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Body, Mind & Spirit

People Who Don't Know They're Dead: How They Attach Themselves to Unsuspecting Bystanders and What to Do About It

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“If you roll over in bed and you reach out for your wife and your hand goes through her, you’re dead” explains ghost counselor Wally Johnston. Ghosts require counseling, says Johnston, for the same reasons the living do—family conflicts, addictions, unresolved psychological issues—but many share an additional burden: coming to terms with being dead. Describing their experience as “like being popped out of a grape skin into a place where nobody talks to you,” these unlucky souls continue to cling to the familiar people, places, and possessions that comforted them in life, only to be frustrated that no one can see or hear them, and feeling they no longer have any influence on the world of the living.

These discarnate spirits, posits Johnston, frequently confused by a sudden and unexpected departure, can and do affect the living by attaching themselves to an unsuspecting host body. These earthbound entities, known as “hitchhikers,” may linger at the place where they died, or, although no longer bound by the appetites and needs they had while living, will attempt to continue to satisfy these needs in the only way they remember. Hitchhikers who were substance abusers seek familiar environments where those of similar taste gather. By overindulgence in alcohol or drugs, the living become vulnerable targets to these invisible freeloaders. There is no limit on the number of hitchhikers a host can carry, when a host dies, he, along with any spirit passengers, can latch on to a new living body.

Johnston, who has a Doctorate in Educational Psychology and Guidance, began working with medium Lorraine Darr in the 1970s; his background in counseling, combined with Darr’s talents as a trance medium, resulted in a series interviews in which he asked questions and the departed answered through Darr’s voice. Johnston continued this work in later years with the assistance of his sister, Ruth, an academic nurse who communicated with the dead through a pendulum. In more than 600 sessions, Johnston counseled troubled spirits to ask for the help of a

dead loved one to show them the way to the light, liberating them and “clearing” the host of an uninvited visitor. Many of these sessions were recorded and are recounted a length in this book. The author, an award-winning playwright, photographer, and filmmaker, is Johnston’s nephew. In addition to having access to more than thirty years’ worth of his uncle’s tapes and files, Hill examines the work of such death and dying pioneers as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Raymond Moody. Those with an open mind will enjoy this engaging, surprisingly matter-of-fact look at life’s supreme mystery.