

Juliane Grodhues/Dorothea Stockmar

Like a Wave From Another Shore

After-Death Communication between
Art and Psychotherapy

Translated from German
by Fee Heitland



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Juliane Grodhues/Dorothea Stockmar
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Preface

“After-Death Communication between Art and Psychotherapy” the subheading of the book proclaims. After-death communication – communication between the deceased and the bereaved – as a subject in a volume on dealing with grief? One does not like to talk about connections between the living and the dead. Talking about these issues can often lead to being considered odd, or even a charlatan. Statistics, however, speak a different language: quite a number of studies confirm that spontaneous after-death communication, meaning those contacts that are experienced directly, without the assistance of a medium or any sort of device, are not exceptional cases but a normal occurrence. Depending on which study you consult, 10 to 40 percent of the general population report one or more instances of contact with a deceased person. In cases of people who lost a child or a life partner the percentages are even higher than that. (See also: *Gerda Lier, „Das Unsterblichkeitsproblem“, 1. Auflage 2010, V & R Unipress Verlag, Göttingen, Kap. 5.3.5*)

In trying to interpret the phenomenon of after-death communication, scientists come to all sorts of conclusions: some suspect wishful thinking, others do not want to dismiss offhand the possibility that these experiences are real. A common factor is the healing effect of the contacts. I myself was lucky enough after the death of my wife to experience several instances of contact with her that substantially alleviated my grief. Now I realize that I remain connected to her – a knowledge that was not gained intellectually but on a deeply emotional level.

The need of the bereaved to remain in contact with the deceased/ancestors is found in many culture groups. In the same manner that a person who has lost something searches for it, a bereaved person seeks traces of the deceased. The

manners of grief are just as manifold as aspects of relationships. Thus, the bereaved attempt to connect to the deceased by way of visiting cemeteries, donning clothes left behind, and sometimes even assuming the role of a deceased person. All too easily one's own home can turn into a place of grief, a house of grief in this process. Yet a house of grief can also be a spiritual place in which a grieving person stays for as long as it helps them heal.

Grief counselor Dorothea Stockmar from Celle experienced the pain of loss herself after the sudden death of her 17-year-old son. In the first chapter, she invites us on a search of her grief which leads her to the threshold of a different kind of awareness. Nearing despair, she finds consolation in nighttime letters to her dead son. These letters turn into an after-death communication which has a healing effect on her. From an adaptation of the letters a dramatic reading develops which can be found in the last part of this book.

Degreed psychologist Juliane Grodhues from Saarbrücken in her work as a trauma therapist has been focusing on dealing with the pain of loss and introduces us to a new therapeutic method called IADC. IADC stands for Induced After-Death Communication and supports the natural instinct of the bereaved of searching for those they have lost.

Juliane Grodhues' empathetic words take us on a journey from Saarbrücken to Chicago where she first comes into contact with Dr. Allan Botkin, originator of the IADC method.

When Dorothea Stockmar and Juliane Grodhues meet during a seminar held by Dr. Allan Botkin at Milton Erickson Institute in Heidelberg and Dorothea Stockmar experiences her first IADC session, she finds it to be an affirmation of her instances of spontaneous nighttime after-death communication, and thus the idea for this collaborative book on after-death communication and psychotherapy is born.

Along the lines of a grief counselor's questions between Celle and Saarbrücken, we are gradually introduced to the new therapeutic method of recovery from trauma and grief to finally become witnesses to a documented IADC session in the chapter "An IADC therapist questions a grieving mother".

From Celle, we learn about spontaneous as well as induced after-death communication which expresses itself in Dorothea Stockmar's artwork, to finally end our journey in Saarbrücken, birthplace of the first German Institute for Induced After-Death Communication, founded by Juliane Grodhues.

Christian von Kamp

Address

My „accidental“ discovery of IADC therapy occurred in 1995. A few years later, I made the decision, with some trepidation, to go ahead and present this new information to other professionals and the general public. I felt it was my moral duty to do so—the one thing that was very clear to me was that IADC was healing patients to a degree that was not even thought to be possible.

I began this new journey completely on my own. I knew right away that I needed other people to make this work. While many people were supportive and helpful, my life (and IADC) changed when Juliane Grodhues walked through my office door. I didn't know it at the time. She had come all the way from Germany to learn the IADC method. One thing I could tell right away was that Juliane was an excellent psychologist.

Since then, Juliane has become a good and trusted friend and IADC colleague. As of now, she is my only certified and independent IADC trainer. She is the best of the best.

On my second trip to Heidelberg, Juliane introduced me to her good friend, Dorothea. What I remember most about Dorothea is her genuine warmth and sincerity. She made me feel very comfortable, even though our first meeting occurred in a busy cafe, in the middle of a busy day. Also, her thoughts about life and death intrigued me.

The idea that Juliane and Dorothea are coming together to write this book is exciting to me. I see it as the meeting of two of the best minds on a topic that is perhaps more important than any other. This book should become a „must read“ for anyone interested in grief, trauma, and the ultimate meaning of life and death.

Dr. Allan Botkin

Celle (Dorothea Stockmar)

A search within grief

Anyone who has suffered a loss is searching and more or less consciously becomes a seeker for the lost. Bidden or unbidden, anything a bereaved person sees, feels, hears, tastes, or smells can recall a memory of the beloved dead: a person's appearance, a gesture, a facial expression, laughter, a specific manner of walking, a song that sticks in the mind, a distinctive scent, a certain speech style, a movie watched together, a phrase, a remark, a thought, a train leaving the station.

Perceptions, feelings, anything coming into a bereaved person's mind can be felt as a loss. Yet things that no longer occur, are no longer expressed, can recall the loss of a beloved person: nobody's trimming the hedges, taking care of the cat, letting milk burn on the stove, no-one keeps cracking the same old jokes, leaving their shoes lying about, banging on the table.

Yet a bereaved person's yearning for the lost is in perpetual danger of turning into a craving when the seeker becomes entangled in their memories, when the search radius keeps shrinking until there is no escape.

My yearning for my dead child led me to the farthest reaches of the house of grief I had constructed for myself. Everything was still so unfathomably close, after all. At first it was everyday things that caught my attention. His shoes behind the door, his keys, an open book next to his bed, his number still in my phone directory, a song he used to play on the piano, hairs I found in his hairbrush weeks later. I positively gathered up these things, followed them, seeking for clues.

In this most unbearable time of my life I sought the bearable. Opening my wardrobe, I rediscovered it: an attire of grief which I had assembled years before as a way of dealing with grief. There were garments expressing hopelessness, despair, disruption, but also ones that propped me up, gave me courage by inviting me to carry my message of grief into the world.

I tried all sorts of fabrics and was deeply touched by many of them. I put them all on – one after the other, some even on top of others. I was attempting to sense what it was like to be grieving. Yet no garment could have provided the support I needed to carry me through the time of grief. This support came solely from undergoing and experiencing my grief. “The pain is leading my way”, I heard myself say time and time again.

Do not swerve, do not flinch, share the speechlessness, accept a bereaved person’s frame of mind, give them the time that they need – these had originally been my thoughts on handling grief. Now I was forced to apply these to my own personal situation. Continually, I had to be careful not to let my work as a grief counselor get in the way of my own healing, not to lose sight of myself in the process.

My feeling of disruption led me to a need to rediscover and reinvent myself. There was nothing whatsoever that could not be reinterpreted under the guise of my grief: old bedsheets became mummified objects; light wood was driftwood in water flowing calmly. Sounds that echoed certain recordings; a coat of my son’s that made me feel so covered that I didn’t want to take it off ever again. In short, I absorbed anything that could provide support in my desperate quest for the lost. This included a certain dress that I eventually turned into a garment of mourning. For mourning is, as I had experienced, a search for lost time at the end of a life which does not end, which wants to be felt, to be articulated here and now, in gesture, thought, and word.

Anyplace I found memories of my dead son I followed in his tracks, even in dreams and daydreams. In many a sleepless night I experienced a different sort of consciousness. It was a deep, lucid immersion in a state beyond time and space which was no dream.

I clearly heard his message, a voice saying, "Mom, I'm going to write you a letter." Waking up with this thought in my head I wondered, "Now where's that letter?" Still half asleep, I reached for a piece of paper and was soon baffled to read words in an unfamiliar style of writing that had positively poured out of me.

Where did these ideas come from? Who had written them on my heart? At first I ascribed them to my dead child's soul brother who I had made up. I named him Sujac (my son's name spelled backwards). It was him who addressed these words to me that gave me comfort without a promise of an afterlife. Through him, I was able to view my dead child's life from a different perspective.

The dialogs springing from this discovery of Sujac constituted an important milestone on my path of mourning. One more time I had the chance to be close to my child by letting his imaginary brother speak the words, "I am the brother of the one you yearn for. I surge in like a wave from a unknown shore. I stand before you without obscuring him, your son. Through me, you get another chance to meet him."

That was precisely what I needed at that moment: an intermediary to render it possible for me to reconnect with my son. From this encounter something began to develop which I later called transmudial communication, crossing over between worlds.

In my search within grief new spaces opened up and I was guided deeper and deeper into a world that still seemed enigmatic to me. Thoughts and feelings condensed into haikus while gazing at the stars, behind a veil of tears in my search for something lasting:

at rest like a stone
caught in a web of my love
a deep grief for you

a river of tears
the sun behind the mountains
I hear your laughter

my tentative steps
bridge towards another world
stars twinkling gently

From Saarbrücken to Chicago (Juliane Grodhues)

IADC – a new way of healing grief and trauma

It was 2006 when I first heard about American psychotherapist Dr Allan Botkin from a colleague in Saarbrücken. Botkin was said to have developed a therapeutic method allowing people in mourning to experience a mental reconnection with a deceased person that eases their grief. That afternoon, we had a long and intense conversation about experiences and phenomena concerning death and existential matters related to it, and I was deeply moved to learn of a therapeutic method that readily incorporates these aspects.

In my professional work as a psychotherapist I had begun to focus on working with traumatized patients; I had worked on projects dealing with refugees from war and had just started my own psychotherapeutic practice in 2006. Personally I had been concerned with the subjects of death, grief, and visionary experiences in the face of death for a while then, triggered by experiencing spontaneous and unexpected after-death contacts with a family member who had died in World War II and who I had never met. These contacts were unlike anything I had experienced before and radically challenged my previous worldview.

Back then I had no language, no terms for what I felt, saw and heard – yet I sensed with a growing conviction that something very important had happened to me. Neither my psychology degree nor my years of additional psychotherapeutic training had prepared me for seeking answers to these new questions.

Colleagues and friends assisted me for a while during my search for interpretations, but they understood no better than I did. I began to sense the scale of the taboo which these visionary experiences represented.

During that time, the mid-80s, I found clues in the as yet meager literature on near-death experiences and with people who dealt with the question of whether consciousness could exist past physical death. Looking back on those years the questions that remain are how I myself as well as other people deal with unusual visionary experiences and how much time and stamina it takes to integrate into your worldview an experience that might have lasted mere seconds or minutes and to intensify that newly begun process of change.

I came full circle when I heard of Dr Allan Botkin and his grief therapy IADC – Induced After-Death Communication:

Here I had found an interface between my psychotherapeutic work and my personal experiences.

My decision to travel to Chicago to meet Dr Allan Botkin and learn about IADC grief therapy firsthand was a quick one. By coincidence – or not – I had just booked a flight to the US, and since as a trauma therapist I was fully equipped professionally, all options were open to me. At Dr Botkin's Center for Grief and Traumatic Loss in Libertyville near Chicago I learned to apply the IADC method and experienced the healing effect in a personal session.

Since that time, IADC has become an important part of my range of therapeutic methods for the support of people in mourning in my grief and trauma practice. The IADC method can be applied in a small number of consecutive sessions as well as in continuous psychotherapeutic treatment.

There is a routine structure to an IADC session: After a few introductory questions about the deceased, the patient's relation to them and the circumstances of death, the grieving patient is directed to focus solely on the pain of loss during the therapeutic process. The emphasis is on the deep sense of sorrow and the traumatic aspects of loss, most especially burdensome images and other memories which are perceived as uncontrollable, persistent, and particularly painful, which block the natural process of grief and in the long term can lead to chronic mental and physical strain.

These blockages can be cleared and integrated into a new sense of perception of the loss. Once a patient has come to a point of feeling calmer, more accepting and more peaceful towards the loss, the process continues and a receptive, open mind is reinforced. When this state is achieved, the patient is asked to close his eyes. He is directed to be open to whatever happens. Oftentimes, suddenly and surprisingly, something happens that lastingly eases sorrow and other emotions: sen-

sing, seeing, hearing or feeling something that assures the patient of not having completely lost the person he grieves for, of knowing them to be in a good place, of still being connected to them in a loving way.

Some grieving patients then remember that they had always felt this way, but were unable to sense the feeling or had covered it up with their own grief.

IADC connects what was previously experienced as unrelated and creates a space for experiencing an inner connection with all living things and for perceiving their unity.

The IADC method is not meant to replace more extensive grief counseling and certainly cannot replace the grieving process. It can however be used by a grieving person at any time after the first shock has subsided – even decades later. IADC can be integrated into any grief model and offers support in establishing a more fruitful grieving process, particularly in cases of traumatic experiences or strong feelings of guilt, anger, hurt, rage or disconnection in relation with the loss. IADC can uncover these burdensome aspects and empower the patient to meet the healing process of grief more freely.

During the past years, several new methods of grief counseling have been established which incorporate the natural impulse of a grieving person to seek and develop an inner connection with the deceased. The IADC method allows for a very direct and natural approach to easing the deep pain of loss through the clearing of burdensome emotions and thoughts, to finding a new inner relation through contact with the deceased and thus to finding consolation, courage and strength for one's own life.

My journey to Chicago allowed me to discover this new method of healing trauma and grief and to invite others to follow.

Between Celle and Saarbrücken
(D. Stockmar/J. Grodhues)

Questions a grief counselor asks an IADC therapist

What exactly does IADC mean? Who developed the therapeutic method?

IADC stands for Induced After-Death Communication and is a psychotherapeutic method for healing grief and trauma. It was developed by Dr Allan Botkin, author of "Induced After-Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Trauma". In the 1990s, he worked with deeply traumatized US veterans in a clinic and successfully applied a method of trauma therapy based on EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). In the course of his work, he investigated in detail a phenomenon which his clients experienced: during the therapy, while dealing with death and grief, they experienced contacts and communication with the dead followed by an easing of feelings of deep grief which was both intense and permanent.

What happens during an IADC session? What do patients experience?

In a successful IADC session, patients experience a reconnection with a deceased person which has a healing effect. During these contacts, patients usually feel positive, loving sympathy, mutual respect and appreciation, consolation, encouragement for pursuing their path in life, and a message that the incidence of loss has its rightful place in life.

What happens during IADC is not in any way spectacular – rather, a quiet, deeply moving presence is felt which heals

and provides relief. "It is good just as it is", many patients say of this internal experience, they feel supported and safely ensconced in something that lies beyond limited notions and conceptions and which touches their very core.

Can experiences during after-death communication be conveyed in words?

Connections with deceased persons are internal experiences often felt to be real. The experience is very individual, unique and surprising and at the same time independent of the therapist. Just as it can be difficult to articulate their impressions for people having near-death experiences, the same is true for after-death communication experienced in these therapy sessions. There are often no words for perceptions and sensations, and for some patients using their inner senses to this degree is an unfamiliar experience. They may require further support to help integrate these experiences.

The therapeutic method used in IADC, based on trauma-therapeutic work with bilateral eye movement, is not a mysterious occurrence and can easily be learned by EMDR trauma therapists.

How can after-death communication be induced?

After-death communication is not a complicated thing, it happens spontaneously and "out of the blue". What can be complicated is the attempt to integrate it into our view of the world, to wrap our minds around it, interpret it, often judging it in the process.

How did IADC come about? To what extent is the method based on the EMDR method used in trauma therapy? What happens in an EMDR session?

The originator of the therapeutic method Dr Allan Botkin is an American psychologist and behavioral therapist. When

he began his therapeutic work, nothing was more important to him than measurable, visible behavior that could be modified. In the late 1980s at Chicago Veterans Administration Hospital, he began to work with veterans whose severe emotional injuries had persisted for years – with little therapeutic success. This led him to seeking additional training in a method of trauma therapy which was only just beginning to emerge in 1990 and at this time is in use all over the world: EMDR or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing.

Francine Shapiro, who originated the method, had learned from personal experience that it made her feel better in a stressful situation to spontaneously move her eyes back and forth while mentally staying with the painful problem.

In an EMDR session, the therapist uses images, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions to reestablish inner contact with previous traumatic situations in the client. The client is then asked to focus on these images, thoughts, feelings, sensations, and perceptions of his own body while he moves his eyes back and forth, aided by the therapist's finger movements. This process takes about 20–30 seconds. It is followed by a break during which the therapist enquires about the client's experiences, which is in turn followed by another eye movement session. This process causes a change of perspective in the client's mind: mental images change, negative feelings and physical tension are often amplified before they are eased and transformed.

Are there any requirements on the client's side for the applicability of the method?

The only requirements is that the client must be willing to face painful memories and feelings relating to stressful experiences which have often been buried for a long time.

Appendix

After-Death Communication dramatized (Dorothea Stockmar)

During many nights when I was unable to sleep, I painted and wrote through my grief. Letters to my dead son which I turned into a dialog between mother and son mediated by the *Weltenseele* (world-soul) later developed into scenes of after-death communication comprehensible to an audience.

Encouraged and supported by Sabine Mehne, Karin Grabenhorst and Erika Schröder, they were first presented under the title "Noch immer such ich dich" (*Still looking for you*). Thanks to the empathetic creative input of all involved, the cooperative effort felt to me like an intensive therapeutic process. A process which I reopened in in-depth conversations with Katharina Marwede and developed into the following after-death communication.



Dorothea Stockmar, „In the Light of a Different World“, 90x 90 cm, oil on canvas, 2011.

An After-Death Communication in Four Acts

I will find YOU

Dramatis Personae: Mother
 Son
 Weltenseele (*world-soul*)

Set:

On the left: a stand with a curtain for the Weltenseele
On the right: an easel with the painting "In sternenklarer
 Nacht" (*In a clear, starry night*)
In the middle: a table, 2 chairs

ACT ONE

Music

Brightly lit. Mother sitting in a chair, deep in thought, under her chair lies a heavy 10-meter iron chain. Son standing behind the easel.

WELTENSEELE (*behind the curtain*):

It was a long, dry summer. Raindrops began to moisten the dry earth. One drop fell on a leaf. A leaf like life itself that had been part of the cherry tree a moment ago. Yesterday it had still been alive, yet in the blink of an eye it had become part of the earth. Even though we had all been parts of a wholesome existence the whole time, be it in a mother's womb or as a leaf on a many-branched tree.

Distinctive shape, a shape within a leaf,
in a blossom, in an embryo,
seed of evolution and passing,
break-through, transformation, doorway,
at the end of that lit tunnel.

MOTHER (*rising slowly, turning to the easel, looking for Son in the painting*):

How strange these words sound to my ears! What tunnel, what doorway? Is there a way to get to my dead child after all?

SON (*stepping out from behind the easel*):

I greet you. I surge in like a wave from a unknown shore. I will show myself to you from time to time so you will not forget me (*walks towards audience*), as you must not forget us. We, the dead, have our place among the living.

MOTHER (*beside herself with joy*):

Is it you, my son? You are alive?

SON (*walking towards Mother*):

Yes, you heard all right. It is me, your son. When I left this world, I was born into another, into a new life. Now I can be what I have always been: free. (*Spreads his arms wide.*)

MOTHER (*still not understanding*):

Born into another life, you can be what you always were? FREE? How can I comprehend what I hear, feel, see? (*Reaches for Son.*)

SON (*sitting down facing Mother*):

Mom, something I really need to tell you. (*Thinks.*) How do I put it so you will understand? (*Dismissive wave.*) Oh, but what are words? NOTHING! Here, what counts are moments, feelings, thoughts that, unspoken, penetrate your heart without anyone having to speak.

MOTHER:

Unspoken thoughts that penetrate my heart? What is that supposed to mean?

SON:

Well, it doesn't exist here, time and your oodles of thoughts and feelings. All is contained in an all-embracing *Now* with no beginning or end.

MOTHER:

That's beyond me. But you always were a nose ahead of me. So quick with everything that I had trouble keeping up.

SON:

Mom (*almost reproachful*), from my point of view, your division into year, days, hours is completely pointless. You wouldn't divide a painting into timelines (points at painting on the easel), you wouldn't say: That line there was drawn at (*hesitates*) 6.30, that one at (*hesitates*) 6.41 and that dot in the middle at 7.00. None of that matters for the finished painting.

What does matter is the whole thing in its entirety. (*Stands behind the easel, looking at the painting from above while Mother dabs at it with a paintbrush.*) In your actions I am close to you again, when you are painting, digging over the garden, picking cherries or doing anything else. Don't be surprised if you end up with something you do not understand. It doesn't matter, keep going, I like it! (*Mother sits at the table, Son walks towards her while she writes in a diary.*) Let your thoughts and feelings flow onto the canvas, onto a page in your diary. Do whatever it takes to get the grief out of your mind! Trust your gut feeling! You'll see, it will help you. I just want you to be okay!

MOTHER (*gazing after Son*):

How can I be sure that it really is you? It is not your features that I recognize. You look so much different! Rather, it is the essence of your being: your youthful curiosity, your way of seeing the world, so easy-going, yet so full of depth. Yes, I recognize you in that ... All those times you asked for the meaning, asked questions like: "What is death? Is there a life after death?" Now it is you who is pointing me towards that, showing me a life beyond. But tell me, how can I reach you? What is the frequency of your transmission?

(*Son disappears behind easel, his chair remains empty.*)

WELTENSEELE:

If only you were willing to consider different frequencies, you would be able to receive a very different kind of message. You have been abandoned in a world of stark facts, scales, norms, and the necessity to choose. (*Beat.*) Speaking of choice – did your son have one? If he did, what made him choose like he did, from the vast pool of options? How surprised you were back then, 18 years ago, when he announced his imminent arrival. Why are you this distressed by his departure? (*Beat.*) What do you mean, it was too sudden? To you, the living, death always seems too sudden. You close

your eyes to the fact of your own transience, like a child covering his eyes, assuming he cannot be seen either. But I must warn you: if you cannot accept death as a friend, you will always lead a life of anxiety. You cannot evade it! Death is part of life.

MOTHER (*upset*):

But why did my son have to leave me at such a young age? He was only 17 years old!

WELTENSEELE:

Do not ask *why*. Ask *what for!* Ask for a new kind of significance. (*Beat.*) Your son never left. He was a latent possibility in your heart even before he was born, and in the same way he is still with you. Even though you cannot see him, he is there. Yes, there are many things you cannot recognize yet. But it is not a matter of seeing or focusing. It is a matter of the heart. With your heart you will feel and comprehend.

MOTHER (*to herself, gazing at the painting*):

In my heart I could feel you early on, before you began to take shape inside me. Your earliest gentle movements beneath my heart which became stronger with growing certainty of your existence apart from my own self. (*Speaking more softly.*) A miracle, conceived, surely, but recognized already in a pre-conscious world, a world which we all originate from. My son, ever since your death, I am more than ever tortured by those questions I keep asking myself: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where do we go?

WELTENSEELE:

This is the moment of realization, as if you could peel off layer after layer until the core of a true, YOUR true self appears.