

Donna Belk's near death experience
(as remembered on 11-28-21)

This was in the mid-1980s and I was in my 30s. I was in yoga class and bent over to do a standing forward bend and I felt a sharp pain in my side. The pain increased and I soon left the class because I felt like I just needed to lay down for a while. I went downstairs to a single bathroom and locked myself in. I started feeling very nauseous and was shaking and sweating. I took off all my clothes, and purged from both ends. I then passed out on the bathroom floor. This is the part that I feel is a miracle, because after two hours I woke up. Somehow I regained consciousness instead of just dying right then and there. I was convinced that if I could just go home and sleep then I would be better in the morning.

I called my boyfriend, Bill, and he came to pick me up. I knew I wasn't well enough to drive. He took me home but when my roommate saw me she said, "You are as white as a sheet and need to go to the hospital." Since the pain wasn't subsiding I agreed and Bill took me to the hospital. As soon as the doctor saw me they admitted me right away. The pain in my side had only intensified.

By this time it was about 2 a.m. and the doctor told me that they did not know what was wrong with me and they were going to do exploratory surgery. He explained that they were going to start at my lower belly and open me up until they discovered where the problem was. I told him that if he was going to cut me open to do a tubal ligation while he was at it. He said he would need my husband's permission to do that. This really pissed me off and I got up on one elbow and shouted, "I'm not married!" at him. He sheepishly went off and the nurse soon brought me a paper to sign permitting the tubal ligation.

Because it was so early in the morning they had to wait for an operating room nurse to arrive. They didn't want to give me any pain medication since they didn't know what was wrong with me. So I laid on a gurney outside the operating room for a long time. They did hook me up to a blood pressure monitor. And the beeping red light of the monitor was right in front of me. By this time I was in a lot of pain. It got to be a rhythm so that I inhaled and focused on the monitor, and exhaled and moaned with pain. I kept my focus mostly on the red beeping light of the monitor. It was all I could do to stay conscious because of the pain. I remember looking one

time at my boyfriend who was in the room with me. It looked like he was just a speck at the end of a dark tunnel.

I closed my eyes and just concentrated on inhaling and exhaling to try to control the pain. I tuned everything else out and only focused on my breath. Soon I felt a sort of rocking motion in time with my breath. The pain was starting to subside and I was feeling better. The more I breathed the better I felt. I started feeling very peaceful, amazingly peaceful in fact. I stayed in that state of feeling rocked and amazing peaceful for quite some time. I noticed a tunnel appeared even though my eyes were closed, and there was a white fog that seemed to be filling up the tunnel. It wasn't scary, it was simply curious to me.

At one point I noticed that I was outside my body looking at my body. I thought it was hilarious because if someone saw my body on the gurney moaning with pain they would think that I was experiencing pain. But I wasn't! I felt more alive, more wonderful than I had ever felt. And I also found it amusing that I could move my arms and legs and it felt the same as if I were doing it from within my body.

I opened my eyes and was back on the gurney and focused again on the beeping monitor. I was not experiencing any pain, although I still seemed to be moaning. Curious, I thought. I noticed that the beeping was getting slower and slower. "I wonder what's going on," I thought to myself. I had the realization, "Oh, I'm dying." I was totally fine with that until I thought about my daughters. Then I started freaking out. "What! " I said, getting anxious. "I can't die! Who's going to take care of my daughters? My ex-husband can't. He's not responsible enough. My mother can't, she'll hit them. They won't do it right. There's no one but me who can raise them right. I can't die." At this point I was becoming very anxious and two things happened at the same time. I heard two voices behind me say, "It's ok. It's all ok. It's ok." At the same time I was flooded with love. The loving and peaceful feelings washed away any anxiety that I had. I was back to floating and rocking in the gentle arms of love and peace. There was nothing to do but surrender to the blissful feelings and at this point I lost consciousness.

Some time later I woke up and I was looking at the ceiling. I saw fluorescent lights, and ceiling tiles. "Oh, I'm alive," I said to myself, "I guess I'll do alive for a while longer."

I drifted back and forth into sleep and learned later on that I had an ectopic pregnancy and that is what caused my pain. My fallopian tube ruptured and I was bleeding internally.

It was at least a decade before I could talk about the experience. The pure bliss and feeling of being loved felt too sacred to speak about. But then I did start telling people about it. I feel very lucky in that I have that experience of deep peace and deep love. I can remember back to it when I'm feeling unsettled. The experience also left me with a longing to return to that space, and I know one day I will.

Also, I have no fear of death and, in fact, I welcome it. Rather than describe this experience to people, I sometimes use a metaphor of what it was like. From my experience, Death is like your most cherished lover that you've been separated from for a thousand years of heartbreak. And not only do your eyes get to look upon his face again, but you get to fall back into his arms and be enveloped by his love for you. To me, this is the feeling of dying.

As far as near death experiences go, I feel like mine was a baby one. I didn't learn the meaning of the universe, I wasn't told about my future, I didn't see otherworldly places, I didn't visit crystal palaces, but I was left with deep feelings of peace and love. And words cannot describe the depth or bliss of gifts.