



WHAT IS A MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE?

Episode Transcript

Hey, it's Rebecca. And welcome to Returning. A podcast to return to yourself and the wisdom within. I'm so glad you're here with me. Thanks for returning.

Today, we are exploring mystical experiences. I know that might sound pretty out there for some people, or even spooky, or like an episode of The X-Files. But rest assured, a mystical experience may be quite different to what you think it is, and chances are you have likely had one yourself, but maybe you just didn't realize it. What if I told you that a 2009 study found that almost 50% of Americans say that they have had a mystical experience? While some mystical experiences may be utterly life-changing and showstopping, mystical experiences can also be really gentle, subtle and even subliminal. I'm really excited to share some examples from my own life and other people and see what insights this episode brings you as you ponder into your own awakening journey and your own mystical experiences. As always, at the end of this episode, you'll find a guided Soul Inquiry for you to explore your own mystical experiences a little bit more.

I know how precious your time is, so let's jump right in together by opening Sacred Space. In the center of your heart, imagine a beautiful flower. With your breath, invite that flower to open petal by petal, revealing a light in the middle. This light is your wise inner self, your soul, part of you that's always calling your intuitive self. Inviting it to step forward now. And together, taking a moment to acknowledge the keepers and custodians of the land where I am, where you are known and unknown. Beautiful. Let's begin.

If I were to try and put it as simply as possible, I would say that a mystical experience is essentially a moment of profound connection with something greater. I get asked a lot about the difference between a mystical experience and a spiritual awakening. Are they the same thing? Are they different? And through working with my students in the Inner Temple Mystery School, we've really explored this topic quite a lot. And my belief is yes and no. They are similar, but they're actually also quite different. I believe that a spiritual awakening is actually more of a longer, gradual, unfolding process. I see spiritual awakening as deepening and deepening as we become more and more

awake. I see it as a boundless journey of transformation and deepening and evolving awareness. I believe that we are constantly awakening, especially once we have our first big significant awakening experience. And on our spiritual journey, I believe that the awakening process just continues to deepen and deepen. We may have had several awakenings on our journey, and generally awakenings are actually triggered by mystical experiences.

So a mystical experience is, I believe, a moment of deep connection. I see there being two different types of mystical experiences. Some mystical experiences that alter and shift your consciousness and these mystical experiences, the ones that alter consciousness, shift consciousness, actually trigger our awakening or a deepening on our awakening journey. Whereas there's other mystical experiences that might not shift your consciousness in an ongoing, lasting way, but they may bring you into a deeper sense of interconnectedness, of unity, of union, and awe.

I believe that everyone on the planet has had some type of mystical experience. And the most common type of mystical experience that the average person has had and most of us have had, if not all of us have had, has likely been in nature. I think that we've all experienced that sense of wonder, whether it's gazing up at the night sky or through taking in an exquisite sunset or sunrise, or having your breath taken away by a beautiful flower. The ocean with the way that the light reflects off it, or even just looking into your child or a baby's eyes. It really is a moment that drops us more fully in. So it's, like, it really is a moment that drops us more fully in. So it's like we get a glimpse into something greater.

These experiences often make us feel amazing in the moment and they actually bring us fully into the moment. I really see it as like the soul, the mind, the body, the spirit, the heart all coming together in a moment of union. And this moment of union is also with the rest of life in most cases. And so while they may feel good and bring you into the present moment and give you a sense of union and oneness and you might be in that state of awe and wonder at the beauty of life, these non-consciousness mystical experiences don't change us in an ongoing way. So they don't trigger an awakening and they don't shift our consciousness in a lasting way. So the consciousness shifting type of mystical experiences deeply change us. Once we've experienced it, we cannot go back. You're literally not the same person as a result. A moment where you literally can't unsee what's been seen or felt or known. Perhaps it's something that's happened outwardly or inwardly, or both. Something within us has awoken that can't go back to sleep. Some people say that through their mystical experience or the unity of experience, some people say that through their consciousness shifting mystical experience, they receive some sort of ancient wisdom and knowing or a clarity about life itself. Another common trait is a difficulty to put the depth of the mystical experience into words. It's as if words themselves are not big enough to describe the extent of the experience. The experience is so much faster than words offer us. And it's as if those words are just too limited. The experience itself is ineffable. It's been felt and known and yet hard to be expressed.

As someone who has had several mystical experiences myself, I so resonate with these traits, especially the difficulty to express into words. And it makes me think of, like, is this why, like, poetry and songs and ancient texts like that which are, which are more mystical, are able to almost, like, just open little, little doors within us. Often there is an experience of unity and a sense of self. Like the individual self is replaced by a feeling of deep oneness, of merging with the divine or a tuning to the sacred. It's why some people may resonate more with the term unity of experience over mystical experience. Often, sometimes I find that there is a certain, like, sense of time stretching or stopping or shifting. I mean, over the years I've been really blessed to hear and hold accounts of consciousness shifting mystical experiences that have gone on to trigger awakenings in other people. It's one of my favorite things to talk about.

One friend of mine had a really subtle but unexplainable sense of time collapsing while they were swimming in the winter off the coast of Australia. Unexpectedly, they came face to face with an enormous, old, ancient sea turtle, and she felt instantly plugged into the magical beauty of all beings. From those deep in the ocean to the most ancient trees. And she experienced also an embodied understanding of the reverence and impermanence that changed her in an absolute instant. I know for myself, coming face to face with wild beings in this way can truly unlock deep awakenings within us.

I had a similar incredible experience when I was diving with dolphins and whales in the Atlantic. It's just something that is indescribable, ineffable about coming eye to eye with a whale in the wild that deeply changes you forever. The transmission, the ancient transmission of them is really undeniable.

Another friend of mine recalled the sudden stillness, peace and clarity that engulfed her while at the bedside of her dying grandmother. She spoke about a sense of being spoken through as her nan took her final breaths. And my friend prayed her out of this world, out of her body. She was left feeling deeply changed from the experience. And I remember with her wrestling to explain the sense of time standing still and how the entire energy in the room just shifted in that moment and how it felt like they were being held by something unexplainable, something greater. I know myself when I saw my friend Blair's body after he had passed. I just could not believe how different he felt. It was just so evident that his spirit, his soul had left. And this part of us that animates us it really is this great mystery. And when it is gone, everything is different. And so, yeah, I had the same experience when I saw my grandmother as well. I was just changed in that instance with both of them. So death can be such an incredible portal for, that can really change our consciousness and just change us forever.

Another friend of mine shared with me a mystical experience which arrived through meditation for them. They were on the last day of a really long silent retreat. And he was feeling kind of frustrated

and disheartened and like he was making no progress when suddenly, out of nowhere, literally simply sitting on the meditation cushion, he experienced a physical surge of compassion entering his body, moving down through the top of his head with a gentle, slow pressure, and it moves right down through his body into the ground. And once the force had gone, he instantly wept tears of deep beauty, and he felt that he'd been shown a really embodied understanding of pure love.

I think it's important to clarify also that some mystical experiences can require deep support and integration. Even if they seem to be, they happen in an instance, I find that most mystical experiences do take sometimes many, many years to integrate properly. As always, I really encourage and fully support professional help and guidance when needed. If you have access to it or just calling in the support of trusted friends and loved ones.

I recall one friend sharing an experience that she had while she was at a conference and one of the delegates was sharing a really important but quite disturbing facts about historical atrocities perpetuated against women. And my friend was in an instant, like overcome with a deep sense of ancient fury, ancient rage. Her entire being was, like humming with this white hot rage. And she said it just like dropped in out of nowhere. It was deeply physical and made her overflow with hot, fast tears. She felt she was experiencing the suffering of all women that have ever been and were yet to come. So it was a really like a collective mystical experience or a collective energy that she was tapping into. It was incredibly powerful and revelatory, but also really excruciating. And it took her a long while to make sense of it. And that same experience actually returned to her many years later. But recognizing it, she felt able to receive it differently, to hold that energy differently. This is a really important example that difficult doesn't always mean bad. And when we have the tools and the awareness to work with these energies when they arise, we can continue the work of integrating them into our life and into our relationships. So it's like we can extract the lessons, the wisdom, the transmission, the activation, the insight, and carry them differently in our body.

I am going to share some of my own mystical experiences when we return after this short break. Hey, Rebecca.

My first mystical experience happened in my early teen years, and in that moment my life was forever changed. It was as if a whole new world opened up to me and my old one no longer made sense. This was both amazing, it was really incredible. But it was also isolating as no one in my life really understood what I'd gone through, definitely including myself. As I trek through my life, there are many more consciousness shifting mystical experiences that I've had. Some lasting for moments, some minutes, some hours, and one actually lasting almost a full year.

That was around 2012 when I experienced what I describe as a Kundalini shakti awakening. One understanding of a Kundalini shakti awakening happens when the life force, like the feminine life force energy that is stored in the base of the spine, expands to enliven all the chakras in the body.

It actually doesn't really have anything to do with Kundalini yoga and a lot of people think, oh Kundalini shakti awakening is Kundalini yoga, but it's a very ancient, energetic awakening. One morning I woke up in extreme bliss and my teeth were chattering and my entire body began to shake. It was not uncomfortable. Rather, it was quite the opposite. And through the days and nights for a period of around nine months, I was in this state of, like sheer ecstasy and joy as like life force felt like it was spiraling through me. And it seemed to be moving from the base of my spine up and out of the crown of my head. I noticed it was definitely an upward rising and it felt almost like waves of ecstasy moving through me like honey. Like really being alive to the vital life force that was within me that had been dormant but then that was within all of life. It felt like I was actually like in the nectar of life. On my morning walks in nature, I began to really be aware of merging with all things and a tuning to the wisdom of all things. I even began to see codes in sacred geometry, particularly in flowers and trees and even some people. Everything seemed like it was in technicolor, so it was like everything was enhanced and just like, more vibrant, more active, more alive.

Another mystical experience I had that I believe triggered a different type of awakening that I describe as the descent happened during my Kirtan training in London. This was, without a doubt, the most sacred moment of my life, and one that I definitely struggle to wrap words around now. In the mystical experience, I was taken into the center of the earth, into the arms of the great Mother, and surrounded by the ancient Grandmothers of the Earth. They sang ancient songs to me, and I'm told that I began singing them too. All were in different languages unknown to me. And so it was like I was receiving them but they were also, some of them, coming through me. And some of them felt like lost languages. Upon sharing this experience with Yeye Teish who is a teacher, spiritual advisor, and author, she described something that I hadn't known of before, known as xenoglossy, which is when one channels lost languages from the consciousness of the earth.

I had several more mystical experiences that caused me to further my descent and move into a crescendo upon giving birth to my son. At the moment of crowning of him moment before he was born, I saw all of my cells and all of the protective barriers that had developed through the ages in my ancestral lines. I was shown that these barriers were layers of protection erected as coping mechanisms through trauma passed down through the ancestral lines. And because my son was still in his water sac that he kept on popping back as soon as I was about to crown. And so this continued on and on and on. And as it happens, I really saw these layers of protection being blasted open to the ends of the universe, and it felt like I was exploding. And these layers of protection of, that were necessary through times and that created ancestral trauma, it was like they were blasted into the ends of the universe, like ricocheted. It was definitely the most physical and transcendent experience of my life. And yeah, as often happens with birth, it really required a deep period of integration, which went on for, I'd say, about three years right in time for me to have my second baby. And yeah, that's a whole other story. And I definitely still grapple with finding the words to describe the deepness of this experience as well.

So, I'm sharing all of this with you with the intention of inviting you to reflect on and connect with your own mystical experiences. Perhaps ones that you've already had but haven't quite identified or been able to find words to wrap around. But also, I'm sharing it with the invitation to see if you can bring your awareness to receive your mystical experiences in the future more fully. I know our busy lives can make it really easy to miss and dismiss these mystical experiences. Whether it's hearing a voice, feeling a knowing, having a really significant dream. It might be seeing a symbolic shape in nature. It could be hearing from that long lost friend that you've just been dreaming about and then something happening between you. It could be a sense of stepping into what the ancient Greeks call Kairos Time, where time stretches and expands. Whatever it is, I just want to invite you to just be curious about it, be in the wonder and the mystery of it instead of the doubt, and just like pushing it away, like Oh it's just, I don't know what that was. We know that our minds are very good at dismissing what they can't logically understand or explain, but perhaps this too, is part of the practice. So, it's like what happens when we lean in a little bit more into those small moments that take our breath away where we shift into awe and wonder and mystery.

Soul Inquiry is a practice where we enter into a direct dialog with our inner self, our mystical self. And today's Soul Inquiry prompt for us is - have you had a mystical experience before? And if you think that you have, just ponder into what did it shift within you? Did it shift your consciousness? Or the way you see the world in some way? What did that mystical experience shift within you? And now it's time to commit to a grounded action to integrate this episode into your life. And so reflecting on everything we've spoken about and that's come through for you, what is one baby step you can take in that direction today to integrate it? And let's share a deep breath together now as we close this Sacred Space we've stepped into together. I'm so grateful for you being here. If you'd like to keep returning to yourself and returning here with me, then please hit subscribe. If you love this podcast, leaving a review or a five-star rating really helps others to find it too. You can find the show notes from today's episode over rebeccacampbell.me/podcast. Thanks for returning.