



Helping with Spiritual Emergencies: Guiding the Psychonaut through Conversion, Visions, Near Death, Ayahuasca, Rising Kundalini, and Oneness with the Universe

Robert Nelson

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Spirituality is a major part of human life. It provides use with meaning, understanding, solace, support, and insight. It can also be the source of confusion and distress. As we progress spiritually we sometimes experience significant growth which can be called spiritual emergence. This can be due to a mystical experience, conversion, initiation, or from some trial or loss. It is all part of the process of gaining wisdom, understanding and compassion. At times the growth expected is so significant that the emergence turns into an emergency. We might experience an emergency as similar to depression or we might become confused, questioning, and feel displaced. We might experience anomalous experiences such as increased intuition, psychic experiences, or even voices. Unfortunately the systems set up in our society will often discount such experiences as mental illness and attempt to suppress them through psychiatric medication. This invalidates the person and experience and often leads to avoidable problems. This book provides background on various types of spiritual and religious crises. These include the Kundalini emergency and related emergencies that can come from various spiritual practices such as meditation, Reiki, or even spontaneous experiences from prayer and worship. It also addresses such things as UFO encounters, near death experiences, mystical experiences, and conversion. There is also attention paid to entheogens such as ayahuasca and peyote and the integration needed following such experiences. It also addresses such things as spiritual abuse and moral panic. The reader is introduced to practical direct techniques for helping people deal with such crises. Many of these techniques derive from the author's years of experience as a crisis mental health specialist and so have application beyond spiritual emergencies. Attention is given to the interaction between psychology and spirituality historically and today. Emphasis is given to the need to increase the role of spirituality in psychotherapy. The problems of ignoring spirituality are examined along with the associated issues of psychopathology and over medication. Consideration is given to how to integrate spirituality and religion into psychotherapy along with suggestions of how therapists can increase their competency for dealing with spiritual/religious issues as well as for their own spiritual development. Although not an academic book there are extensive references and bibliography. The author draws on his experience as a psychotherapist, military chaplain, and student of comparative religion. He also has extensive experience with entheogenic drugs including ayahuasca, peyote, San Pedro cactus in Peru, Mexico, Panama, and the U.S. He is part of the Spiritual Emergency Network and works frequently with people who are working with spiritual emergence or who are experiencing spiritual emergencies especially those who are interested in integrating or understanding spiritual experiences.

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