

Does a brush with death affect sleep?

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Dr Natasha Tassell-Matamua, from the School of Psychology

A Massey University psychologist is seeking participants for a study on people who have had a brush with death to find out how the experience has affected their sleep.

Dr Natasha Tassell-Matamua, who specialises in the study of near-death

experiences, is seeking 200 [people](#) aged 18 and over who have had a close shave with death – or a near-death incident– to find out more about whether this has changed their sleeping patterns, for better or worse.

Dr Tassell-Matamua, from the School of Psychology, says there is anecdotal evidence that people who've been on death's doorstep – whether through illness or accidents – experience changes to sleep. But little is known about whether people need less sleep, whether their quality of sleep is affected and how their quality of life changes.

After a near-death incident, she says "sometimes people report a decreased need for sleep, while others report an increased need. Some people may also report difficulty with falling or staying asleep and or insomnia."

In particular, she wants to compare the results of people who have had a near-death incident, with those who've also had what is known as a near-death experience, which can accompany, but is not integral to, a brush with death. It involves intense psychological or spiritual effects that can trigger profound and long-lasting changes in a person's priorities and perspectives.

A near-death experience "might be a situation where you were dead or close to death, but still felt something significant happened during this time," she says. "Some people report leaving their physical body; moving through a tunnel; seeing a bright light; having a life review; meeting with deceased relatives or spiritual beings; among other features. This experience may cause significant and fundamental life changes, including a change in [sleep quality](#)."

Some people may experience the first – a near-death incident – without having a near-death experience. She hopes people from both groups will come forward to take part in the study.

Dr Tassell-Matamua says examining sleep patterns across the two groups will provide a better understanding of the impacts on sleep specifically, and people's perspectives on life.

Part of her interest in doing the study is based on the documented therapeutic value for people in learning about what a near-death experience entails, and the impact it can have on someone's frame of mind – even if they have not actually experienced it themselves.

Dr Tassell-Matamua is an international researcher into the psychology of near-death experiences and with sociologist Dr Mary Murray, undertook the first major research on people's accounts of near-death experiences in New Zealand. She is also supervising a number of master's and doctoral research projects into the phenomenon.

The online survey takes 15 to 20 minutes. Participants who complete the questionnaire can enter a prize draw to win one of ten \$50 MTA vouchers to acknowledge their time in contributing to the research.

More information: For information contact Dr Natasha Tassell-Matamua – E: N.A.Tassell-Matamua@massey.ac.nz; or to take part in the online survey: [qasiasingleuser.asia.qualtrics ...
D=SV_5hloIHdCs7N9ptz](https://qasiasingleuser.asia.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5hloIHdCs7N9ptz)

Provided by Massey University

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