

Life in the past lane

REINCARNATION IS TYPICALLY THE STUFF OF FICTION OR PHILOSOPHY, BUT SOME THERAPISTS BELIEVE IT CAN UNLOCK THE SECRETS OF WELLBEING. HERE, ONE WRITER DELVES INTO A FEW OF HIS FORMER LIVES... AND DEATHS

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One sunny afternoon, I was murdered. It was a vengeful lover that did it. Or perhaps an elder brother – I can't exactly recall. I can picture my attacker now. He was enormous and bald and had a hammer, with which he hit me several times in the throat.

Then he killed the girl I'd been trying to protect; the girl I loved, but who didn't love me back. Baldy, you see, thought we were lovers. He was wrong, but there was no telling him. She'd brought great humiliation upon his burly shoulders and there was no question the lady would die. If I hadn't

intervened, I would've escaped the hammer's thuds. But how could I stand there and watch the object of my unrequited affections be reduced to a lump of human mash? So I tried to stop him and, consequently, had my neck tenderised. Did I mention this happened in Germany? In the 15th century? In a past life that I'm, only now, reliving?

All this strangeness is taking place in the clinic of past life regression (PLR) therapist Vered Kilstein, who's also an astrological counsellor, linguist and voice-over artist. In her 'late, late 40s', Kilstein – who was trained by internationally recognised American PLR expert Dolores Cannon – has 10

years' experience in curing clients of physical and psychological maladies by hypnotising them to allow their subconscious minds to drift into other lifetimes. There, she finds patterns, events and causes that are affecting their wellbeing in their current one.

"This process can allow great shifts in a person's life," she says. "We can identify patterns of behaviour we've been repeating through lifetimes. Just seeing them can be a release of that pattern."

It's easy to be sceptical about concepts such as reincarnation. But while mainstream materialist science snorts at claims of the existence of a 'soul', the truth is, we're still ignorant of how the brain >

generates the sense of self, or consciousness, and all experience as 'me'. Nobody, in fact, has disproved the concept of the 'soul' or the possibility of life-after-death. And evidence of there being some manner of post-mortal survival is more compelling than the dogmatists would have you think.

For example, scientists engaged by the UK's University of Southampton are currently conducting a three-year study into near-death experiences, of which there are thousands of credible documented cases and no convincing 'rational' explanation.

Perhaps the most famous academic with an interest in reincarnation was Professor Ian Stevenson, founder and director of the University of Virginia's Division of Personality Studies. Stevenson, who passed away in February 2007, spent more than 40 years travelling the world and collecting data from young children who had seemingly impossible memories of lives already lived.

One case was that of an Indian boy called Gopal, who started talking about the medical company he'd owned when his name was Shaktipal. The child claimed the business – which, he insisted, was called Sukh Shancharak – was located in Mathura, a city 260km away. He also remembered being shot by his brother, after asking to borrow money. On investigation, the company was found to be real. As was the dead owner, the shooting and the cause of the fatal argument, which had only been known by the man's relatives. Yet, Gopal lived in a different town, was unknown to the family and, most amazingly, was only three years old.

I meet Kilstein in her Sydney office, next to a plastic surgeons' clinic and a cosmetic dentist. There's an enormous stone Buddha head by the door and her consultation room is decorated with crystals, mystic books and a large glass dodecahedron, which hangs off a bit of wood and is on sale for \$960.

She's dressed in loose green clothing and has hair that can only be described as 'excited'. It's long, dark and pinned about her head with a complex arrangement of clips so it looks as if it's been frozen, mid-explosion. It's the sort of hair you'd expect of someone who has qualifications in advanced PLR, Jungian astrology and delirium, and who speaks several languages. It gives her the look of someone caught between parallel universes; as if she knows something you don't and can't wait to tell you.

"I'm very aware of myself being an entity of consciousness across lifetimes," she says. "I'm one of the millions who are here to help people move to a new consciousness. We all have our roles."

We move onto the issues I hope PLR might help me resolve. I spend my days in the middle of a great, black casserole of anxieties. The moment one lump of worry floats out of view, another takes its place. Yet, looking objectively, I have no problems at all – at least, not serious ones.

"Our thoughts create our reality," says Kilstein soothingly, making notes with a special pen that has a light inside it so it glows, celestially, onto her pad. "You experience the world as aggressive and dog-eat-dog. A lot of people do."

"Some people can deal with that world," I say. "The go-getters, the businessmen."

The special light-pen runs out of ink. She puts it down and carries on with a normal one.

"Do you feel there are people out there who

achieve success without treading on people?" she asks. "Are there wealthy people who've achieved success in honourable ways?"

Suddenly, I feel embarrassed.

"No," I say. "I don't think there are. But that's obviously not true."

"It doesn't matter what the truth is. It's what you feel is the truth," she says, making more notes. "There could be an issue here around worthiness."

Before Kilstein leads me to the 'couch', or massage table, I try to find out what she believes will happen. "I don't believe in linear time," she says. "We're using terminology like 'past', 'present' and 'future' because we're living in a three-dimensional reality."

I'm confused.

"It's like a tuning. Let's say that you and I, at this moment, are tuned into the same consensual reality. With this process, I tune you to have a double focus."

In other words, we're living lots of different lives at once. It just so happens I'm currently 'tuned in' to this one. During hypnosis, Kilstein will adjust my tunings, so I can glimpse other lifetimes – or, as she prefers to call them, "time-space dimensions".

"All I'm doing is helping you move into a deeply relaxed state. Then I ask your subconscious – your

deserving of sympathy, not me with my silly 'feeling'. Then, the cloud takes me to the war's end. I'm in Portsmouth, watching my husband's boat disembark. He's not there. I run up to a young sailor on the gangplank. He insists he knows nothing about my husband, but I can tell by his sad, frightened eyes that he's lying.

Then, it's the late 1960s. I'm lying ill and heartbroken in the attic room of a boarding house. I've been living on baked beans straight from the tin, wearing my overcoat and stockings in bed to shield me from the cold. I don't die so much as fade away; after all, I've been dead, really, ever since that rainy night in London when I was possessed by that mysterious and terrible knowledge.

"May I have permission to speak to Will's subconscious, please?" Kilstein asks.

"Yes," I say.

She asks why my subconscious chose to bring the car crash forward. My wise, all-knowing higher-self responds thus: "To see, I think, um... the link... er... between... a loss of control... and how that's triggered by other people. I can... react... put myself in danger... by, er... worrying too much about, er... what other people think about me."

Next it's 15th century Germany, then London's West End, in the 1940s. This time, I look down at my feet and see I'm a woman

higher self – to take you to the most appropriate time-space. That can be in the past or in the future."

As I lie on the table with my eyes closed, Kilstein asks me to picture a special place, "like a meadow". I think about meadows and imagine a warm, flower-filled pasture fringed with a dark, looming forest. "This is the part of the mind we'll be working with," she says. "The part that deals with images and memories; the part that's active at night."

She asks if I can see a cloud and if I can sit on it. "This cloud is like magic because it can carry you to another place, where there's information we would like to find to help you," she explains.

The cloud floats down and I see a cat. Kilstein asks me if I have feet. She wants to know what age my feet seem to be, what colour the cot is, what room I'm in and what I can hear. We don't go far in this life before the cloud takes me to the 1920s, where I'm speeding in my purple sports car after an argument. I crash into a tree. I'm dead.

Next it's 15th century Germany and the murder. Then I'm in London's West End, in the 1940s. This time, I look down at my feet and see I'm a woman. I'm hurrying to work at a Soho nightclub when I'm suddenly gripped by a powerful sensation that my husband, who's at war, has been killed. All night at work with the girls on the cash desk, I keep my fears to myself. Many of my friends have been widowed by the Nazis and they're the ones

As I gasp for an answer, I feel like a schoolboy who's being asked about the homework he hasn't done. As the process continues, however, I become better at analysing my past lives. By the time the session is over, I've confidently informed Kilstein that my experiences in Germany (in which I volunteered myself for murder in a hopeless attempt to save a woman) and in England (where my refusal to recover from a broken heart led to my early death) were both the products of a "desperation to cling on to how things are or how I want them to be. And that can ruin your life."

And my hitherto unrealised wealth-complex? "I feel there's virtue in being poor. And there's not."

"It was like opening the floodgates," Kilstein says, after I've come around. "The subconscious was so ready to allow the stories to flow out of your energy system. You look totally different."

"How do I look?" I ask.

"Frisky and cheeky," she says.

I ask Kilstein about some of her past successes and she tells me about a man who had problems with a nerve pressing on a shoulder muscle.

"His was an almost textbook case," she says. "He told a very moving story of having been a knight in England. He'd come late to a meeting because he'd been coveting in the forest with his beloved and he arrived dishevelled. The other members of the brotherhood were furious. >

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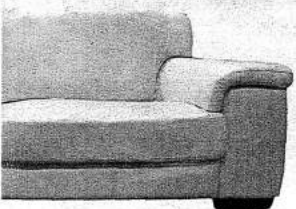
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One of them hit him hard with a sword on that shoulder. We had to bring him to a place of forgiveness. He opened his arms, in armour, to the other knight and held him. He never felt that pain again."

It makes you wonder why you hear of so many past lives that involve mad dramas such as murders, wars and knightly hugging. Even more curious is the tendency for people to be celebrities.

"People who've had a profound affect on the world - such as Cleopatra or John Lennon - you might see them as sparks," she says. "The soul has many sparks in it. So a lot of people may carry sparks of John Lennon." "Have you ever had a John Lennon?" I ask.

She nods and thinks for a moment. "Actually, I've had two John Lennoons." Kilstein explains that most people have mundane past lives, and some even have non-human ones. She once regressed a lady who'd been a twig in the presence of Jesus.

"During my first regression 20 years ago, I experienced myself as a blade of wheat," she says. "It was a very, very moving experience."

"How did it feel to be a blade of wheat?" I ask.

"Vast and empty and alone."

"And now you've experienced yourself as a blade of wheat, do you sometimes feel guilty about eating wheat-based products?"

Kilstein leans forward, goggles her eyes in my direction and says, "I'm totally wheat-intolerant."

I'm not sure I'm all-the-way with Kilstein, any more. The process I've just undergone felt like having a lucid dream; I'd been guided into a place of alert somnolence and when Kilstein asked me simple questions - "What sex are you?", "How old are your feet?" - my imagination conjured answers.

Indeed, it was Kilstein herself who described my vividly projecting mental state as, "The part of the mind that deals with images and memories; the part that's active at night."

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For me, the clue is in the detail - in that there wasn't any. Every scene we look upon in real life contains myriad tiny surprises. We turn a corner on any normal day and the walls are dirtier than we expected; the crowds noisier; or the flowers brighter; a new make of car drives past; or there's a novel in a shop window we've never seen before.

And yet there was nothing in any of my visions that surprised me. Not a name, a style of dress or a location that wasn't already familiar from some other time in this life.

Moreover, researchers at The Netherlands' Maastricht University have found that people who believe in PLR tend to be more prone to 'source monitoring errors', where they misremember where a memory actually comes from.

But Kilstein's right about one thing; our thoughts do create our reality. The placebo effect is known to be extraordinarily powerful and I've no doubt that, if a patient did believe in PLR, this experience might have a dramatic effect on them.

I was impressed, as well, by the quality of Kilstein's basic counselling techniques. I had no idea I had such irrational prejudices and attitudes about wealth until she forced me to confront them. And my 'subconscious' was quite right about my clinging on to "how things are or how I want them to be". Before I'd experienced PLR, I'd never seen it quite like that.

Sadly, however, I've not become a PLR disciple. Which isn't to say that reincarnation itself isn't real. In fact, despite devoting his work to the study of past lives, even its most famous academic proponent, Professor Stevenson, didn't believe in the power of hypnosis to access them.

As I leave Kilstein's office, I thank her for a fascinating morning and ask what benefits she think I'll take with me. She smiles beneath the tresses of her crazy hair and says simply, "I can't tell you that. You create your own reality." **SM**