

Revisiting the "Cradle of ESP" (A Mother's Day Blog)

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All mothers are keenly aware that the loving bonds with their children are innately strong. As the psychiatrist Jan Ehrenwald once pointed out: "The mother-child relationship has always been considered a source of profound emotional closeness and communicative intimacy between the two."^{1,p.455} A reflection of this may come through the intense longing that a number of mothers describe feeling upon being separated from their child, even for a brief time. But could this bond also be a possible basis for a seemingly psychic connection between mother and child, allowing their bond to be maintained even at a distance? In other words, could this bond perhaps be considered the "cradle of ESP?"

This was an idea which Ehrenwald initially proposed in the early 1970s as one way to possibly understand how babies are able convey their meanings, needs, and desires to their mothers even in the absence of verbal speech.¹ Perhaps it could be reflected in the seemingly intuitive moments in which a mother "just knows" when her baby is crying, or even at times when the mother seems to sense that her child may be in danger. One notable case involving the latter situation was described by Dr. Louisa Rhine (the matriarch of modern parapsychology) in her classic 1961 book *Hidden Channels of the Mind*:

In Washington State a young woman was so upset by a terrifying dream one night that she had to wake her husband and tell him about it. She had dreamed that a large ornamental chandelier which hung over their baby's bed had fallen into the crib and crushed the baby to death. In the dream she could see herself and her husband standing amid the wreckage. The clock on the baby's dresser said 4:35. In the distance she could hear the rain on the windowpane and the wind blowing outside.

But her husband just laughed at her. He said it was a silly dream, to forget it and go back to sleep; and in a matter of moments he did just that himself. But she could not sleep.

Finally, still frightened, she got out of bed and went to the baby's room, got her and brought her back. On the way she stopped to look out the window, and saw a full moon, the weather calm and quite unlike the dream. Then, though feeling a little foolish, she got back into bed with the baby.

About two hours later they were wakened by a resounding crash. She jumped up, followed by her husband, and ran to the nursery. There, where the baby would have been lying, was the chandelier in the crib. They looked at each other and then at the clock. It stood at 4:35. Still a little skeptical they listened – to the sound of rain on the windowpane and wind howling outside.^{2,pp.177-178}

Perhaps this seemingly psychic connection between mother and child may persist to maintain their bond even into adulthood. This might be one way to account for the experience described in a case later described by Louisa Rhine's daughter, Dr. Sally Rhine Feather (the emeritus director of the Rhine Research Center in North Carolina):

A woman from Fairbanks, Alaska, was vacationing in California one year when suddenly she "just knew" she had to telephone her married daughter back in Anchorage, Alaska. As she explained, "It simply came to me that I must call her, although I hadn't been thinking of her particularly. As soon as I got to Santa Rosa, I telephoned her. She asked me how on earth I had known she needed to reach me. It turns out her husband had been seriously injured and, since I had been traveling, she didn't know where to reach me. I told her I had just known, that's all I could say." The woman believed that her daughter's great need and troubled thoughts "had come straight to me, and since I was receptive, I got the message."³, pp.73-74

Similar kinds of cases have also described by Dr. Feather in Chapter 4 ("A Mother's ESP") of her 2005 book *The Gift*, which she co-wrote with author Michael Schmicker.³

And could perhaps the connection even persist beyond death, as a way for a mother to continue "looking out" for the well-being of her child? Might this be one possible way to account for the following apparitional (ghost) experience described by Dr. Rhine in her 1981 book *The Invisible Picture*:

A woman in New Jersey reported an occurrence that happened on her parents' wedding day, of which her mother had kept a memoir. The young couple had driven through mountains to a town in Utah for a wedding dinner. While there the husband was given a telegram stating that his wife's mother had died.

He did not tell his wife about the death, but only that they would have to return at once. Although it was dark and overcast, they were given a fresh team and started on the long drive back.

They were deep in the mountain area when a furious storm broke. From her mother's memoirs, the daughter, reporting to the Parapsychology Laboratory [once located at Duke University], quoted, "The rain came down in torrents amidst deafening bursts of thunder and piercing flashes of lightning. I was horribly frightened and somehow in the darkness we got off the road. Suddenly the horses lunged backwards and stopped still. At that moment a blaze of lightning emblazoned the scene and I saw my mother standing in front of those horses with her arms outstretched. We were at the very brink of a precipice which dropped straight down to the river far below.

"Now, I do not think this is to be an idle dream or fancy. I did not then know my mother was dead, but just as firmly as I have ever believed anything in my whole life I believe that Mother – in spirit – stopped those horses, thus saving our lives."⁴, p.158

Could these cases really represent genuine psychic connections? Quite apart from purely anecdotal accounts, there is a considerable amount of experimental evidence that has been gathered over the past four decades which seems to favor the existence of ESP⁵⁻⁷, so it certainly seems within the realm of plausibility. And if that is so, then these experiences may be particularly revealing about the subtle personal interconnections which may underlie the loving bond between mother and child. They may add deeper meaning to the notion of "heart and soul." :-) :-)

References:

¹Ehrenwald, J. (1971). Mother-child symbiosis: Cradle of ESP. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 58, 455 – 466.

²Rhine, L. E. (1961). *Hidden Channels of the Mind*. New York: William Morrow & Company.

³Feather, S. R., & Schmicker, M. (2005). *The Gift: ESP, the Extraordinary Experiences of Ordinary People*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

⁴Rhine, L. E. (1981). *The Invisible Picture: A Study of Psychic Experiences*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.

⁵Radin, D. (2012). *Supernormal: Science, Yoga, and the Evidence for Extraordinary Psychic Abilities*. New York: Crown Publishing/Deepak Chopra Books.

⁶Powell, D. H. (2009). *The ESP Enigma: The Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena*. New York: Walker & Company.

⁷Broderick, D., & Goertzel, B. (Eds.) (2015). *Evidence for Psi: Thirteen Empirical Research Reports*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.