

# The ethical dilemma of psychics

by Matt Moir

When asked about the visions of death that she at times experiences vividly, Tammy Taylor smiles warmly and leans forward.

"This gift is a beautiful way to heal... and it is my job to channel messages I receive from spirit guides and angels in a profound and loving way," she says, cryptically.

It is a chilly April afternoon and the Toronto psychic is sitting cross-legged on a large leather chair in her bright, spacious home office. The scent of white sage lingers in the room and lit candles flicker silently on a mantle along the wall.

I asked Taylor to meet me in order to explain the code of ethics in the psychic community; more specifically, the ethical concerns in regards to whether or not a psychic should share visions of death with a client.

Taylor projects an almost otherworldly tranquility while discussing matters of tragedy and misfortune. She explains that her role is to act as a translator for guides and angels that bring her messages and that her clients' emotional and spiritual well-being is of pinnacle importance.

"I've had many clients ask: 'Am I going to die?' But even if I did see their death, would I tell them about it? Absolutely not. Not in a million years would I tell them that. I don't believe it's in the client's highest good to tell them that."

Many within the psychic community agree with Taylor's ethical outlook, however those views are far from universal. In fact, there is a yawning chasm between those psychics that feel that informing clients of visions of their death is irresponsible and those that feel that withholding that information is equally so.

Unlike teachers or nurses or engineers who, throughout North America, have formed scores of self-regulated professional bodies that address best practice standards and policies, psychics generally have no access to membership of any sort of similar regulatory body.

Psychics, therefore, must rely on their own personal codes of ethics to navigate work-related roles and responsibilities. That, predictably, can lead to highly divergent concepts of professional conduct.

And whether or not a psychic should let a client know if she or he foresees that client's death is one of the primary sources of disagreement.

Kelly Oswald, a Vancouver-based psychic, says that she considers it to be "a big no-no" to share visions of death. "We absolutely do not ever do that. A really good psychic is probably about 80% accurate... I've never yet met anyone that is 100%. A lot of [psychic readings] are impressions and imagery - sort of like your dreams. So it's not exact. If you predict death, it might not be a physical death. It could be that the person had an awakening and they've become something else or they may no longer have the same identity or they may have become estranged. There are lots of ways that death can be perceived through psychic reading."

Toronto psychic Barbara Rybicka says that clients often ask her for death predictions, though she usually attempts to convince them that some information should remain

unknown. "I ask them: 'What is your reason?' I tell them that it's not something that we should know, because it's going to stop us from what we're supposed to do - what's in our plans, our path, our destiny. After five or ten minutes, they say: 'I don't want to know it anymore.'"

Rybicka considers whether or not to share her visions a difficult moral question and borrows from the Hippocratic Oath to help inform her decision-making. "First, do no harm. I personally never predict death, even if I do see it. I might be wrong. I don't believe there is any psychic on this planet that is always right. I never met any colleague that would make that kind of prediction."

It's impossible to compare with any reliable statistical accuracy the percentage of psychics that are in favor of sharing death visions with those that are opposed (there is little traditional academic research into what some might call the 'mystical realm') but the psychics interviewed for this article suggested that a vocal minority believe that refusing to share an uncomfortable vision with a client is unethical and potentially dangerous.

Reverend Suzanne Daniele-George is the Senior Pastor of the Temple of Light and Assistant Executive Director of the College of Metaphysical Studies in Clearwater, Florida.

Similar to Tammy Taylor, Daniele-George said that a responsible psychic should serve the "best and highest good of the person getting the reading."

Unlike Taylor, however, Daniele-George interprets that ethos as an invitation to honestly share with a client all of the information in a 'death vision'. She feels that she has an obligation to the client to do so and anything less would be a denial of the message's intended purpose.

Some of the messages are "a warning of imminent danger that offer a chance to correct or even avoid the potential disaster by taking some needed action by the person getting the message," Daniele-George said in an email. "To not share the message or vision would actually do a disservice to the client

by not giving them a chance to take that needed action or make that necessary correction."

"In my many years of special awareness I have only once or twice had visions that warned of danger. I have always acted on these immediately (to share with the party involved in my vision) to equip them with the information as soon as possible. Thanks be to God, any disaster was avoided," said Daniele-George.

Many psychics believe that sharing a death vision with a client might cause that client to act erratically or even do something to hasten their own demise.

Anthony Skelton, an ethicist at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, says that if the principal reason to not share a death vision with a client is to protect that client from making choices, a psychic shouldn't share particularly positive visions either.

"People can do stupid things on the basis of good information. Suppose you tell a person they're going to live for a long time and they decide 'okay, in that case I don't have to worry about smoking or over-eating or not exercising.' I don't think it's only information about harm or death that a person can act irresponsibly on the basis of," says Skelton.

Kelly Oswald agreed that being cavalier with psychic visions is irresponsible, regardless of the message. As an example, she said that if she were to foresee someone winning a lottery, she might tell that person that she or he will come into some money instead of predicting lottery riches.

"You have to be very careful. I think that a lot of psychics will make sure that their message is not too extreme. You have a huge responsibility to not play with somebody's life when you're doing a psychic reading."

After interviewing a psychic for this story, I asked her if I could sit for a reading. I had never had my fortune told, and exploring the world of clairvoyance had piqued my interest.

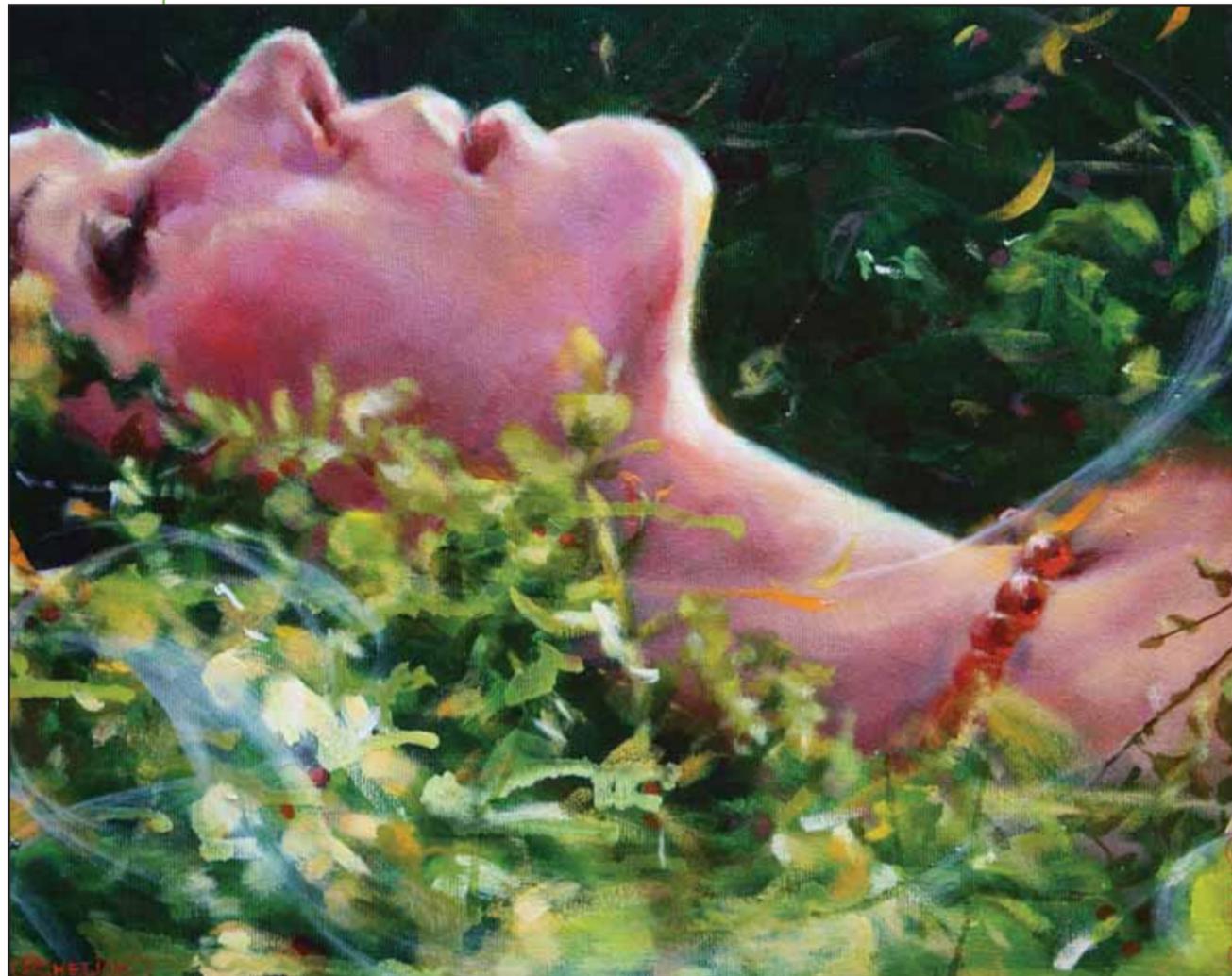
I closed my eyes as she took my hand in hers. It didn't take long for snapshots of my future to emerge. She didn't tell me that I'd soon win the lottery or meet the love of my life (my wife was both disappointed and pleased with these projections).

She did very gently, though, suggest that I spend more time with my family. She advised me to look into my past and re-connect with something that I had let go of long ago.

It was cryptic advice and because of the rather dark nature of my research for this story, I would be lying if I said I didn't, for a fleeting moment, interpret her message, well, darkly. But this particular psychic was one who didn't believe in withholding visions of death and for that I was grateful; she didn't inform me of my imminent demise.

Still, I left work after lunch the following day. I wanted to spend the afternoon with my wife and son.

Matt Moir is a Toronto-based writer. Follow him on Twitter @Meerkatmoir.



Holly © Oksana Zhelisko — www.zheliskoart.com