

Exploring past lives

Is it really possible to be regressed to a past life? If so, what's the point? Haven't most of us got enough problems in this life without worrying about a former existence? To answer these questions who better to ask than hypnotherapist Joanne Jimenez, who offers counselling, regression and hypnotherapy at the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain?

Interviewed by Tony Ortzen, the first point Joanne answers is, "Can you briefly describe what happens during a regression session?"

THIS depends on the client and their need. For example, if a client wishes to explore this subject they will be guided through a relaxation technique accompanied by some very gentle music.

This assists the individual to relax physically. Once that happens, the conscious mind relaxes and the client enters into an altered state of trance. Each individual is different. So, too, will be their experience.

I am present at their side. They are in a safe and protected environment. I'm working with them processing the session to the end. If anything comes up that needs attention as in a trauma, we work through it together.

On the regression therapy side of things, a client might come along with the intention to seek help over a particular issue. This may help solve, ease, repair or relieve certain issues in the current life which have their origins in a former life, including relationship problems.

Issues suitable for regression therapy include anxiety, anger, blocked feelings, depression, emotional problems, fear, guilt, loneliness, obsessions, childhood traumas, nightmares, sadness and phobias.

Then there's unexplained pain, muscle tension, panic attacks, feeling spiritually stuck and relationship problems.

This will sound sceptical, but why is it that so many people claim somewhat exotic past lives? They were always an Egyptian dancing maiden for some pharaoh or other rather than a leper living and dying in the gutter, or am I wrong about this?

I wouldn't rule out a claim of people experiencing exotic lives. The soul makes progress by experiencing as many incarnations on earth as it will need to learn, grow and make progress.

This may include leading the life of a dancing maiden for a pharaoh, being the pharaoh himself or the poor leper in the gutter. The importance from the soul aspect would be acquiring those soul/life qualities that are to be gained from living a particular life.

Most of us have enough problems in this life without fretting about a past incarnation! How can we benefit in the here and now from knowing who we may have been?

The benefits for a current life can be positive and open up the mind to a bigger picture. Accessing information from a former life may

also help individuals to understand themselves more.

Past life regression can enhance someone's confidence just by finding out the qualities and skills they had in a previous life or significant people they were with.

These qualities, insights, talents, skills and abilities can be resourced to help current life situations. Take the dancing maiden. She learned how to entertain and experienced what life was like at court. What did the soul learn from that?

She learned the art and skill of dance, movement and fitness, and enjoyed privileges that went with a life in a pharaoh's court as well as the challenges. The maiden might also have learned obedience, discipline and gracefulness.

Perhaps if this life was explored, it might reveal more skills, qualities and insights to help her in a future life. The aim is for all the positive qualities realised in a past life to be retained.

Negative traits can be improved and transformed. For example, the pharaoh's life would have been about power, money, wealth, leadership, privilege, fighting wars, winning new lands, being a warrior and responsibility.

He would also have been involved in the creation of magnificent building projects, which needed planning, vision and engineering, and pressure to keep the dynasty going.

The leper's life was about rejection, maybe falling on hard times and homelessness. This would have led to poverty, hunger, thirst, helplessness, dependency, incurable illness, struggle and being an outcast.

It seems his soul's intention was to learn how important it is to share and reach out to the unfortunate, then there would be healing, compassion, forgiveness and finding cures for incurable illnesses.

He may have reincarnated as a researcher, a doctor, a person of wealth to fund research or a politician to change laws. Maybe he became a human rights activist.

How would you answer the point that past lives via regression are no more than subconscious mumbo jumbo or wishful thinking?

I cannot recall a time when a client has demonstrated under trance that they could be suffering from subconscious mumbo jumbo and wishful thinking. I can only speak of what I've seen and have witnessed profound reactions when a client has regressed to a past life.

There are those who support past life regression and others who do not. I would suggest that anyone contemplating past life regression should try one session first.

Do you have any idea who you were in a previous existence?

I have been regressed a few times. One life was as a Christian nun. In summary, I found myself looking out of a small window onto a peaceful setting.

I was aware I was wearing a black habit and knew that I was in my early twenties. I had been in the convent since the age of fifteen and had taken my vows.

I became aware that I was kneeling on my knees in prayer or penance. The cold went through my knees, which were hurting. I was emotionally upset, and missing my family.

I knew that I loved God very much. One of the characters in this life was the Mother Superior, who was very strict.

Have you come across many cases where someone who's been regressed has found factual evidence to support who they once were?

This is rather difficult to answer. During a session, a client may have encountered some facts which are possible to research. I encourage clients to do so, but seldom has anyone got back in touch with me about the outcome.

Sometimes people contact me and are concerned that their "dead" loved one might reincarnate before they, too, go to the spirit world.

Would you agree that we will retain our present earthly identity after we pass on and that, as Silver Birch teaches, rebirth is a facet of the same diamond?

Yes, I agree with this.

Let's switch subjects! What kind of problems can hypnotherapy help? Is there a good success rate with, for instance, dealing with weight issues, phobias or trying to stop smoking?

Yes, good success rates. I recommend a client to have one session first. This will give him or her a good opportunity to experience hypnosis, and assess if they are comfortable and can work with the hypnotherapist.

Rapport is very important. The hypnotherapist will be able to assess how many sessions are needed based on the client's need.

Hypnotherapy is suitable for a wide range of issues, such as stress, anger, unwanted behaviour patterns, habits, addictions, insomnia, relationship issues, emotional problems, depression and to enhance excellence in sport or in the work field.

Exactly how does hypnotherapy work?

Through hypnosis, which induces a really intense focus to stop what you wish to be stopped.

It aids the outcome you want, be it to end a habit, reduce or change a behaviour pattern, deal with emotional problems and so on.

Hypnotherapy gives an edge to the subconscious mind and the extra push for success.

What's the exact procedure?

The hypnotist will assess the client for the best method to use which will enable someone to enter trance. There are many ways to induce a trance state.

It can be through a relaxation technique or for more analytical clients it could be another kind of technique which is shorter and suits them better.

Once the hypnotherapist gives the command to close the eyes, this starts the process of deepening the client's state as they sink down inside.

The hypnotherapist waits for the client to show signs that they are in a state of hypnosis. This is recognised by various body signals, like a change of skin tone or eye-flickering movements.

A new positive suggestion is given to the client's subconscious mind. These positive life-enhancing suggestions are composed by the client with the help of the hypnotherapist. The client hears everything and is mentally alert and awake, but at the same time is in a state of hypnosis.

If someone is hypnotised, are they are totally out of it?

This is rare, but it can happen. Generally, the client is mentally awake and alert at all times. However, their eyes will be closed, as this is how they go into trance.

Keeping their eyes closed keeps them in trance and intensely focused. Hypnosis is a natural state of mind. Think of it as a day-dreamy trance state.

I know that you also offer counselling at the SAGB. What are the most common problems for which clients seek help?

AH sorts of things, like depression, loneliness, work-related frustrations, decision-making, hoarding and the problem of having no one they can really talk to independently outside the family, friends or work circle.

Some people are looking for a loving relationship and do not know where to turn to find one. Then there are issues with neighbours and the depression which comes with that, and financial problems. Clients seek help for most everyday worries and concerns.

Am I right in thinking that counsellors never tell people what to do?

Yes, that's correct.

After someone's outlined their problem, how do you help them deal with it?

You need to create a rapport, so that the client feels comfortable and is able to open up and outline their problem. There is usually more than one in the mix.

Find the strongest one to talk about and feelings begin to emerge. It's usually the case that a client begins to sense a solution or a way forward.

Clients may look at what they could do to change the situation or help resolve the problem, or what is needed to transform it. My role is to listen, give support and facilitate when and if necessary.

If there is a ball of tangled problems all feeding into the main one, each problem has to be teased out gently and explored. They are then dealt with one at a time.

I realise this sounds harsh, but do you think that some people rather glory or wallow in their problems and are just too self-centred?

I can't comment much on this, except to say that I think we are where we are at this moment in time and some people are struggling to cope in this life.

If you've got a problem, to whom do you go? Do you try and resolve it yourself?

Yes, I certainly try to resolve a problem myself as well as taking sessions with a fellow therapist. Issues are best cleared, keeping the energies in the aura flowing.

What do you find especially satisfying about your work?

The privilege of working with people all of whom are so uniquely different. It is especially satisfying when an individual responds well, experiences a positive transformation with their issues and gains a better understanding of themselves.

Lastly, a slightly whimsical point. If rebirth occurs, who or what would you like to come back as next time?

If my soul intention decides it's best for me to reincarnate as there is more to learn on the earth plane, I would choose to come back as a woman architect.

■ ***To book an appointment with Joanne Jimenez for counselling, regression or hypnotherapy at the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain, please see its advert on page 9 or phone its reception desk on 020-7931 6488***