

What is it like to be an Experienter?

No one comes away from contact with alien beings unchanged. Regardless of their age, the circumstances of contact and whether the contact is positive or negative, once a human being comes into contact with ETs, he or she is never the same. Contact with extraterrestrial beings is not an everyday run-of-the-mill occurrence and it challenges many of the biases and beliefs about ourselves that all humans share.

Cultural/social bias

Contact events challenge shared cultural and social knowledge. According to accepted norms, contact with extraterrestrial beings is impossible, so experiencers often find themselves either trying to deny the experience or suffering alone in silence, unable to reach out to anyone else for help in understanding what happened and how to deal with it. Understandably, most experiencers are reluctant to talk openly about their ET contact due to the very real possibility of ridicule, loss of respect, increased stress between family and friends and even loss of employment. Additionally, by talking about such an experience, an individual is relinquishing an important coping mechanism – the ability to pretend that such an event never occurred. Once it's out in the open and other people know about it, an experienter may feel that he has further lost control of his life and more vulnerable. Worse, in some countries, even today, individuals are institutionalized for professing contact with other-worldly beings.

The challenge to our sense of predominance

The very thought of contact with beings so technologically superior to us challenges our understanding of reality and our place in the universe. Can ETs really cross vast expanses of space, transport us through walls, travel through time and all the other things they reportedly do? After all the years they have supposedly been on Earth and all the history of contact with us, we still don't have answers about who they are and why they are here. If they really do exist and are as powerful as they seem, it's obvious that humanity doesn't hold the position of predominance and mastery in the universe we like to think we do, and that's not something we or our governments are eager to admit.

The challenge to our sense of safety

Probably the most difficult thing about being an experienter is the threat it represents to an individual's personal sense of safety and control. Abductees often recount being treated like we treat animals by beings with vastly superior technology and unknown motives. "You're being controlled by creatures who show no regard for your wishes or needs, without knowing what they're gonna do to you. You're helpless."

Contact, especially abduction-type contact, can bring us face-to-face with the pain and terror of our worst nightmares. Even positive contact experiences often contain elements of fear and many long-time contactees report that even though their contact events may have become more positive over time, their early experiences were threatening and traumatic.

Experienced anomalous trauma

The thoughts and behaviors of experiencers often fit into a pattern of responses to traumatic events that are beyond society's current explanation of normal human experiences and that it has no logical explanation for. Contact with alien beings isn't part of the normal real human experience and yet abductees/contactees may suffer very real trauma as a result.

Initially, before such individuals have had a chance to talk about their experiences, they often suffer from symptoms similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They may exhibit phobic avoidance of anything linked to the contact experience, they may experience intrusive thoughts and emotions or may have nightmares, flashes of images related to the event and have trouble focusing on daily tasks. In addition, they may avoid the location of the event, written and video material about UFOs or ETs, and doctor or dentist visits that involve bright lights, examination tables or scenarios. Some also report a decreased interest in physical intimacy due to feelings of vulnerability they didn't feel before the contact experience.

The next response to contact is often fear and anger, especially if abductions/contacts continue. This can be a difficult stage to move past and, unfortunately, many people get caught up at this point and spend years viewing themselves as victims. However, after speaking to an investigator or therapist about their experiences, even if no formal therapy is involved, many acute PTSD-like symptoms can begin to fade. After a while, experiencers may become interested in learning all they can about UFOs and ETs, perhaps in an effort to make sense of what happened to them and in anticipation of preventing future contact events. From then on, how they choose to go forward, whether to continue learning more about their experience or to put it aside and get on with their lives, is up to each individual.

Fantasy proneness

The whole human-ET contact phenomenon seems fantastic, so it's easy to believe that experiencers must not possess the ability to distinguish reality from fantasy. But the truth is that there is no good, hard evidence that experiencers are more fantasy prone than the rest of the general population.

In their firsthand study of abduction experiencers, Sandra C. Wilson and Theodore X. Barber (*The Fantasy Prone Personality: Implications for Understanding Imagery, Hypnosis, and Parapsychological Phenomena*) found that levels of fantasy proneness, as measured by the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (ICMI), a validated measure of fantasy proneness, were no higher than fantasy proneness levels in the general public.

In their 1993 study, N.P. Spanos, K. Dickson and S.C. DuBreuil (*Close Encounters: An Examination of UFO Experiencers*) found that 40% of intense UFO experiences (involving seeing a UFO close-up, contact with aliens, missing time or abduction) showed average fantasy proneness scores when compared to a community sample.

When comparing the characteristics of fantasy proneness in UFO contactees and non-UFO control groups, Kenneth Ring (*The Omega Project: Near Death Experiences, UFO Encounters and Mind at Large*) found no difference. He concluded:

“Fantasy proneness is definitely not a trait that differentiates our experiential groups from the controls. Indeed, the average score on this measure is actually identical for the UFO groups. Accordingly, there is no evidence from our study that the UFOERs . . . are distinctively characterized by tendencies toward fantasy proneness.”

Psychological effects

Some human beings experience traumatic contact events that result in serious mental issues. The human mind has a reasonable ability to block memories of events that are too traumatic to deal with in the moment, but if such memories remain over time without being expressed and faced, they can cause problematic behaviors such as phobias. Usually, these issues cannot be cleared up until the contact is dealt with.

D.H., a 32-year old woman, came to me for help because she was suffering from claustrophobia, an extreme irrational fear of confined places. She had been uncomfortable in closed spaces as long as she could remember without knowing why, but in the previous two years her discomfort had increased to the point where it was limiting her ability to live a normal, active life. During therapy, this is what she recalled (summarized from my notes):

When she was around five years of age, her family lived in a rural area in Arkansas. Behind their house was a large field bordered by trees. One night the family was sleeping, her parents in their bedroom at the front of the house and she alone in the screened-in back porch, when she awoke and reached for her doll. Not finding it, she got out of bed to search and saw a bright light in the field behind the house. Assuming it was her parents, she went out the back door and walked toward the light. When she reached the back of the yard, she saw that the light was a large round object with people moving in and out of it. Suddenly, someone stepped in front of her, blocking her path. The being was very tall and its face looked “puffed up and squinty-eyed.” Frightened, she turned and ran back to the house, but she couldn’t get the back door open, so she crawled into a space under the back porch to hide. She could still see the beings moving in and out of the lighted object as she cried herself to sleep.

Sometime later, she awoke to sunlight and the sound of her father’s voice calling her name. He pulled her out from under the porch and took her inside the house. She had a few scratches on her elbows and knees, but no other injuries. Her parents sternly, but lovingly, reprimanded her for leaving the house at night, but nothing more was said and the incident was not mentioned again. She was never really comfortable in small spaces after that, but it wasn’t an issue and she didn’t link that discomfort to the childhood incident. It didn’t become a problem until many years later, when it was triggered by events in her life and developed into full-fledged claustrophobia.

During therapy, she recalled the event from so many years before and identified the people she had seen in the back yard as alien beings. She came to understand that the traumatic contact she experienced at that time had stayed buried in her mind until recently. Remembering the contact event was the first step to eventually leaving the trauma and the phobia behind.

Certainly, not all phobias arise from ET contact, but the fact that some do isn't surprising, considering how powerful and traumatic contact events can be.

Contact - positive or negative

Contact between a human being and an alien being is very personal. No human being can understand what the experience is like until they actually live it for themselves, and whether it's beautiful or terrifying, it's a part of their life that may eventually need to be dealt with. But being an experiencer can be a great opportunity for personal growth in a myriad of ways and can lead an individual to help others as well, if that's what they are called to do.

Many experiencers consider themselves blessed and wouldn't change their contact with extraterrestrial beings for anything. The four-year study of over 3,000 experiencers conducted by the Edgar Mitchell Foundation for Research into Extraterrestrial and Extraordinary Experiences (FREE) found that out of 1,318 experiencers who were asked if they would stop their ET contacts if possible, 83.69% said No and only 16.31% said Yes.

Some experiencers believe they have important roles to play in raising the consciousness of humanity and protecting the Earth and are happily working toward those ends. Others do not. Being touched by ETs doesn't make an individual a saint, a genius or better than any other human being, but it does give them something special. Whether that something is a gift or curse differs with each experiencer.

If you are an experiencer and are okay with that, I congratulate you. There are still many who haven't arrived at that place. If you aren't sure, know that although there are people who are happy to help, your path is yours alone to walk. Try to stay positive, patient with yourself, open-minded and open-hearted to who you think you are, and don't worry about who or what others think you should be.

Excerpt from "Forbidden Questions: A Guide to Human-ET Contact", 2019, Gwen Farrell, CHt, RT