

Spirituality & Community

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www.spiritualityandcommunity.com



Mandaeism Gnosticism

Ayahuasca
Malgorzata Duszak

Channeling Erik
Elisa Medhus M.D.

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Who We Are

www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Welcome! Seeking spiritual fulfillment? True happiness and mental wellness? Well, that's what we're all about. Spirituality & Community is a magazine, web site, and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. ***We are dedicated to promoting spirituality, true happiness, mental wellness, and appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.***

A New Age of Light

Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment. We are concerned with what lies within the heart. ***We believe that within everyone lies a pure love that we call the Light or the Lord within. We believe that one must open one's heart to the Light to attain spiritual fulfillment and that only this brings true happiness and mental wellness.*** The Light is the essence of humanity. ***Ultimately, we find our way by casting our gaze inward.*** We will search this inner world over until we find our home:

***We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding***

We believe that mankind is entering a new age, an Age of Light. We see a growing spiritual crisis in the world today. Our culture has brought us unprecedented material well being, but we seem further away than ever from true spiritual wholeness. We also perceive an increase in mental health issues in our society and believe this to be linked to spiritual detachment. Many wander endlessly in search of the material gratification that will bring them happiness. Many have lost faith in religions and traditions. Others sincerely believe in traditional religions but remain unfulfilled spiritually and unhappy. Unfortunately, too many are so close-minded they refuse to ask what is missing from their lives. Yet, many hunger for spiritual wholeness and are searching for answers. ***We believe that we are entering a new age of enlightenment in which genuine spiritual progress will be made and that spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.*** An appreciation for diversity of belief provides us with a fresh view of the beliefs of others, allows us to take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and enables us to synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. When we view the beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. We look with the highest regard to traditional beliefs and religions for guidance, and we also look forward. ***We believe that the past is not the end but the beginning.***



What We Do

Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas. We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- *Spirituality & Community magazine*
- *Features on the site*
- *Online chats* (as interest arises)

The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. *We sincerely hope that you will find truth within, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!*

Mandaeism

Gnosticism

The Mandaean Book of John the Baptist
Translated by G.R.S. Mead (1924)



Mandaeans in Iraq

Mandaeism is regarded as the only form of ancient Gnosticism surviving to the present day. Its adherents, Mandaeans, lived primarily in Iraq, around the lower Euphrates, until the war in 2003. Since the war, most have dispersed, mainly to Iran. Mandaeans believe in a Supreme Being in a world of light and a universal division between light and darkness. As in the Gnostic tradition, they believe that flawed demiurges created the physical world. They venerate John the Baptist above all prophets and do not venerate either Jesus or Muhammad. They strongly believe in the practice of baptism as essential to purification from sin. The following is from the Mandaean Book of John the Baptist. Yahya is John; God is often referred to as Life. For more, see: www.sacred-texts.com/chr/gno/gjb/index.htm.

19: YAHYĀ proclaims in the nights and says: "Through my Father's discourses I give light and through the praise of the Man, my creator, I have freed my soul from the world and from the works that are hateful and wrong. The Seven put question to me, the Dead who have not seen Life, and they say: "In whose strength dost thou stand there, and with whose praise dost thou make proclamation?" Thereon I gave to them answer: "I stand in the strength of my Father and with the praise of the Man, my creator. I have built no house in Judæa, have set up no throne in Jerusalem. I have not loved the wreath of the roses, not commerce with lovely women. I have not loved the defective, not loved the cup of the drunkards. I have loved no food of the body, and envy has found no place in me. I have not forgotten my night-prayer, not forgotten wondrous Jordan. I have not forgotten my baptizing, not [forgotten] my pure sign. I have not forgotten Sunday, and the Day's evening has not condemned me. I have not forgotten Shilmai and Nibdai, who dwell in the House of the Mighty. They clear me and let me ascend; they know no fault, no defect is in me."

When Yahyā said this, Life rejoiced over him greatly. The Seven sent him their greeting and the Twelve made obeisance before him. They said to him: "Of all these words which thou hast spoken, thou hast not said a single one falsely. Delightful and fair is thy voice, and none is an equal to thee. Fair is thy discourse in thy mouth and precious thy speech, which has been bestowed upon thee. The vesture which First Life did give unto Adam, the Man, the vesture which First Life did give unto Rām, the Man, the vesture which First Life did give unto Shurbai, the Man, the vesture which First Life did give unto Shum bar Nū,—has He given now unto thee. He hath given it thee, O Yahyā, that thou mayest ascend, and with thee may those ascend
* * * * * The house of defect will be left behind in the desert. Everyone who shall be found sinless, will ascend to thee to the Light's region; he who is not found sinless, will be called to account in the guard-houses."

25: YAHYĀ proclaims and speaks: "Ye nobles, who lie there, ye ladies, who will not awaken,—ye who lie there, what will you do on the Day of the Judgment? When the soul strips off the body, on Judgment-Day what will you do? O thou distracted, jumbled-up world in ruin! Thy men die, and thy false scriptures are closed. Where is Adam, the First Man, who was here head of the æon? Where is Hawwā (Eve), his wife, out of whom the world was awakened to life? Where is Shit-il (Seth), son of Adam, out of whom worlds and æons arose? Where is Rām and Rūd, who belonged to the Age of the Sword? Where are Shurbai and Shar-hab-ēl, who belonged to the Age of the Fire? Where is Shum bar Nū (Shem, son of Noah), who belonged to the Age of the Flood? All have departed and have not returned and taken their seats as Guardians in this world. [The Last Day] is like a feast-day, for which the worlds and the æons are waiting. The Planets are [like] fatted oxen, who stand there for the Day of the Slaughter. The children of this world are [like] fat rams, who stand in the markets for sale. But as for my friends, who pay homage to Life, their sins and transgressions will be forgiven them."

26: Gnosis of Life who is far from the height [writes]:
"Wherefor do ye weep, generations, wherefor weep ye, O peoples? Wherefor fade your splendour? For you have I brought my Image, I betook myself into the world."

57: THE Treasury am I, Life's Treasury (Sīmath-Haiyē); the Treasury am I, the Mighty One's Treasury; the Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. A crown was I for the Mighty from everlasting. The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. Ever did I give light to the treasures and to the shekīnahs, and was for adornment to Jordan. For adornment became I to Jordan, who was from everlasting, through whom the treasures give light. Great [Life] made me limpid and lucent and made me into a vesture. He made me into his vesture, which day in and day out sings measureless praise of the Æther.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. To the King of the Splendour became I a crown. The treasures shine through my glory and praise my form beyond measure.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury—I who as adornment settled down on the King of the Splendour, so that he shone in his mind, that he became bright and shining, and his form glittered more than the [light-] worlds. As I (lit. it) gave light and enlightenment unto the treasures and to the shekīnahs [e'en] in the Æther, the King laid me as vesture round N^c□ab the Radiant. N^c□ab the Radiant then took me, brought me and laid me as vesture o'er Jordan. As vesture o'er Jordan he laid me, through whom the treasures shine beyond measure.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. The wicked are blind and see not. I call them unto the Light, yet they busy themselves with the Darkness. "O ye wicked," I unto them cry, "ye who sink down in the Darkness, arise and fall not into the deep." I cry unto them; yet the wicked hear not and sink into the great Sea of the Ending. Therefore was Jordan made a bridge for the treasures; a bridge for the treasures became he, while he cut off the wicked and hurled them into the great Sea of the Ending.

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. A crown I became for Life's Gnosis. He bestowed on me the rulership over the treasures and the shekīnahs which are there [yonder].

The Treasury am I, Life's Treasury. Of the light-worlds was I the enlightener. Day in and day out they sing praise to Great [Life], and through me they mount upward and behold the Light's region.

Ayahuasca- Entry to Spiritual Heaven or Gate to Mind's Hell?

Excerpt from "Odyssey of an Airhead; Ultimate Truth, Here I Come!"

Malgorzata Duszak

Two days ago, Mark and I came back from the ayahuasca adventure. What an experience it was! Honestly, I never expected it to be as intense as it was. It was the most incredible, bizarre, agonizing, and insightful night of my entire life. The ayahuasca is definitely the psychedelic queen of all times.

We reached Simon's hut in the early evening. The surroundings looked shamanic. The house was made of natural ingredients, and everything inside expressed the owner's fascination with the primitive and tribal way of living. Simon used candles for lighting, and there was no electricity available. In the corner I saw a few beds made from wood and straw. Everywhere I looked there were herbs, wooden living utensils, cotton covers, and straw. The dwelling was unique and exotic, oozing out love for simple and natural living. Several other people arrived before us, including a woman who needed healing for cancer, and some inner dimensional explorers. Not everyone drank the brew. Some people took the condensed form of ayahuasca in a pill, and two or three people ingested something else completely. We arrived last, so there was no time to get to know anyone or to find out their reasons for taking part in the ritual. When we came in, the ceremony already started.

After sharing a few things about ourselves, we went straight into the main part. Simon called each of us separately into the corner of the room and performed a shamanic blessing of the drink. At this point, we drank the brew. It tasted nasty, but I managed to quickly swallow it all. I could take the pill instead of a brew with similar effects and less chance of becoming sick, but I didn't want to. I preferred to follow the authentic procedure, the way the shamans in the Amazon drink it.

The experience lasted all night, and I went through three stages of the ayahuasca effects. Each phase flowed into the next one, resulting in the complete ayahuasca journey. However, each differed in less or more intense ways from the other, or they each brought a distinct revelation.

I

After ingesting the brew, I lay down on one of the Mattresses, awaiting impatiently for the arrival of any changes. I was mentally prepared for anything. I knew that the first symptom is physical debilitation, including vomiting and defecating. None of it, however, had the power to scare me away. I anxiously anticipated what would happen after the sickness receded.

After about a half hour, the reality within and without began to feel slightly distorted. The inner world started to pull me in. The intense visual scenes appeared in the eyes of my mind, absorbing me quickly in their rapidly changing content. After another ten minutes, the virtual reality began for good. I call it virtual because it gave the sensation of it happening for real, and yet it was all taking place within the mind. I remember feeling satisfied as I already knew at that time that it was going to be a trip much more vibrant and eventful than any other before.

As the images within me kept striking my consciousness more strongly with each passing minute, I sensed a growing nausea and decided to go outside. At that time, a few other people already left outside to enjoy their experience alone and with nature. As I got up to leave the room, I noticed it wasn't easy to walk as it was extremely hard to focus attention on the physical world with all these visual scenes drawing me intensely within. It seemed like the reality of the mind began to feel superior to what I perceived on the outside.

As soon as I stepped out, I threw up. I felt sick beyond imagination. It was a terrible feeling of weakness, with extreme nausea and no stable reality to hold on to regardless of whether my eyes were closed or open. Everything was spinning, and the images within my mind kept flashing in front of me insanely, transforming fluidly one into another. I vomited more and right after it, I felt forcefully pulled into the whirlpool of virtual scenes developing inside again.

I couldn't stay focused on the external world. I stayed kneeling above my own vomit, absorbed by the visual effects within my mind. I didn't have a clear perception that I was still next to the place I threw up at. I had only a remote awareness of the external world, or I was in and out of it continually, which added tremendously to the general feeling of painful confusion.

Most of the scenes I don't remember. They appeared fast, kind of transforming one into another. They seemed alive, too, drawing me into their world. It was hard to hold on to them or try to remember them. As soon as one emerged, it started transforming into the next one, making the previous one vanish into oblivion, and so, all I recall is an intense play of virtual scenes, but that is all. Hence, I call this stage a virtual reality phase.

There are only a few scenes I remember. One was a space full of screaming (without a sound) and distorted, ghostly faces around me. They were everywhere, stacked one on top of the other. Some were just skulls with an expression of agony and screaming desperation on their faces. I didn't feel any fear, though. I instantly knew that they represented a deep pain that I carry within. I accepted the faces as part of me, and as soon as I did, they disappeared and never returned. I also recall having a brief feeling of love and, immediately thereafter, my vision appeared pink, and I saw a huge heart with smaller hearts and flowers around it. At that time, I realized that whatever I think, I create. Some images appeared on their own, but others I could bring into existence by thought and watch them emerge in front of me. All these scenes were taking place with my eyes shut.

Amid all the vibrant activity going on inside my head, I found enough sensibility to make a conscious decision to walk to the fire where several other people gathered. Mark was among them, too. They were all silent, but I felt like laughing. I started to laugh without knowing why. I guess I was happy that the plant had a strong effect and that I could have a lot of fun with the images.

The strange thing was that, while I was laughing, I didn't have a realization that I was actually doing it. It seemed as if my body was doing it for me. I also felt like I was alone, as in my head it was truly just me witnessing all of the scenes. The imagery appeared very vibrant, and it seemed much more real than the world outside that I occasionally glanced at with my half open eyes.

The reality within was buzzing with activity, and it felt only natural to laugh. I thought no one could hear me as it all seemed so full of intense action. I couldn't hear myself laugh. Only when I opened my eyes, I had a sudden realization that, in fact, everything was totally silent around me. It was a different world. The darkness of the night engulfed us, and no one made any sounds except for me laughing like crazy. As soon as I opened my eyes, I knew that the vibrant activity I participated in wasn't taking place in the "outer" reality.

The contrast between the two worlds seemed odd. I looked at other people and realized that my laughing must seem wacky to them since they weren't there to witness the colorful hustle going on in the reality within me. I couldn't stop laughing, so I decided to leave the fire area so as not to disrupt them. I went inside and lay down on the Mattress next to some lady.

Again, I lost myself in the inner imagery. Unfortunately, I don't remember any of it. What I do recall, however, is being immersed in the vibrant activity once more. It was buzzing with life, and I began laughing like a maniac again. I wasn't aware of where I was on the outside. I was completely absorbed in the world within.

I opened my eyes and realized once again that the world outside of me was completely quiet and that everyone could hear me laughing. It felt so strange. Everything was silent around me while on the inside it was oozing with intensity. Once again, I left to avoid bothering others with my continual laughing, and I went outside to find a quiet spot somewhere in nature, far from people. I sensed that I should probably try to do some serious spiritual work, instead of spending my entire time giggling.

I found a small hill behind the house and decided to walk up there to be on my own. I heard Mark walking behind me. I didn't mind that because I wasn't feeling comfortable, and he made me feel safer, but I wanted him to stay at least several meters behind me. I needed to be alone. This is where the next phase began.

II

At the second stage of my ayahuasca experience, all the fun ended and never came back. Instead, I was thrown into the midst of mental agony and chaos with my consciousness trying to find and figure itself out. I was still bombarded with the images but, this time, I began to be aware of myself as their independent watcher. I became conscious of the "I" impulse behind the observing process. I decided to figure this "I" out and follow it to its source. It's here where the agony began.

I felt myself placed in a cube comprised of my own thoughts, images, ideas, all of which took on a life of their own. They appeared almost physical. I decided to trace them to the first force that created them; the formative impulse behind them. Thoughts were appearing one after another, almost like material entities, and I could sense myself hidden somewhere still beyond them. I was the original driver of their existence. I had to find it, to find myself.

It was intense, inexpressibly confusing, and mentally agonizing. My identity was totally shattered. When we think about things normally, our awareness is centered, contained, and doesn't experience much mental disturbance when trying to look upon itself. At that time,

however, the sense of “I,” usually a fortress to hold on to, was completely lost amid the infinite number of thoughts and images that popped out of everywhere.

As disembodied as I felt, I managed to remind myself of the concept that I learned of astral plane creations of imagination that feel like separate beings, and the description of thoughts, fears, and expectations, which all take the form of living entities after we die, as described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Remembering these teachings, I forced myself to dismiss the disturbing images and thoughts as transitory manifestations of my consciousness. In reality, I told myself, they don’t constitute my true self at all.

I decided to endure the process and manage my way through them all, letting them go one by one. I knew that the source of the “I” feeling that I was sensing was still somewhere beyond. The source of the “I” wasn’t the thoughts and ideas because the “I” watched them. It was hidden somewhere underneath, and I was determined to follow the thread of my consciousness to its very source.

It’s actually not that I had the choice to do otherwise. I was kind of forced into this task by layers of thoughts and ideas being stripped away from my identity as not constituting the real essence of it. As a result, in order not to lose my mind entirely, possibly even resulting in injury, I hurled myself in the pursuit of the absolute source of the “I,” the one I could finally hold on to as the base of myself. It was an agonizing journey, but I gained several insights here, and therefore I regard this stage as the most revealing part of the entire experience.

A) First, I noticed an incredible correspondence between what was going on in my mind and the physiological manifestation of it in the body. As I was totally engrossed in the reality within, I didn’t feel connected to my body. However, I was still able to notice that it was expressing whatever was happening on the inside, as if by itself. If the painful feeling developed, my body started to tremble and sway back and forth. I also talked to myself, not being in control of the words I uttered. I was aware I was doing it, but I wasn’t the one to originate it. It was a bizarre feeling. I was not my thoughts, and I was not my body. The “I” was completely dissociated from both my mental processes and the physical self.

B) As I was in the process of experiencing one state of mind after another, I could hear the remote “I” guiding me through, telling me to dismiss them all as mere illusions. They were not the essence of self where I craved to be. It was endless. Where are you, the “I?” I desperately kept crying out within. Where is the source of you? It was a complete dissociation of self, thoughts, emotions, and ego. Horror. I screamed mentally into the void of the internal abyss where the “I” dwelled, asking it to teach me.

Then, an amazing thing happened. A soft, gentle voice spoke quietly from within the depths of my mind: What do you want to learn? I didn’t hear these words physically. It was more of a mental message inserted into my awareness, although I clearly discerned every individual word. At that moment, I knew I was facing the eternal “I.” I realized that all the answers we ever seek are buried somewhere underneath the layers of our external identities and thoughts. I decided to dig. Mental confusion persisted.

Each time I thought I grabbed a hold of a state of being that I hoped was finally the ultimate “I”—a stable reality from where I could relate to everything else, it cruelly dissolved in front of me, leaving me blank and foundationless again. It wasn’t that it simply vanished on its own accord. It was the essence of the true “I,” or higher self, that kept guiding me to do it, to let go of these illusory layers of identity and to move on.

In a way, I was searching for a container for my shattered self, realizing in the process that none of those that kept presenting themselves before me were actually it. It was all mentally agonizing. Today, I found this passage on the Internet, and it may explain why it was so hard to reach the level of ultimate self, unattainably hidden beyond my reach.

The quest for higher consciousness is ego—driven. The “I” has no such drive—it is already there. This then allows us to just be higher consciousness we already are. The drive for higher consciousness is the ego trying to become ‘I’ without losing itself in the process—impossibility. (source unknown)

I feel that this was exactly what was happening. I attempted to reach the ultimate “I” state without losing myself in the process. It was my lower self, the ego, that was trying to attain to the “I” in the pursuit of its own enlightenment. The higher consciousness has no such drive. I wouldn’t have felt any of these torturous feelings if I was anchored in the state of higher consciousness already. I wouldn’t be searching anything. It is the ego that continues to search, which means that, to let go of it, I would need to release the nagging search process itself. Did I just confuse myself, or am I truly on something here?

Back to the experience, though. I decided I was going to let go of all the layers of myself disguising themselves as my permanent being and release the need of the search itself. I just wanted to immerse myself in a state of non-being. I didn’t feel I needed to look for a container for my identity anymore. I allowed myself to just be, even if it was a state of a “nowhere to be found” self.

Ego wants so badly to experience the enlightenment, and yet, it pushes it away with its attempts to participate. It must occur outside of ego’s experience. Release and receive.

C) Another realization occurred at the point of my inner journey when I sensed that I reached a level where all thoughts were created. I felt like a fluid and vibrant ocean of potential. In my mind, I heard myself think: good, I reached a plane of, what Kabbalists call, Formation. There, I became aware of some other form of self which was having fun and almost entertaining itself with creating all of the images and ideas, and laughing at my lower self that identifies with them. The higher awareness of me was playing with itself and with its own infinite potential of created objects, concepts, and thoughts.

I actually experienced myself being on both sides at the same time, being the creator and the creation. As the creator, I kept throwing certain states of being at my lower self, the creation, and watched with amusement its identification and preoccupation with them. As soon as the lower self realized that the experience was temporary, created by the whim of the higher self for fun, that particular experience would disappear. In that instant, I realized that everything around us is

just that—a virtual reality we're trapped in and made to believe that no other exists. In fact, however, it is solely a flash of a manifested thought in the mind of the higher self which is a vast field of creative energy.

Another quote that fits into my experience is a bit difficult to grasp, but I'll include it nevertheless as it seems to fit:

There is a beam of light being focused into a light point by a lens floating in space. The point of light is our current life/reality. We are both the light and the lens that focuses the light. Our current life/reality is point of focused attention in space created by our higher selves. (source unknown)

In a way, it was an odd experience of higher self-awareness playing with itself. From that level, it was possible to think into being a certain state of mind, which then came infusing my lower self with feelings in accordance with that particular created state.

D) The next realization came out of the previous one. As explained above, I reached a state where I could observe the higher self creating images and states in the reality of the lower mind. I decided to pose a question to it as to why it was doing it, and how we were supposed to act being thrown into this virtual game.

The answer I received came in the form of a deep seated insight. As soon as I thought of this question, I realized that what we're here to do with this reality, created whimsically by the highest self, is to enjoy and play with it as well. The spiritual, creative mind has fun conjuring it all up. It sits there laughing, as if to say, when it is looking down on us us all serious and lost in the game like it is something permanent and stable. It is a virtual world and so it should be treated. Let us play and enjoy it while it still lasts because it won't. The creation wants us to take pleasure in it. It wants to be looked upon, admired, appreciated, and loved. It craves to have a peek at itself and marvel at its own being through us.

I remember looking at the moon and realizing that I was in fact looking at the other aspect of the highest self in expression, at the other aspect of myself. It was all Self—God. That's why we were created, so God can experience itself manifested.

That is why all of us are worthy—to feel unworthy disrespects our purpose. (source unknown)

After all this mental analysis, which was an extremely intense and direct experience of those insights, I made myself simply be in face of whatever else might come up. I felt drained and didn't care to let the rest of the experience take its own course. At that stage, all I wanted was for it to end since the mental unrest I was still feeling was beginning to border on madness, and I couldn't even conceive of how to release the pain. The sense of shattered states of my mind was overbearing. I thought I was dying.

Little did I know, the agony was nowhere near the finishing line. About five hours have passed, but I was to be tormented for another three at least.

III

Mental confusion ended, pure emotional agony began. I felt sick and miserable beyond any expression. Weakness overcame me, and I couldn't walk so Mark led me back to my blanket. I tried to lie down and rest. I didn't have analytical thoughts and couldn't see images anymore. Nevertheless, what overwhelmed me tremendously at that point was an acute emotional pain.

I couldn't find any balance. Emotional turmoil of the exhausted mind followed mental unrest. I became extremely tired, but the whole experience didn't seem to want to end. I started to cry out loud. I breathed hard, trapped within the state of enormously lost and disembodied awareness.

Mark stayed with me all the time, but there was nothing he could do to help despite his best intentions to do so. No escape existed, and no aid could rescue me. The guiding voice within me felt weaker, and the emotional agony began to grow stronger. There was nothing in particular that I lamented over. Pain and tears happened on their own, and I didn't realize what triggered such an intense reaction. It could have been the pain of being lonely because of Damian's ongoing absence, but it's possible that it stemmed from older, deep-seated wounds coming out in full expression.

I didn't know and I didn't care. All I wanted is for everything to end so I didn't have to feel this agony anymore. I desperately wanted my old self back.

As the yajé (ayahuasca) works its way through your system, it not only cleans out the excessive foods, stimulants, and poisons clogging your body, but it seems to dredge up the old repressed emotions and traumas stored literally within your guts. Thus, in addition to suffering from intense pain, dizziness, nausea, and horrifying visions, most beginners must suddenly confront a lifetime's accumulation of emotional blocks and wounds.

The yajé ritual is certainly one of the few places outside of psychotherapeutic institutions where regressive madness is encouraged, and some yajé's power as a therapeutic force may come from its ability to catalyze traumatic memories. (Weiskopf)

I lay there under the full moon above, crying hysterically, and with Mark next to me silently watching me not knowing what to do. For a brief moment, I saw myself through his eyes, and I started to laugh as I thought this must have been a bizarre night for him. I laughed for a short moment, then went back to crying again. I never cried like this in my entire life. I couldn't lie still, and I began to sway back and forth losing myself in the pain.

I forced myself to tell Mark to bring Simon, the shaman, over so he can help me. I couldn't stand this on my own anymore. Simon usually assists people who have difficulties going through the experience alone. I craved for him to come and perform some chanting or healing me, anything to end this suffering. However, as Mark found out, Simon was too far gone in his own experience already and couldn't help me. It was too late. At that moment, I realized I was completely alone. I lay down again, squirming with emotional pain.

As I lay there crying, I suddenly heard a distant sound, as if someone was singing or playing an instrument. It was only a one tone sound with no melody developing. It must have been someone down by the fire. It absorbed me totally, and, as I discovered with relief, it soothed my pain. My awareness shifted from experiencing the emotional turmoil within to this 1-pointed sound in the distance. When it stopped, I asked Mark to do the same sound for me. I knew that it would help me.

He sat singing a one-tone melody for a while, while I was lying there, still crying, but in much less agony than before. Slowly, I became calmer, and he stopped. While looking up in the sky, I noticed a Northern star shining brightly. I focused myself entirely on it. It absorbed me and filled me with some sort of energy that I wanted to channel. The star appeared full of life and love. I felt the urge to express this energy and told Mark I wanted to do some kind of healing session on him. I sat there next to him, allowing my hands to feel his aura and to channel the star's energy. It felt good, and I was in harmony with the star essence while doing it. After that, I lay down on my blanket again and, exhausted to the extreme, finally fell asleep.

All these experiences, revelations, and the entire torture lasted about nine hours. For the most part, all the insights were born in the midst of mental and emotional agony. I feel purified now, and I know it was a necessary experience to realize what I am and what the nature of the mind is. The experience was painful because it was the ego—a false container of what we are—that was being stripped of its identity (in the second, mental stage). I experienced its death in order to be born again. Catharsis and renewal—that's what the ayahuasca journey represented for me.

Having drawn close to agony, madness, and death, you come to terms with suffering. Ego must die. (ibid)

I never came out on the other side of the experience in peace and harmony, as they say it's supposed to happen. No ecstasy followed. My agony lasted until the very end. In a way, I feel like I failed to win the battle against my own mind. However, another part of me believes that it's not really the case. It's just the beginning. The battle has been revealed. I know and see now what it is I need to overcome: layers of artificial identities that attempt to pass off as the essence of self. They are the mind's true illusions.

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BIO:

Born and raised in Poland, Duszak graduated from the English college in Elblag after which she left to the United States to work as an au-pair. She stayed in the USA for another year travelling across the continent. She discovered a lot about the spiritual and esoteric matters in that time, and deepening the knowledge of the subject remained her most cherished passion ever since.

Malgorzata also graduated from the Religious Studies program at the University of Queensland in Australia. Despite lots of personal turmoils, she continued to explore life following her never-ending desire to venture into the unknown regions of the world and of her mind.

She has been a spiritual adventurer and the true “experience collector,” as she calls herself, for years. She participated in the variety of religious and spiritual events and ceremonies on three continents, open to always increase her connection with the truths hidden beyond the ordinary perception. Her questioning mind and metaphysical curiosity has taken her into the most unusual situations and human encounters. She studied with Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons as well as with more alternative philosophers. She explored the Occult, New Age, the UFO phenomena, participated in ancient as well as modern ceremonies, visited native lands, deserts, jungles as well the busiest cities.

Her ongoing odyssey to find the ultimate truths might provoke the questions and answers within us all so that our own odyssey may continue forever onward.

She is currently living in Central America, soon to prepare her move back to Europe.

For more, see:

www.odysseyofanairhead.com

Channeling Erik

Elisa Medhus M.D.

One decision. One ill-fated decision. That's all it took to cleave our lives in half: the wonderful before and the intolerable after. In the days and months that followed my son, Erik's, suicide, our entire family was catapulted into a new world of grief, bewilderment, anger, and guilt. As a mother, the effect seemed to take an even greater toll. The physical connection that began 20 years and nine months ago had been ripped apart so violently that a searing pain permeated every part of my body and soul. It leached into every cell, distorted every memory and haunted every thought.

It didn't take long, however, for our new dark world to lighten with brief moments of hope. As early as the day after Erik's death, he sent us what would be the first of many messages that all was well with him in the afterlife. These intermittent respites from grief inspired me to share our experiences in a blog, www.channelingerik.com.

As a physician with a strong science background, these ghostly visits radically shifted my belief system. I had always believed what science had taught me: reality is that which is measurable by one of the five senses. If it cannot be touched, smelled, heard, seen or tasted, it is unknowable and therefore not "real." Whatever is "unreal" we scorn and relegate to the domain of mysticism where only gypsies hunched over crystal balls and New Age kooks dared to tread.

Each of Erik's visits made me question: Is there more to our three dimensional reality than can be perceived by our senses? Do these phenomena have a rational explanation? In a quest for truth, I began to devour nearly every book on consciousness survival and the afterlife, including those written by theoretical physicists and other scientists. Eventually, my research evolved into a new understanding of the quantum physics behind all things metaphysical, converting me from skeptic to believer. I now *know* the soul survives death. Erik has simply shed his body like a set of clothes and now lives in an alternate reality.

Eventually, I began regular and direct communication with Erik through a gifted medium. I wanted to ask the tough questions: What was death like for him? Where is he now? *What* is he now? What is the afterlife like? Why did he take his life when he had so much to live for?

In the blog, I continue to share not only the amazing stories of Erik's on-going visitations and mischievous pranks, but also his answers to our many inquiries. *Channeling Erik* gives him a voice to help us broaden our perspective. Often each question generates a dozen new ones: What's left after the body is shed? Has he met God? If so, what is God like? What new abilities does he have? How do souls manipulate energy to manifest themselves to us here on the earthly plane? How do thoughts create reality? Does time really exist? Will 2012 mark the end of our existence? Do we have past lives? If so, why can't we remember them? Do souls in Heaven have a work life, a sex life, a social life? Can they hear our every thought? The list goes on.

Over time, those questions have blossomed into a journey. Strangers from all over the world have joined me, asking Erik their *own* thought-provoking questions. Many of these strangers, now friends, consider his insight life changing. For some on the brink of suicide, he has inspired them to live. Now, my readers and I venture hand in hand to explore the human experience, the death process, the afterlife, reincarnation, and more.

As a physician, writing this blog has been an immense healing experience for me, because it is in my nature to heal others and, through their restoration, I find my own salvation.

As a mother, writing this blog has not only strengthened my relationship with Erik even more, it has also allows me to continue to parent my son. Motherhood and Love knows no boundaries, even Death. I defy that wall and reach beyond to guide Erik to become what every mother wants their child to be: a productive, fulfilled, contributing soul who makes the world a better place for his fellow travelers. In the end, I refuse to allow his death to be in vain.

Erik would be the first to admit that he is no Oracle of Delphi. He does not claim to be a Dalai Lama, the Great Messiah, a mountaintop guru, or even a wise sage. No, he is a flawed human being who, like many of us, has battled his own dragons. He has stumbled and failed time and time again. But perhaps *because* of his foibles, he has a deep understanding of the human experience. He knows what it's like to be neck deep in a foxhole of misery clawing desperately in the mud to pull himself out. He also knows what it's like to feel hopelessness, to give up, to believe that life is not worth the pain and setbacks. But his trials and tribulations offer another type of wisdom—one we can relate to in the shadow of our own

hardships. That said, however young, flawed and imperfect, Erik is a voice worth hearing. He is one of us.

It is my sincerest hope that you join Erik and me on this journey. At times you will cry. At times you will laugh. At times you will pause in wonderment. Some of you may be drawn by a fear of death. Some of you may be drawn by grief over a departed loved one. Like me, you search for comfort and hope. Some of you may be drawn by a yearning to see the bigger picture, to grasp the purpose of your existence. Whatever your motives, together we will explore the meaning of life, death and a new reality infinitely larger than both.

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About Dr. Elisa Medhus

Dr. Elisa Medhus is a veteran physician who built and operated a successful private medical practice in Houston Texas for thirteen years. Her busy practice served thousands of families. She is also the mother of five children ages 15 through 26, some of whom have special challenges like Tourette's Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder, learning differences and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

With over 19 years' experience parenting her own children, several years' experience home-schooling her children and thirteen years' experience as a family physician, Dr. Medhus is uniquely qualified to address the concerns of parents.



Over the last several years, Dr. Medhus began to notice that children, including her own, seem more influenced by their peers and the pop culture than by their parents. Seeing the negative effect this had on families, children, schools and communities, she embarked on a lengthy interview process to try to determine the cause of this destructive phenomenon. Based on the interview results and her own experience and expertise, she decided that by giving children the tools they need to make responsible

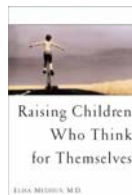
choices—choices that are governed by their sense of right and wrong rather than by their need for approval—then these influences would no longer hold such power over them. Parent would no longer be obsolete. Children would grow to think for themselves, and the world would become a safer, saner place. In her first book, *Raising Children Who Think for Themselves*, Medhus gives a detailed explanation of this concept and provides practical solutions for raising self-directed children and, therefore, a self-directed world. The book has earned numerous prestigious awards including the Parent's Choice Award, the National Parenting Center Award, and the National Parenting Publications Award. It is widely available in bookstores and online booksellers and has been translated into more than six languages. In her second book, *Hearing is Believing, How Words Can Make or Break Our Kids*, Dr. Medhus argues that even seemingly harmless phrases such as "You're such a good girl" can encourage children to become approval seekers, thwart their ability to reason, or both. Over time, these children become less inclined to trust their parents' guidance and internalize their values. Exposing potentially harmful words and phrases, many that may surprise readers, this book suggests language changes that are simple to implement and keep up. All of her books are available through most online and retail booksellers.

In high demand as a keynote speaker and as a guest on TV and radio, Dr. Medhus regularly discusses the issues and problems facing today's families.

List of other books

Raising Children Who Think for Themselves, Beyond Words Publishing, 2001, 292 pages, ISBN 1-58270-047-8.

Raising Everyday Heroes, Beyond Words , 2004, 256 pages, ISBN 1-57731-427-1.



www.channelingerik.com