

Some thoughts on Past-Life Regression

Donna Nowak, CH, CRT

www.donnanowak.com

I've read many books concerning past lives, taken quite a few classes and attended numerous conferences on the subject of reincarnation. Perhaps I've studied this particular subject more than the average person, but I am **not an expert** on the subject of past lives. My fundamentalist religious upbringing did not support a belief in reincarnation and, in fact, the concept of reincarnation is still considered to be blasphemous by many fundamentalists, including at least one member of my birth family. But a series of events in life have caused me to look at things more often from a *spiritual* perspective rather than from a *religious* one, with fewer preconceived notions about what is true or possible, and much more often with an open heart and inquiring mind instead of a dogmatic persuasion that says I have all the answers.

These notes simply share some of what I have come to believe about PLR, including the belief that we can learn about and understand the past to gain helpful information about living fully in the present.

When you're a hypnotherapist, it is important to have an open mind. (I suppose that makes sense since we are helping our clients open their mind). In my hypnosis work, clients have sometimes spontaneously and unexpectedly had memories that seem to be from another life experience. Whether or not those are real memories or simply the incredible work of someone's imagination doesn't really matter to me since my goal is to help them gain insight and healing, using their subconscious mind as a tool.

Are past lives real? That's an interesting question. My two primary teachers in the area of past-life therapy have been Lynn Sparrow and Henry Leo Bolduc. Both are experienced certified hypnotherapists who have close affiliations with the Association for Research & Enlightenment (ARE) in Virginia Beach. Henry recently retired after researching regression experiences for over 30 years, and he emphatically says that, "You don't have to take a stand on past lives in order to benefit from information the unconscious provides." Lynn also insists that she doesn't know whether clients' memories are real or simply the product of their imagination; it doesn't matter. On the other hand, the regression therapists I know have all seen significant evidence that we find persuasive or convincing, and we are strongly inclined to believe that the concept of past lives is authentic.

The concept of past-lives is both ancient and established. There are references to reincarnation in ancient scrolls, Egyptian artifacts, and a wide variety of religious, philosophical and sacred writings. Some people even interpret some of Jesus' words and teachings noted in the Bible as support of the concept of reincarnation. Personally, I believe that our soul is eternal; and that includes a belief that we have experienced other human lives. It makes sense to me; it feels right and true. But that's a personal decision. Researching a past life cannot prove its existence any more than owning a Bible and describing miracles contained in it can prove that God exists. That's something that comes from observing and evaluating the evidence, listening to your inner voice, and reaching your own conclusion.

Frankly, it **may be impossible to tell the difference between a real memory and a story** that the mind creates. In the beginning of a past-life regression, clients often feel like the thoughts or memories are just products of their imagination, almost like they're making up the story. But usually quite early in the process, the past life story begins to take on a life of its own. And the feeling in "past-life memories" usually has a haunting mood. You can feel there's truth somewhere in the stories even if you doubt the facts. The question of meaning then may move away from concerns for the reality of reincarnation or the reliability of past life memory and turn simply toward *making a connection with a story and learning from it*.

There are many fascinating stories of past-life memories where dates, names and events, (impossible for the person to know about in their current life using what we consider normal conscious awareness), were investigated and found to be accurate. I, personally, have read books, which have provided convincing documentation. Some of the more intriguing ones include examples of little children who had not traveled to or heard about the distant places or events they described, but independent research and scientific investigation showed their statements to be accurate. But if we're going to be open-minded, who's to say these children were not channeling information from another source, or that they gained the information psychically, or any one of numerous other possibilities?

But do we really care if past lives exist and whether or not those memories are real, as long as the memories create a positive and healing effect without causing harm to anyone? I have observed some pretty interesting phenomenon through my client work, and I've had some profound experiences myself through past-life memories; but even this is only anecdotal evidence, not really *proof* of reincarnation.

What I do think **most of us will admit is that the human mind is incredible**, and we recognize that it can be a powerful tool. The use of hypnosis and regression is an excellent way of exercising your brain power. There's a book on NeuroLinguistic Programming by a guy named Richard Bandler, and it's entitled "Using Your Brain for a Change." I think that title says a lot!

Freud believed that behavior has a cause, which usually is hidden from the conscious mind. He actually wrote that, "Amnesia lies at the base of all neurotic symptoms." Worded differently, Freud believed that our neuroses are caused by something we've forgotten. He went on further to say that, "Our goal is to reveal the forgotten memories through yet-to-be learned methods." One of those yet-to-be learned methods seems to be Regression Therapy.

Encouraging the *conscious mind* to process past-life memories and allowing stories and themes to unfold from these memories can be especially powerful and effective. Of course, the act of restoring forgotten events to the conscious mind is not a guarantee that the processing of such events through to forgiveness or change will be automatic. The client has to choose to take deliberate action to make changes in life. But along those lines, a Regression Therapist, working with a client at the soul level, can help a client "debrief" the regression experience and pose questions or suggestions regarding possible follow-up work. A commitment on the part of the client, knowing that there is support from a genuinely caring person, can lead to desirable life changes.

Regression Defined

The word *regression* means to “go back” or to return to something. Past-life regression is based upon the belief that the history of every soul is stored in the unconscious mind. That means that whether you’ve experienced 10 prior lifetimes, 100, or even 1,000, your entire soul history is forever stored in the recesses of your mind. The mind, then, could be regarded as a pathway through time, with a vast storehouse of information, which can be explored to bring lessons from the past into present awareness.

Past-life regression helps you access that historical record of the soul, at least the section pertaining to the presenting situation (meaning the issue or problem you are presented with at this time and which you are presenting to the universe). That historical record can prove to be quite significant in understanding the root cause of certain behavior, or as psychologists might say, the causal factor. When the recall of past events and experiences is analyzed along with insights from your current perspective on things, there can be a direct and profound impact on both the desire and ability to improve your well-being.

If I were to talk with you 1:1, at this point I could share story of my suicidal memory in a PLR and the immediate changes having that memory made in my life.

What is Past-Life Regression Therapy?

In a nutshell, past-life regression therapy is the *retrospection of the soul’s journey*. (Retrospection is simply a study of the past from the perspective of the present.) Past-life regression is a reflection on the past that can bring understanding or meaning to present life activities or situations, providing a vision for the future. I mentioned earlier that the belief in reincarnation is ancient and well-established. At the same time, there is a fairly new and emerging field of past-life study, which combines knowledge from the various fields of philosophy, theology, science, psychology and the healing arts. It is a rapidly-evolving and dynamic field, reflecting both the: 1) wisdom of the past and 2) the dynamics and change today of an expanding knowledge and understanding of the mind. Going back to the concept that we’re only using a fraction of our mind’s capacity, then, PLR is a way to more fully utilize the memory banks of the subconscious.

The current popularity of Regression Therapy is a result of decades of work dedicated to past-life exploration and research. A variety of explorers and researchers specifically experimented with past life recall and memory processing in order to develop and refine therapeutic intent. Individual therapy sessions brought help and healing to many people in a wide range of situations: spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, and even financial.

These therapists realized that inner, deep-level work tended to go beyond the superficial symptoms of the presenting problems. Unlike some clinicians who focus on helping clients alleviate symptoms, the regression therapists wanted to identify and heal the underlying cause of the problem which then leads to symptom removal. In other words, PLR is designed to probe the root causes. Finding the originating event or root cause and changing our perception of that

event (or learning its intended lesson) can have a profound and positive impact on a person today. That is what lies at the heart of PLR.

Although I usually begin a regression therapy session by inducing a light hypnotic state, it is not a necessary prerequisite. Past-life regression therapy does not depend upon hypnosis. Regression work can be done through creative visualization, reverie, meditation, intuition during travel or dreaming, or even spontaneously. I like to use hypnosis because it's a great way to achieve a nice, relaxed state both physically and mentally, making it easier to access subconscious memories.

The **primary work of regressionists** is that of guiding clients in *recalling and processing* the past. Many recognize their roles as counselors, teachers, and spiritual mentors; and they observe the reflection of another person's soul and try to help that person interpret the themes and patterns, bringing light to shadows. The value of the session goes far beyond the actual trance work. An effort is made to help the client discover their soul's purpose; to rediscover the soul's strengths, skills and talents; as well as *remember, process and release traumatic events*. Helping clients change their perception of something hurtful from the past is one of the most important benefits of past-life regression.

A Deeper Look at the Real Work in Past Life Therapy

A client's unconscious mind may have held painful memories and information for years, but now, the deep memories are ready to be processed at a conscious level. PLR opens a locked door from the past in order to gain entrance through a blocked door in the present.

The real work in past-life therapy, then, is in:

- 1) *understanding, appreciating and learning the lessons* from past experiences
- 2) *utilizing and further developing skills acquired* in a lifetime
- 3) allowing a *healing of the past and the building of a better future*.

Past-life regression brings forth healing stories from one's deep memory that focus on soul lessons learned in that lifetime. These lessons and memories can help the individual become a wiser, kinder, and more balanced person. ***The important learning involves spiritual progress—whether there was gain or loss.*** And the real measuring rod by which we evaluate a lifetime is the progress of the soul toward attunement with God... learning forgiveness and understanding the concept of unconditional love. So, the important question is, "Did you take a step forward or backward in that life?"

In past-life regression therapy, ***how the life was lived is of vital importance.*** Fame in itself is usually not associated with soul growth. We know that fame can be loaded with difficulties and challenges. So the fact that someone had wealth, fame or prestige may not indicate positive soul growth. Some of the most valuable, eternal lessons in a soul's journey are patience, service to others, generosity, kindness, social skills and emotional intelligence.

Toward that end, questions asked during a regression session would include:

What did you gain or lose?

What could you have done differently in that previous life?

What similar events or patterns do you see in the current life?

What forgiveness or release in that life would be helpful to you in this life, at this time?

The Benefits

Past-life exploration is a process; it is a step along the path of life but it is not the end product, not the final destination. The **lessons that you have learned and how you have learned those lessons** can provide vital information that can be helpful to you today. You can gain clues and tips concerning things that are holding you back. This information aids in your inner growth and your soul's maturity. Obviously, those lessons are of far more value than knowing your name or your town in a past life, or knowing whether you were rich and famous. That might be fun to know, but it may not be particularly helpful.

*1) One of the greatest lessons for past-life study is to learn the lesson of **forgiveness**.*

Opportunities for forgiveness, both for ourselves and others, abound in regression work! If you examined several of your past lives, perhaps you'd see a destructive pattern, one that had become addictive. Forgiveness exercises offer a method to break the chains that bind us to destructive patterns. It is the key to releasing the past.

Perhaps in this life you have a strained relationship with a friend, co-worker, or relative, and you just can't figure out why. It could be the residual memory from a shared experience in another life. It could be an addictive, destructive pattern from the past. Your memory of that experience could give you greater insight into the other person, as well as yourself; and forgiveness could be the key to releasing you both.

The act of forgiveness is processed primarily for *your* healing, and it simply means that as a forgiver, you can be friendly, kind, and cooperative. I'd like to clarify that although it is necessary to forgive the hurt, the lesson itself must be remembered so that the pattern does not continue. We don't deny that the hurt happened because the lesson must be learned. So, the saying, "forgive and forget" is probably not a realistic or positive goal since the mind holds the memories of everything we have ever said, thought or done. But the act of forgiveness puts the original hurt into a healing context. It tries to avoid the possibility of setting up a scenario for another victimization, avoiding both the victim role and the playing of victimizer to another person.

Remember that although we forgive others, there is no control over others' forgiveness of us, and we must be careful not to make that part of our agenda. They may choose to become a prisoner of their own hatred, and that hatred will likely become a poison. But only they can decide if they want the antidote of forgiveness. By choosing forgiveness, the possibility of fresh choices is restored and the addictive chains are broken so that people are no longer linked together in a negative way.

2) *Love is another great gift of past-life exploration.* Love links us to the wonderful people and the healing episodes in our long-term memories. It's interesting and fun to recall others from previous lifetimes with whom we have a strong and loving connection now. Or to recall a past life memory of someone who was a friend, relative or lover and who has already died in this life. The realization that we truly are eternal beings makes it easier to release the loved one, knowing that when the time is right in the future, we will meet again.

In other instances, perhaps the memory is of a troubling life event from the past where you had difficulty with someone who is now your boss, co-worker, neighbor or family member. You may gain insight into thoughts or memories being carried over from the past-life experience that are negatively affecting your relationship with this person in the present. A new understanding allows release of the past and an improved relationship now. Doesn't that sound cool?

Through past-life regression, we may become increasingly aware of our common bond in humanity, how truly interconnected we are. We have the opportunity to learn that love is the guiding light that illuminates a soul's journey on the path to wholeness. Our love for others can bridge the gap between ancient times and today.

3) *Discovering the root cause of a problem is another benefit of past life work.* Our subconscious stores everything that we have ever seen, heard, thought or done. Every experience is recorded here. Every association we've ever made.

Throughout our lives we've been gathering information or evidence. The first time we experience an event, our impression is put on file with no comparison. The second time we encounter a similar event indicates a possible or even probable trend. The third time we experience this similar event, we may connect cause and effect. From that point on, we will most likely just gather evidence that supports the data or belief now in the subconscious.

Think about this for a moment. As children, if we were told that we were "in the way" or ... "so clumsy, you can't do anything right", unfortunately, we accepted these statements as true in our subconscious. If we overheard our parents say, "If it weren't for having gotten pregnant, I would've had a great career", or if in anger a school teacher said something like, "You're so lazy you'll never amount to anything good", then regardless of what we may know in our conscious mind, we hold to the early subconscious truth. Throughout our lives we gather evidence that proves this point to be correct. Unfortunately, rational adult thinking or willpower alone is not strong enough to permanently override those subconscious programs since the logic of the conscious mind is no match for the power of the subconscious. It is important to change our perception of that original event, and we must do this at the deepest level of our mind.

In regression and hypnosis work, we can access deeper levels of the mind presenting an opportunity to change our perception of the original events.

4) *Discovering hidden talents and abilities* is another interesting area of exploration in Past Life work. We all know cases of childhood prodigies or seemingly genius. Well, the early childhood identification of people with exceptional gifts (such as classical pianists) has led to the belief that such gifts have been developed in previous incarnations and that in subsequent lives,

we simply build on the foundation of skills and talents already laid. Perhaps you discover through past-life exploration that you spoke a foreign language fluently. You might find it amazingly easy to learn that language in your present life. And you actually could, through past life regression, search for the original source of specific skills and talents and either rediscover or further develop those past-life abilities.

There is a concept that, in helping others, we help to heal ourselves. At the personal level, I and many other therapists have found that as we help clients uncover soul lessons involving struggles, shortcomings and strengths, we observe similar patterns within ourselves. So, we are growing and developing right alongside the client. In other words, healing one soul through past-life regression therapy is actually healing a section of humanity. Our bond of spirituality and sense of unity increases so that all souls are strengthened and all lives on the physical plane are enriched.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that the question about whether or not past-life memories are real may not really matter. Certainly for me, one thing that *has* been proven sufficiently over and over again is that the harnessing of the mind through past life therapy has real value!