

Induced near-death-experiences in healthy volunteers: Phenomenology, psychophysiology and after effects. Illustration with two exceptional case studies

ABSTRACT:

Background

Near-death experiences (NDEs) are known to occur in individuals who go through the first stages of physical death. Such framing elements, defining what has been called an NDE include, among others, OBE's, meeting dead relatives and spiritual entities, an encounter with a bright light, a life-review moment carrying an important message, all before returning to everyday awareness.

Aims

To produce an NDE like through hypnosis and in mimicking after-effects of a true episode. To verify if cortisol decreases and melatonin increases. To study in depth two exceptional cases.

Method

Subjects (n=19) were selected and submitted to a specific hypnosis protocol in order to induce an NDE. The instruments used were the Greyson NDE Scale, BSI 18, DAP-R and SHALOM. Values of cortisol and melatonin were obtained from saliva samples before and after the experience. The two exceptional cases were sorted because of the not usual content experienced in an NDE and thematic analysis and semi-structured interviews were used.

Results

All volunteers scored as a true NDE. There is not significant difference for both hormones before and after the hypnotic induction for the whole group. There was a decrease of melatonin in nearly half of the sample and Cortisol increase for five subjects. The aftereffects pointed to the inconclusiveness of the results. In the two exceptional case study, mystical experiences were established.

Conclusions

A similar event to an NDE was achieved with the hypnosis protocol. A cortisol increase, for some subjects, could mean that it was somehow stressful. Melatonin decrease probably means a relaxation in alert systems. Both in depth-studied subjects had experiences of a mystical nature. It shows that the use of hypnosis as a tool within a transpersonal therapeutic approach can enhance psycho-spiritual growth.

Keywords

Hypnosis, Near-death-Experience, Near-death-like-experience, Non-ordinary state of consciousness, Mystical experience, Spirituality, Spiritual maturity, Salivary biomarkers, Thematic analysis

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