defined as the point at which the heart stopped beating.

13

00:02:03,324 --> 00:02:18,325

But we've come to find out that some of the cells in the body can live on for a considerable length

of time after the heart stops beating.

14

00:02:18,325 --> 00:02:26,325

Now we have redefined death to mean death of the cells in the brain.

15

00:02:26,325 --> 00:02:31,325

Now it's very difficult sometimes to tell when that has occurred.

16

00:02:31,325 --> 00:02:34,325

If you use the definition of death, it used to be used.

17

00:02:34,325 --> 00:02:44,326

Many patients who would have been declared dead under those criteria are resuscitated and regain consciousness and go on and live a useful life.

18

00:02:44,326 --> 00:02:51,326

The medical profession's dilemma over the definition of death has startling implications for everyone.

19

00:02:52,326 --> 00:02:54,326

What is it like to die?

20

00:02:54,326 --> 00:03:01,326

For centuries, man has turned to his priests and wise men for answers that were no first-hand accounts to go by.

21

00:03:01,326 --> 00:03:08,326

Now, due to advances in medical science, there are a few among us who claim to know what death is.

22

00:03:08,326 --> 00:03:17,327

Not scientists or doctors, but people who have technically crossed the line between life and death.

23

00:03:17,327 --> 00:03:23,327

Western custom is to mask the pain of dying and the sting of bereavement.

24

00:03:23,327 --> 00:03:33,327

But the accounts of those who have died and been brought back to life are remarkably similar in that the experience seems not to have been an unpleasant one at all.

25

00:03:33,327 --> 00:03:41,327

The words they choose may be different, but their stories lead to the same astonishing conclusion.

26

00:03:41,327 --> 00:03:49,327

One account goes, I lost control of my car on a curve and I remember thinking, this is the end.

27

00:03:49,327 --> 00:03:57,328

I felt like I was tumbling through a long tunnel and then suddenly I found myself floating over the scene of the accident.

28

00:04:03,328 --> 00:04:07,328

Another victim describes his experience this way.

29

00:04:07,328 --> 00:04:12,328

It happened years ago. I was playing in the pool with my brother when I lost my breath.

30

00:04:12,328 --> 00:04:17,328

I kept bobbing up and down and then suddenly I was engulfed in blackness.

31

00:04:17,328 --> 00:04:29,329

I could hear a soft vibrating sound in my ear like wind chimes and then I was above my body watching them pull me out of the water and pound on my back.

32

00:04:31,329 --> 00:04:35,329

A third account also stresses the feeling of euphoria.

33

00:04:35,329 --> 00:04:43,329

I was on the steps when the heart attack came. I collapsed and then felt myself go out of my body.

34

00:04:43,329 --> 00:04:48,329

The next thing I knew, I was in a rolling field too beautiful to describe.

35

00:04:53,329 --> 00:04:58,329

I was overcome with a feeling of utter peace and tranquility.

36

00:04:59,329 --> 00:05:07,330

Many have been reluctant to tell others of their encounters with the unknown, but a few have begun to speak out publicly.

37

00:05:07,330 --> 00:05:14,330

In 1970, I was diagnosed and told I had Hodgkin's disease.

38

00:05:14,330 --> 00:05:21,330

And at the time I was unable to have any treatment because I was pregnant.

39

00:05:21,330 --> 00:05:29,330

And both medicine and radiation treatment were not appropriate at that time.

40

00:05:31,330 --> 00:05:37,330

Catherine Hayward knew she was dying. Her disease advanced to the final stage.

41

00:05:37,330 --> 00:05:44,331

She made plans to have her children cared for and prepared to enter the hospital with no expectation of leaving.

42

00:05:44,331 --> 00:05:51,331

I was 27, critically ill, terminally ill.

43

00:05:51,331 --> 00:06:03,331

I began getting weak, very weak in June 1973 and called my best friend Anne who took me to the hospital.

44

00:06:03,331 --> 00:06:11,331

They took her immediately into the emergency room and began to try to locate vein so that they

could get some blood from her.

45

00:06:12,331 --> 00:06:18,332

And after that they took her to the coronary care unit.

46

00:06:18,332 --> 00:06:30,332

Then it happened I was lying on my side and I looked over at the heart monitor and the line went straight across.

47

00:06:30,332 --> 00:06:38,332

The next thing I knew, I was standing over my body looking down at the form in the bed.

48

00:06:39,332 --> 00:06:47,332

I watched the nurse beside the bed adjusting the wires and I was fascinated by it.

49

00:06:47,332 --> 00:06:52,333

I kept wanting to tap around the shoulder and tell her that I wasn't there.

50

00:06:52,333 --> 00:07:02,333

Then I saw this team of nurses and this little green thing on wheels coming toward the bed and they were in such a hurry.

51

00:07:02,333 --> 00:07:04,333

It really scared me.

52

00:07:04,333 --> 00:07:17,333

So I turned and stepped into a tunnel, I guess you'd call it, because it definitely had sides and I definitely felt confined.

53

00:07:17,333 --> 00:07:30,334

I started moving upward and I felt exhilarated but when I got to the end of the tunnel there was a light that was so bright

54

00:07:30,334 --> 00:07:33,334

I thought would hurt my eyes.

55

00:07:33,334 --> 00:07:43,334

Then I saw him about 100-150 feet ahead of me and it was the figure that I knew to be God.

56

00:07:43,334 --> 00:07:52,334

They began punching on her chest and thrusting some sort of instrument down her throat to help open up her passages so that she could breathe.

57

00:07:52,334 --> 00:07:56,334

Kathy wasn't responding.

58

00:07:56,334 --> 00:08:01,334

I said, please don't make me go back. Please let me stay here with you.

59

00:08:01,334 --> 00:08:06,335

I sounded like a spoiled child and I was really, really hanging on.

60

00:08:06,335 --> 00:08:13,335

Finally he just took me in firmly but gently pushed me away from him and said, you must go back.

61

00:08:13,335 --> 00:08:19,335

There is a task that you have to do for me and if you do this you will come to me.

62

00:08:19,335 --> 00:08:27,335

Then he turned and he walked away and I was furious.

63

00:08:27,335 --> 00:08:35,335

They had somehow managed to start her heart again and to start her breathing again.

64

00:08:35,335 --> 00:08:46,336

The doctor that was standing over me said, we've put the two past her lungs into her stomach and apparently they were pumping air into my stomach instead of into my lungs.

65

00:08:46,336 --> 00:08:54,336

They said that's what was causing all this tremendous pain as I was experiencing as I was coming to but I knew it wasn't that.

66

00:08:54,336 --> 00:08:57,336

I knew I was resisting coming back in the body.

67

00:08:57,336 --> 00:09:05,336

I felt a quiver running up and down my body and I felt rage and I felt like I didn't belong there.

68

00:09:05,336 --> 00:09:13,336

So there I was and not speaking and all of a sudden the line went straight again.

69

00:09:13,336 --> 00:09:23,337

I saw this nurse come running in and she took the portable oxygen tank down and I watched all this and I watched her put the mask on me.

70

00:09:23,337 --> 00:09:28,337

Even though the machine, the line went straight, I still saw this.

71

00:09:28,337 --> 00:09:34,337

I saw the bed being pushed down the corridor towards the intensive care unit.

72

00:09:34,337 --> 00:09:40,337

That's the last thing I remember seeing before I left my body again.

73

00:09:40,337 --> 00:09:53,338

I was immediately in the light and I was immediately in God's presence again and he just took me in his arms and very gently said, do you understand?

74

00:09:53,338 --> 00:09:56,338

I said yes I do.

75

00:09:56,338 --> 00:10:02,338

And then I came back into the body with just the easiest breath.

76

00:10:02,338 --> 00:10:05,338

I left, signed myself out of the hospital.

77

00:10:05,338 --> 00:10:09,338

I left the hospital and I haven't been back.

78

00:10:10,338 --> 00:10:17,338

Three years later, Catherine's physician reports that she has no trace of Hodgkin's disease.

79

00:10:17,338 --> 00:10:23,338

Catherine was recently remarried and she and her husband Jim have started a new life.

80

00:10:23,338 --> 00:10:26,339

Catherine's story is not unique.

81

00:10:26,339 --> 00:10:34,339

The out-of-body experience has had a great impact on others who have come close to death.

82

00:10:34,339 --> 00:10:45,339

Over the last several years I've been involved on various levels with several hundred people who have died and intimately involved with about a hundred.

83

00:10:45,339 --> 00:10:53,339

Dr. Charles Garfield is a psychiatrist at the University of California Cancer Research Institute.

84

00:10:53,339 --> 00:10:59,339

A number of years ago I was teaching a class at UC Berkeley called Psychology of Death.

85

00:10:59,339 --> 00:11:11,340

I got a letter from Shelley Ruderman in which he described his experiences some twelve years prior in which he was dealing with a life-threatening illness.

86

00:11:11,340 --> 00:11:14,340

In fact, he was dealing with a seriously advanced lung cancer.

87

00:11:14,340 --> 00:11:27,340

The emotional tone of both the letter and the subsequent meetings we had spoke really powerfully to me about the powerful emotional reality they're represented in the present.

88

00:11:28,340 --> 00:11:33,340

Sheldon Ruderman's encounter with death began in 1960.

89

00:11:33,340 --> 00:11:38,341

The experience had a profound effect on him and changed the direction of his life.

90

00:11:38,341 --> 00:11:47,341

He now counsels cancer patients like Micah Friedman and believes that the power of the mind can reinforce medical treatment.

91

00:11:47,341 --> 00:11:50,341

Thus far, the results have been positive.

92

00:11:50,341 --> 00:11:52,341

When's your birthday again?

93

00:11:52,341 --> 00:11:54,341

January 29.

94

00:11:54,341 --> 00:11:57,341

Okay, by January 29.

95

00:11:57,341 --> 00:12:04,341

If we keep doing this, if we keep doing what the doctors tell you to do, it's coming on.

96

00:12:04,341 --> 00:12:10,341

When I asked my surgeon what he thought, he gave me less than two years to live.

97

00:12:10,341 --> 00:12:18,342

Like a lot of other cancer patients, my original diagnosis seemed to me unbelievable.

98

00:12:18,342 --> 00:12:21,342

I mean, somehow it still seemed a little unbelievable.

99

00:12:21,342 --> 00:12:27,342

Less than two years to live was somehow not within my emotional capability at that point.

100

00:12:27,342 --> 00:12:30,342

So I communicated this back to the doctor and I said,

101

00:12:30,342 --> 00:12:36,342

but I'm not going to die and your task is to help me in how not to die.

102

00:12:36,342 --> 00:12:38,342

You tell me what to do.

103

00:12:38,342 --> 00:12:42,342

But I'm not going because I have to stick around now.

104

00:12:42,342 --> 00:12:51,343

In my research, approximately 15% of the people I work with have what might be described as death accepting attitudes.

105

00:12:51,343 --> 00:12:56,343

A sense of the basic old rightness of their death, that death feels appropriate to them.

106

00:12:56,343 --> 00:12:59,343

That's a pretty small percentage, 15%.

107

00:12:59,343 --> 00:13:07,343

Many other people are angry, furious, in the sense that Dylan Thomas was furious, raging against the dying of the light.

108

00:13:07,343 --> 00:13:10,343

Okay, I survived an eight hour operation

109

00:13:10,343 --> 00:13:14,343

in which my surgeon did what he later described was the best surgery of his life.

110

00:13:14,343 --> 00:13:16,343

I came out of that.

111

00:13:16,343 --> 00:13:21,343

I felt physically violated and no one had prepared me for these kind of feelings.

112

00:13:21,343 --> 00:13:29,344

17 days after this major operation, my surgeon finally walked in and he said,

113

00:13:29,344 --> 00:13:32,344

well, Shelley, we got a problem.

114

00:13:32,344 --> 00:13:35,344

We got a mechanical thing that we're going to have to correct.

115

00:13:35,344 --> 00:13:40,344

There's a valve that's filed up in there and it's making some kind of mess.

116

00:13:40,344 --> 00:13:45,344

But it's really a minor correction.

117

00:13:45,344 --> 00:13:47,344

I'll have to take you back in the operating room.

118

00:13:47,344 --> 00:13:50,344

But it's such a minor thing we won't have to give you a shot.

119

00:13:50,344 --> 00:13:58,344

They took me back into the operating room and I was on the table now, sort of face down.

120

00:13:58,344 --> 00:14:04,345

And since this is a teaching hospital, there are like now about 25 students in the room surrounding the table.

121

00:14:04,345 --> 00:14:07,345

And I couldn't believe what was happening.

122

00:14:07,345 --> 00:14:10,345

He was cutting me open. I was wide awake.

123

00:14:10,345 --> 00:14:14,345

One of the things I originally was trained in myself was engineering.

124

00:14:14,345 --> 00:14:23,345

What was perfectly obvious to me was that of the 25 people in the room, very few could see the surgery.

125

00:14:23,345 --> 00:14:26,345

So what I did was sort of like a little engineering thing.

126

00:14:26,345 --> 00:14:35,346

In my mind, I built a board coming out of the wall and back of me, which would go right over the table, right above the body.

127

00:14:35,346 --> 00:14:37,346

I'd be able to look down. No one would block the view.

128

00:14:37,346 --> 00:14:40,346

It was just, you know, mind play.

129

00:14:40,346 --> 00:14:48,346

No sooner had I thought of that when my consciousness was on the ceiling watching this operation.

130

00:14:49,346 --> 00:15:02,346

I have to say at this point that the guy that I was at that time was somebody who thoroughly disbelieved in anything that was psyched.

131

00:15:02,346 --> 00:15:07,346

I was a very scientific character. I was an atheist, very pragmatic.

132

00:15:07,346 --> 00:15:11,347

I didn't believe anything I couldn't see.

133

00:15:11,347 --> 00:15:15,347

Here I was experiencing something that was impossible.

134

00:15:15,347 --> 00:15:20,347

My consciousness was on the top of the room watching the operate on my body.

135

00:15:20,347 --> 00:15:28,347

The view looking down was very clear when it came to the people watching the surgery.

136

00:15:28,347 --> 00:15:31,347

I could see all of the students, very clear.

137

00:15:31,347 --> 00:15:37,347

When it got to the outlines of the table that I was on, it got fuzzy.

138

00:15:37,347 --> 00:15:42,347

When it got to the outlines of my body, it got fuzzier yet.

139

00:15:42,347 --> 00:15:48,348

And when it got to the wound itself where he was actually operating, I could not see.

140

00:15:48,348 --> 00:15:53,348

People have the sense of leaving their bodies, of rising above their bodies,

141

00:15:53,348 --> 00:16:03,348

and of drifting throughout the room, of being aware of images, of being able to see the room, to see the world from a different point of view,

142

00:16:03,348 --> 00:16:11,348

to be able to see their own bodies lying in the bed, and in essence to be detached from the physical body.

143

00:16:12,348 --> 00:16:20,348

Now, about every 15 minutes or so, my surgeon asked me how I was doing.

144

00:16:20,348 --> 00:16:28,349

Somehow I had to be back in the body to answer those questions, and I'd say, alright, and then I'd get out again.

145

00:16:28,349 --> 00:16:38,349

I mean, while there was something going off someplace that said, this is impossible, the rest of it felt completely normal.

146

00:16:38,349 --> 00:16:44,349

I think the important part is that we're not just generating pictures in our mind out of anxiety,

147

00:16:44,349 --> 00:16:51,349

that somehow there appears to be a contact with a level of reality that we don't normally address.

148

00:16:51,349 --> 00:16:59,350

I felt like I was within, at the most, 24 hours of dying if I let myself die.

149

00:16:59,350 --> 00:17:06,350

And somehow I did not seem at all incredible at this point that it was up to me whether I would have to die.

150

00:17:06,350 --> 00:17:11,350

And that's something I never would have believed before, but it seemed totally obvious right then.

151

00:17:11,350 --> 00:17:20,350

He had come as a natural scientist, as a scientist from the conventional mold, and had had an experience that totally baffled him.

152

00:17:20,350 --> 00:17:30,350

Another thing was the fact that he was quite convinced that he was responsible, largely responsible for his survival,

153

00:17:30,350 --> 00:17:40,351

that his will to live, his powerful sense of having to stay alive, in Shelley's case for the sake of a newly born son,

154

00:17:40,351 --> 00:17:47,351

was the ingredient that enabled him to survive an outrageous set of experiences.

155

00:17:47,351 --> 00:17:53,351

My wife did, in retrospect, was pure genius.

156

00:17:53,351 --> 00:18:00,351

There were no kids allowed on this ward, but she knew what it was I was trying to save my life for.

157

00:18:00,351 --> 00:18:11,352

So she took our kid, who was six months old, put him in a shopping bag, hit him, brought him up, brought him into my room,

158

00:18:11,352 --> 00:18:15,352

and in fact reminded me what the whole thing was about.

159

00:18:15,352 --> 00:18:19,352

When I saw him, it was like...

160

00:18:20,352 --> 00:18:23,352

That sent you the question, I had to stay alive.

161

00:18:23,352 --> 00:18:29,352

Let's go in your chest, where all the Red Soldiers are.

162

00:18:29,352 --> 00:18:37,352

So let's call them, and tell them all to bring their Squid Cones.

163

00:18:37,352 --> 00:18:44,352

And when they're all following you, we'll go into the other room where all the White Soldiers are.

164

00:18:44,352 --> 00:18:47,353

Until then to bring their Squid Cones.

165

00:18:47,353 --> 00:18:57,353

Help all the Soldiers to shoot all that gooey stuff into the holes in the monster, plugging up all those holes.

166

00:18:59,353 --> 00:19:05,353

And as the gooey stuff goes in there, watch the monster get smart.

167

00:19:05,353 --> 00:19:08,353

Just watch the monster shrink.

168

00:19:08,353 --> 00:19:23,354

What the out of the body experience did, what I became aware of was that whether I lived or died did not depend on the kinds of rules that the doctors understood.

169

00:19:23,354 --> 00:19:32,354

The other thing that I think has been a major transformation is that I don't believe, as I did at

the time, this experience unfolded,

170

00:19:32,354 --> 00:19:36,354

that the end of life was the end of everything.

171

00:19:36,354 --> 00:19:40,354

I believe now, very strongly, that there is a life after death.

172

00:19:40,354 --> 00:19:52,354

My personal belief is that there is continuity, that it would be outrageous for me at this point to believe that this was all there was.

173

00:19:52,354 --> 00:19:58,355

If you ask me what I know for sure, I'm in the same ambiguous position that the rest of the human race is in.

174

00:19:59,355 --> 00:20:05,355

I feel sure to myself that there is something that transcends beyond when you die.

175

00:20:05,355 --> 00:20:11,355

I have to say that the out of the body experience was probably the key thing,

176

00:20:11,355 --> 00:20:17,355

because it was very hard once you realized you couldn't have your consciousness and your body to separate,

177

00:20:17,355 --> 00:20:22,355

not to at least entertain the idea that even when your body is going, your consciousness may go on.

178

00:20:28,355 --> 00:20:33,356

Independent accounts of the out of body experience are remarkably similar.

179

00:20:33,356 --> 00:20:39,356

What they tell us about the nature of human consciousness may have great significance.

180

00:20:39,356 --> 00:20:48,356

The fact that the experience cannot be adequately explained by science has led many to question the finality of death.

181

00:20:48,356 --> 00:20:51,356

Is there life after death?

182

00:20:51,356 --> 00:20:56,356

Today there are many who've gone over the brink and returned to tell us about it.

183

00:20:56,356 --> 00:21:03,356

They do not offer proof of life after death, but their reports give us a new perspective on the possibility

184

00:21:03,356 --> 00:21:07,356

that death is not an ending, but a beginning.

185

00:21:11,357 --> 00:21:17,357

Coming up next in Search of continues with the facts and fiction about voices from the beyond.

186

00:21:17,357 --> 00:21:23,357

Then the 20th century with Mike Wallace reports on the history of the U.S. Israeli connection.

187

00:21:23,357 --> 00:21:29,357

And later tonight, an almost forgotten document reveals new information about one of our greatest presidents

188

00:21:29,357 --> 00:21:33,357

as Lincoln, the Untold Stories, continues on History's Mysteries.

189

00:21:33,357 --> 00:21:37,357

At 8, here on the History Channel, where the past comes alive.