

“Kids Who See Ghosts. How To Guide Them Through Fear”, by Caron B. Goode, Ed.D, NCC. Published by: Weiser Books, ISBN 978-1-57863-472-9. 2010.

Section Four “Is My Child Psychic?”

Professionals are often asked, “How do I know if my child is psychic or just having a singular encounter?” Parents of a child who sees or has seen ghosts might be thrilled to discover that their child is psychic, or they might be disturbed by that knowledge. A onetime ghostly event can be triggered by several stressors, like drinking aspartame in diet soda, food allergies, emotional intensity or overload, an emotionally toxic home environment, physical or mental abuse, or night terrors. An adrenal overload of the stress hormone cortisol can activate the temporal lobe, the part of the brain associated with psychic activity. A onetime sighting may also be a crisis apparition, experienced by adults and children alike after the death of someone close to them. If a child has a one-time event, does this mean a child could have other events? Possibly.

Athena Drewes Responds

Athena A. Drewes, Psy.D., RPT-S, is a licensed child psychologist, parapsychologist, and consultant to the Rhine Research Center at Duke University and the Parapsychology Foundation on children’s psychic experiences. She has conducted research, written articles and reviews, and spoken on children and ESP. She coauthored, with Sally A. Drucker, the reference work *Parapsychological Research with Children: An Annotated Bibliography* (The Scarecrow Press, 1991). Drewes is also author and editor of five books dealing with play therapy. Her personal experiences shaped her interest in the subject of children who see ghosts or those who exhibit other traits of intuitive intelligence.

Like me, Drewes receives questions from many parents about kids who see ghosts and the correlation, if any, to a child’s psychic abilities. These questions include:

Are all children who see ghosts psychic?

Do all psychic children see ghosts?

How can we help these children not be afraid?

How can we help these children feel confident?

DREWES’ PERSONAL PSYCHIC EXPERIENCES

I became interested in the field of parapsychology and psychic phenomena when I was a child. I had many recurring dreams and a sense of past-life information. However, the most outstanding event that crystallized my interest and future career occurred at age ten, when I had a precognitive dream.

I was in bed. I had five pages to go to finish a book, and I really wanted to reach the end before I went to sleep. My mother yelled at me to go to sleep and turn off the light. She then sent in my older brother to shut off the light. I was furious and so angry as I fell asleep. That night I had a lucid dream, in which I was seeing, as an observer from outside of myself, my family being in a car accident. I knew my mother was severely hurt, coming in on a flatbed stretcher with wheels, which I found out later was like a gurney. I saw my older brother, who was my younger of two brothers, but still older than me, sitting in a wheelchair. I knew he was not hurt.

The dream had a special feel, a very profound sense that this was not my usual dream. It stayed with me in vivid detail.

About two weeks later, the family went to see a movie. It was raining, and as we were heading home, a car accident happened. The same exact scenes from my dream replayed before my eyes. It was very striking that I had dreamt this. I told my father at the time, "I just dreamt this accident two weeks ago. The same exact scenes." He turned to me and said, so seriously, "Don't ever tell anyone."

From that age I wondered, how can dreams tell us the future? How can they come true? Moreover, I worried if my anger had caused the accident to occur, which would have been pretty phenomenal by itself. I felt guilt throughout childhood and feared the effects of my anger.

The dream experiences led me toward one part of my professional career: seeking out information about psychic phenomena. There weren't a lot of books or people to turn to. I was hesitant to tell friends about my experiences and had to be selective. They would start to think I was a witch or crazy. Around age nineteen, I read about a study that was being conducted on telepathy-dream research at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. The research sounded so much like my experience. I had to check it out.

I called the researchers and asked if I could speak with them about their study. They invited me to come down, and I wound up staying the night, running the research experiment with them. I found a whole research group of kindred spirits who knew what I was experiencing. The fact that my dream was a precognitive experience alleviated my sense of guilt.

I had many other psychic experiences growing up, including telepathy. Even in recent years, I have experienced clairvoyance and precognition, and more recently, I'm starting to see spirits and am having a lot of past-life information coming back.

My professional path includes being a researcher with children who have had psychic experiences, writing articles, doing public speaking, and helping children and parents understand their psychic experiences. And I have remained a consultant for the Rhine Research Center in Durham, North Carolina, as well as the Parapsychology Foundation in

New York City. The other part of my professional path as a child psychologist is working with children in a variety of settings to help them feel heard and validated about their psychic and emotional experiences.

HELPING PSYCHIC CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

As a consultant, I receive a lot of e-mails from parents and children about their psychic experiences, and I respond to them. I was featured on an A&E show *Psychic Children* back in 2006 and [the A&E show] *Paranormal State* has contacted me to work with a few children. Also the current A&E show *Psychic Children: Children of the Paranormal* has sent me the e-mails from viewers who have concerns about their children or their own personal psychic experiences.

The two worlds are coming together for me now. I'm doing a lot of active consulting and counseling and supporting children to help them understand that their psychic experiences are a gift and not to be afraid of them.

I don't see children making things up. I don't see them fantasizing and creating their experiences for glory or attention. Even imaginary playmates fit in with normal child development, and that's part of children's worlds. But sometimes children are seeing spirits of other children, and they call these spirit children their imaginary playmates. I have never run into a child who I feel is manipulating or utilizing their psychic abilities in any other way than is legitimate.

In the past, the e-mails I received were more around precognitive dreams and a little bit about paranormal, psychic contact with the spirit world, be it seeing actual figures and shapes, hearing other entities, or sensing the essence or energy or orbs of spirit forms. Now the e-mails are almost exclusively in the latter realm. I think people have come to realize parapsychology and psychic phenomena are the norm. Having psychic experiences is not so atypical, but seeing spirits, hearing their children talk about it, and helping children understand how to cope with it are much more relevant topics to parents and of concern for kids at this point in time.

I would say 90 percent of inquiries I receive are from parents who are accepting and open to their child's experiences. I would say maybe 65 or 70 percent of the parents believe in such ability to have contact with the other side, but they are concerned for their child. If they see that their child is in distress, they want help, or they don't want to say or do something to make it worse for them.

BEING PSYCHIC VERSUS BEING PSYCHOTIC

A good 10 to 15 percent of parents are concerned that what their child is experiencing is a psychosis, a psychiatric issue, and they are wondering whether they should pursue medical help. Sometimes, mental-health practitioners or school personnel push parents in that direction. Some parents intuitively feel that's not the thing to do, but they don't want to go in the wrong direction and not seek the help if it is needed.

Let me explain the difference between psychosis and a regular psychic gift. I see the two as qualitatively different. I consider whether a child has had other psychic phenomena occur in their life. What is the quality of what they are saying about the spirit contact? I would encourage the parent to consider a psychiatric or psychological problem and referral to a mental-health professional (e.g., psychologist, social worker) when I hear the parent or the child report that the spirits are telling them to hurt themselves or to hurt others, when the spirits' communication may have a very bizarre feel to it, or when their children's thought processes are not very logical or coherent when they explain their experience.

Stress or other events in the child's life could have triggered these symptoms, and spirit contact maybe in there. Yet the children are so overwhelmed and feeling defenseless that they do need some other form of intervention besides just an understanding about the phenomena. They may need medication; they may need psychiatric help.

In a small minority of the requests that I get, there isn't necessarily a spirit contact. With the media shows out there, sometimes the parents are hoping the answers to their questions are going to be more sensational, and they're not.

I have a handout of frequently asked questions, *Is My Child Psychic?* That lists ways that the parents or child can understand their experiences. They can keep a journal, for example; they can look at psi patterns and write things down. These are ways for the parents to respond matter-of-factly and not give psychic experiences too much emotional power, either in disbelieving or believing, because kids are susceptible to the reactions of their parents.

STEPS THAT HELP KIDS

First I let parents and children know that they shouldn't be afraid of the spirits and that spirits are not going to hurt them. Kids can keep a night-light on in their room or turn on the light from a fish tank, which changes the energy pattern in their room, so they will have less contact at bedtime and when they're sleeping. For some, that is very helpful and solves the problem.

For older teens, sometimes lights aren't as effective because they still feel the presence strongly. I give them, and any child who may feel afraid, a guided-imagery meditation in which I have them do some deep breathing. I ask them to close their eyes, put their feet on the ground, and envision that they have a bubble around them. The bubble is filled with white light, and it's the white light of God's love or universal love or the energy of the universe (depending on their religious beliefs). It protects them. Whatever is on the other side of the bubble is not going to harm them. As they breathe in, they breathe in that love and energy and feel it envelop them in that bubble. As they breathe out, they expand the bubble beyond them into their room. And then as they breathe in again, they feel the protection of the energy and love. Then they breathe out and expand the bubble out to fill the whole room, then again to fill their house or apartment, and then to expand the bubble

out into the universe. This is done so they don't keep their aura, their bubble so tight around them – so that their aura is really out there.

Once a mother asked me, “Do you ever teach any defensive techniques?” I do tell children that they can tell the spirits to leave them alone and to go away; they can command spirits to leave. Practice and role-play this scenario together. Children can practice saying, with their very loud voice, “Go away”, just like they would say it to anyone who's bothering them in the real world.

Let children know that they have a right to their space, to their protection, to their body, and certainly they can say, “Go away and leave me alone.” I also teach them, even in their meditation, to send love to the spirit and to say, “You need to move on, move to the light, move to the love. There's someone waiting to help you cross over. You don't need to be here.”

I help children understand that a spirit is not a malevolent, evil thing. A soul or spirit may be lost and may come to children because they are open and sensitive. And the spirit could be that of a child. I tell children, “You can send them on their way. You don't need to have them around you.”

Most of the kids do sense their guardian angels, relatives, and people who are there to support them, rather than lost spirits. Yet, as kids get to be ten, eleven, or twelve, and during puberty, they tend to develop their abilities more. Other psychic abilities come forward.

Their emotional states are a little unbalanced. So kids in that age range and teen group are those that I really want to work with. Working on the fear factor is most important because fear attracts the negative, fearful, or intense energy. It is better for tweens and teens to learn to send out love, but also not invite the negative to them, either through thinking, “I've got all these super powers” or “I'm the greatest here.”

If a child is feeling emotionally unsettled, they can move into a direction that is negative and can add to a greater psychological imbalance. So our role is to definitely empower them, to help them role-play and practice sending the spirit away, to not fear it.

In fact they need to feel less fear and know they are safe. I also tell kids, depending again on their religious beliefs, to call on Archangel Michael. He's the warrior archangel who will protect. Some parents have pictures or icons of Archangel Michael near them. I then tell children, “Call on your spirit guides or angels to protect you and keep you safe. There are people looking out for you”.

RESEARCH

You can set up ways of helping children tune in to their psychic abilities. I had conducted some studies with children and using M&Ms as a game. We had five M&Ms each of five different colors – red, green, yellow, orange, brown – so there are a total of twenty-five.

You put the M&Ms in a non-see-through brown bag, shake them up, pick one, and hold it inside the bag. The child guesses what color M&M is in your hand, and then you take out the candy and record its color. Then you put the candy back in the bag and repeat. You do this twenty-five times.

Chance says five correct answers would occur. So any score above five, usually seven and above, starts to be beyond chance – more than just the normal guessing. From the parapsychological view, there is some psychic ability that the children are tapping into and using for the information.

The parents could also be behind a screen, looking at the M&M color and having the child guess. We found some significant results in children similar to those Dr. J.B. Rhine got when he started their field of parapsychology using Zener cards, in which there were five cards each of five different symbols. He did a lot of card tests with everyday people and with people who were psychic or mediums or known to have some ability. Children are as psychic as adults are.

I believe personally we're all psychic, and some more so than others. It's just like being able to play the piano. Some, like Mozart, are virtuosos at a young age. Some have to work hard at it and develop their skills, and some could care less about their psychic abilities or information coming to them.

Children have psychic abilities. Some of the testing we did certainly shows that. Children also have some of the same personality characteristics as adults in terms of being open, positive thinkers. If you have a negative view of things, we call that the sheep-and-goat effect. If you are more believing, like a sheep is, you tend to be a higher scorer on psychic ESP tests. If you are a goat, a nonbeliever, you actually tend to score in the negative range.

On a psychic test, if a child is getting twos or threes, this says they're suppressing their psychic ability. Normally they would have gotten five just by chance, so something's occurring to suppress their information.

Some of the research is inconclusive as to whether children lessen their psychic abilities or put a kind of shield over it as they enter school. My personal view from my own experience is that when you're under the age of five, you don't really censor what you say. You believe everything. You're open to all possibilities. You're very in tune to the other side, and so you share it all. You tell your parents. You tell people close to you. If they're accepting and open, you continue talking about it.

But when you get into school, the world changes. Then you find out people are not so open to hearing about psychic experiences. Then the teacher calls your parent up and says, "Your child's been talking about seeing spirits. I think you need to go see a therapist or a psychiatrist." Kids start easing you, making fun of you, expecting you to perform on command, or get frightened by what they hear, because that's not what they believe or what their parents tell them.

The child starts to shut down by not talking about it, or you get a direct verbal statement from a parent, like my father, “Don’t ever tell anyone,” as though there’s something wrong with it, or you should be ashamed of it, or you’ll be viewed as a witch. Sometimes the abilities go undercover and get suppressed.

Sometimes children mask or shield their gifts because they’re frightened of them. Then when they hit puberty hormonally, you see a rise in psychic ability.

There’s a lot of research being done at the University of Virginia in a field of parapsychology, on out-of-body experiences, past lives, and near-death experiences. Dr. Melvin Morse wrote about children having near-death experiences with very similar aspects to those in adult reports.

AN INCREASE IN THE EVOLUTION OF PSYCHIC SKILLS

A lot of the people I encounter through e-mail, lectures, and workshops believe their experiences are real. They have sensed spirits and had personal experiences, or they believe their children and wonder, what does it all mean? Where does it all fit?

I feel that reports of spirit contact and psychic abilities are increasing within children. What the source or causes are, I don’t know. I leave it up to others to draw their own conclusions. I have my own personal view that a shift in consciousness is occurring. It depends on your philosophy and whether you believe in reincarnation, which I do. We are here for a purpose, and we are all coming together for a purpose. For me, I see it as my role to help children understand and master what they are experiencing and not to be afraid of it.

I think the most important thing to underscore and emphasize again for children and parents not to be afraid of what the children are experiencing or being told. It’s important for parents to really support their child and be a resource for them to come to; to allow their child, even if they don’t believe this, to have a place to come and talk and to share their experiences; to help center their child and ground them and anchor them in their love; to help their child realize that they may be seeing things or feeling things that the parent can’t, and that’s okay. You want to be there to hear them and help them.

The worst things that a parent can do are to shut the door and to turn their child away and not allow them that forum. Turning their child away has more negative emotional consequences for the child, especially as they grow up. And it shuts the door to other important communications that are not about being psychic. The child feels that you are not a person that they can come to, because you cannot truly hear them. So the most important thing is for the parent to be loving and accepting, and for the child not to fear and not to give in to their fear – to feel the love, that they are protected, and that they are safe.