

## GIFTS AND CHALLENGES OF INDIVIDUALS WHO REPORT E.T. ENCOUNTERS

by  
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In 1999 I began my post-doctoral work in psychology with Dr. John Mack at PEER (the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research.) Dr. Mack, the world-renowned Harvard psychiatrist, was exploring the phenomenon of alien abduction through his work with people who reported having ET experiences. He had already published the book *Abduction* (1995) and was about to publish *Passport to the Cosmos*, both based on his research.

As I sat with Dr. Mack and worked with 'abductees' or 'Experiencers', I was deeply moved to see some of my own struggles mirrored in them. Although I have no history of ET abduction, I had a spiritually transformative experience in 1971 that lasted several months and changed my life forever. Since that time, it has been my life challenge to integrate what happened, to discover how to live in the world authentically and to use my experiences as a contribution to others.

We have come to know that extraordinary experiences are significantly different and often less traumatic among indigenous cultures. It also seems that there is great diversity in the Universe, and while certain types of encounters are typically associated with trauma, others are inherently gentle and healing and thus, more easily integrated.

For most Experiencers, there is profound relief and hope in the presence of those who can see them without judgment; accept their confusion and their knowledge; create a safe space to reveal and process their experiences; and support the transformational work of evolution.

Below is a list of characteristics I observed in people reporting abduction. It was written for those who have experienced an additional reality outside our current paradigm and may struggle to integrate their life-transforming experiences. This list is also for those who work with Experiencers or simply wish to understand and appreciate them more fully.

The list is divided into two parts. The first includes some of the gifts that may be either a consequence of extraordinary experiences or a natural predisposition. The second and longer part describes many of the challenges. Difficulty integrating extraordinary experiences (even the gifts) is to be expected, and may take many years or a lifetime.

**Please note:** This list is not exhaustive nor can it be generalized to all Experiencers. While the list focuses primarily on individuals reporting ET encounters, some of it will apply to individuals who have had other kinds of extraordinary experiences, such as near-death and other out-of-body experiences, drug related altered states, kundalini and other spiritual awakenings.

How extraordinary experiences are processed varies from person to person. However, there are some patterns that may be observed along the way, e.g. from the initial shock to a sense of personal transformation and query into what comes next. This list is grouped with those patterns in mind. Unless otherwise specified, the characteristics listed are *typically* observed amongst those who report abduction experiences.

### CHARACTERISTIC GIFTS OF EXPERIENCERS

- o They have a significantly heightened awareness and sensitivity to their surroundings, to subtle energetic forces, and to unseen but felt realities of other people and their lives.
- o They have a holistic or multidimensional view/understanding of this world and the Universe. They trust we are one among many forms of life beyond planet Earth.
- o They recognize a spiritual dimension to their experiences and to the transformation that has occurred in their lives.
- o They have special abilities, e.g. psychic, artistic, and/or healing skills.
- o They may have a vague or intuitive sense of somehow "choosing" the experience.
- o They may experience an immediate recognition or unspoken resonance or bond with other Experiencers.
- o They believe there is a greater good that will come from these experiences and they accept the personal cost.
- o They often have knowledge, understanding, perceptions and energetic resonance that defies explanation.
- o They wonder how to go to the next step: What can they do with what they know and feel? How can they prevent the destruction of this planet?

## CHARACTERISTIC CHALLENGES OF EXPERIENCERS

- o Reality or the world view as they knew it has been shattered. ("ontological shock".)
- o They often have memories of trauma, intense physical pain, and terror. They may feel disempowered, overwhelmed, or have a sense of being annihilated - desperate to protect themselves and their families but cannot.
- o They may have memory loss or feel confusion, embarrassment, denial, or dissociation.
- o They may wonder about missing time, i.e. hours or days that cannot be accounted for.
- o They experience nightmares, fear being alone, being in the dark or going to sleep.
- o They have unusual physical symptoms (e.g. subtle to intense vibratory sensations; physical body feels too small to "fit into"; nosebleeds, unexpected pregnancies followed by miscarriages) and may have markings on their body (e.g. scoop marks)
- o They are often afraid initially of being crazy.
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- o They doubt their experience. They have a challenge fully believing it or believing themselves.
- o Their experiences, sometimes ongoing, are difficult if not impossible to integrate into ordinary life. It seems they can neither grasp them nor be free of them.
- o They are fearful of this "other world" that is associated with loss of control and traumatic experiences.
- o In contrast to the above, they may also feel grief, loss and anger being separated from a world that was more alive, loving, vibrant, familiar, or resonant. They want to "Go Home". Or, they may feel they don't belong in either world.
- o They want an explanation of what happened to them and struggle with a range of intense feeling such as confusion, isolation, fear and frustration because no satisfying explanation is immediately available.
- o Since their experiences defy linear time, their perception of time is altered, e.g. space-time anomalies and distortions, missing time, and images of future time.
- o They wonder, "Why Me? Why not my loved ones, neighbors or anyone else?"
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- o They experience a "dual identity", i.e. they feel a split between the way people know them and the way they experiences a part of themselves they keep hidden from others.
- o They may question the source of their identity. For some there is a felt sense or deep knowing of having a "non-human" identity existing in the past, present or future. They have limited opportunities to become familiar with or to express this identity.
- o They are cautious. They try to appear non-threatening and "normal".
- o They are afraid others may see that they are different, or see in them something they cannot explain.
- o They are afraid of being seen as crazy.
- o They have a secret. They are careful whom to tell about their experiences and frequently feel disappointed in the telling.
- o They are likely to be pathologized by professionals. They have few, if any, resources available to help them cope with or process their experiences.
- o They have difficulty sharing themselves fully with their partner or close friends.
- o They will often withdraw after coming forward. They work to fit into social situations even though it may be unsatisfying or uncomfortable.
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- o The connection between or among Experiencers may be more powerful, compelling, or resonant than other relationships. They may avoid being with other Experiencers so as not to feel sadness and loss when they are apart.
- o They need to bridge the gap between the old reality and the new one and are afraid of what the bridging may mean for their lives.
- o They struggle with how to hold the burden of knowledge that comes from their experiences and/or their special abilities.
- o They feel a responsibility to help change the world but don't know how.
- o They grapple with isolation and what comes after surviving their experiences.

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Shelley is grateful to Dr. John Mack for his courageous and pioneering research that gave her the opportunity to work with an exceptional group of people and participate in exploring the edges of human consciousness in this multi-dimensional Universe.