

AN INVESTIGATION OF PREMONITION

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Experiential Description¹

The question: Describe a situation in which you had a premonition about an event in your life.

On this particular morning, as I woke up for work, *one of the first thoughts and feelings I experienced was the knowledge that our house was going to be burglarized that day.* As I lay there, just allowing the *feelings* to run through me, *I never questioned why I felt this or how I could know.*

As I was finishing up getting ready for work and was about to leave, I went and turned on the stereo. My husband asked me why I had turned it on when I was just leaving for work. At this point *I shared my feelings* with him and explained if the stereo was on it would sound as if we were home and perhaps we would avoid someone breaking in. There was silence for a moment and then my husband said I was being paranoid and unless I was involved *I couldn't possibly know such a thing.* Rather than argue further with him, for I really *didn't expect him to understand something I didn't even understand,* *I went into my bedroom to hide a few items.* I took some of the jewelry my grandmother had given me, that had strictly only sentimental value and hid it in various clothing in my drawers. I then hid a leather jacket in the clothes hamper. *Feeling secure with this,* I left for work.

After a full day of work I stopped by my mother's house, on the way home, for a cup of coffee. We visited for about 45 minutes and then I told her I had to go home and see what they took. She said, "what who took?" I told her I knew we had been burglarized today. She asked if I received a call at work from the police and *I had to explain it was all just a feeling from within me.* She looked somewhat puzzled and said I looked tired and should probably just go home and relax.

As I drove up to my house there were police cars in my driveway. *I felt no surprise or panic.* When I walked in they questioned who I was and once I explained it was my home they informed me I had been robbed. I observed people dusting for fingerprints and others checking the lock on the front door. Apparently my next door neighbor came home and interrupted a robbery in progress at his house. They escaped out the back door. He then came over to my house to see if I was okay and found the front door lock broken and no one home. He then called the police.

Various items were stolen, a small TV, my husband's leather coat, some jewelry and a camera. My items were still safe hidden away from that

morning. Twenty-nine other homes were robbed, after that, before the thieves were apprehended.

My husband was very angry over the robbery and some of it was directed at me since *he just couldn't understand how I had known. I have had many similar occurrences and it's only after the fact that I look back and wonder how I knew. When I experience the feelings I just seem to act on them without really questioning.*

Thematic Amplification²

Thoughts and Feelings

Thoughts and feelings are primarily characterized as subjective in juxtaposition to facts and tangible evidence. If we act on our feelings we are often criticized for being emotional and irrational. But thoughts and feelings, while not always based squarely in reality, are their own reality relative to our previous personal experiences. To wake up with a strange feeling on any given morning may or, may not, be a premonition. In order for us to make that judgment we must evaluate the feeling based on our previous experiences and their outcomes.

If we choose to share these thoughts and feelings with others they may not see the validity in the premonition, nor the value in the remedy. Certainly the degree of difficulty required to remedy the situation will have some bearing but if that remedy is extreme it will probably not be an action that the non-believer will be willing to take. As an example, if I have a premonition about having an automobile accident if I take a certain road home perhaps I can change my course fairly easily and avoid the calamity. On the other hand, if I have a premonition which would keep me from flying to Hawaii on vacation after I have made and paid for extensive travel arrangements the travel agent may not be so quick to change my plans for me without a penalty.

In this example, both the husband's and mother's reactions are not surprising. There is no "real" basis for the belief that the robbery would or had occurred but the subject was convinced that the robbery would and had occurred. It is difficult to understand how a person might know about such a thing occurring in advance but if one has a history of experiencing such phenomena it seems more likely that they and others, will be more apt to believe it possible.

Knowledge

Next I'd like to consider where knowledge fits into this kind of experience. Where do we cross over from thoughts and feelings to

knowledge? Webster's dictionary defines knowledge as "the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association." This implies that knowledge is learned experientially over time through trial and succession. If we experience the same results over and over from our experiences, we begin to accept this expected outcome as knowledge. That is really not so different from the scientist who conducts an experiment numerous times, with the same result, assuming that this predictable outcome will now become accepted as a form of common knowledge.

If we have had the occasion to experience views of the future, whether through dreams or intuition and these experiences have proven to be true, it is likely that we are going to be more prone to accepting them and acting on them with regularity. One must, however, also accept that there will always be skeptics. It is difficult for someone who has not had a similar experience or who has not even been exposed to others that have had these experiences, to accept them as knowledge. They will often be dismissed as mere bunk. The reaction may even be one of anger, as in the description above. There is a tendency to criticize and even ridicule, those who seem to have this predisposition to premonitions. Oftentimes we are afraid of what we do not understand. Nonetheless, for those who do experience this phenomenon, it is very real and is a form of "knowledge."

Understanding

As I use understanding here I am making reference to comprehension. In the description there are two dimensions of understanding; the understanding of the writer and the understanding of her husband and mother. The writer explains in paragraph two that she does not fully understand what she is experiencing and consequently does not expect her husband to understand. Rather than continuing the discussion any further she chooses to just act on her own and deal with the situation for herself. After all, the husband had gone as far as accusing her of being in on the burglary. It is a very natural reaction to go "underground" in this situation and act on your own.

In situations where repeated thoughts and feelings give rise to knowledge, a true understanding of this phenomenon is not necessarily a precursor to its acceptance. Even though you believe you do not always understand. I may believe in the theory of evolution but I do not necessarily understand how the whole process took place. So it is with phenomena. There are things we simply cannot explain. How we choose to deal with these phenomena is a very individual thing. There are, however, some fairly common reactions that one can expect from the non-believers.

The first reaction is that of the husband. Both disbelief and, to some extent, anger. A fairly common reaction given that he clearly did not understand where the feeling came from or how one could really believe that such a thing were true unless they had some part in it. The second reaction described here is dismissal. The mother, upon being told of the premonition, suggests that her daughter go home and relax — she must be tired. It is little wonder one would begin to doubt themselves about such feelings when those close to them keep telling them they are either involved or working too hard. One is not likely to gain much understanding in such a non-nurturing environment.

Questioning

As we look at this experience it is easy to see why one would begin to question their lucidity. Premonition defies logic as we know it. Yet in the above description the subject states very clearly, twice, that she never questioned the feelings. Not only did she not question the feelings, she was willing to act on them without reservation. In the final sentence she states, “When I experience the feelings I just seem to act on them without really questioning.” It is almost as if the reaction is automatic and beyond her control. Experience has taught her to listen and to heed these warnings regardless of what others may think.

Being able to react even though we do not understand why implies that we have a great deal of respect for our intuitive nature. This can only occur when we detach ourselves from our logical minds and allow ourselves to get in touch with our inner selves. This can broadly be referred to as “going with the flow.” following our intuition when our logic says that it cannot be so. While this may not work for everyone, all of the time, it certainly cannot be dismissed as merely coincidence. Ask those who have experienced it repeatedly.

Reflective Synthesis³

The Thematic Amplification has shown that premonition has four key components. They are: Thoughts and feelings, knowledge, understanding and questioning. Premonition begins with a thought and/or a feeling. ... *“one of the first thoughts and feelings I experienced was the knowledge that our house was going to be burglarized that day.”* This feeling was poignant and could not be dismissed as a mere fleeting thought. It was a feeling that simply could not be ignored and required action. ... *“I went into my bedroom to hide a few items.”*

Having an experience of this nature one begins to build a knowledge base about such things. This knowledge base tells the person that they had better heed the warning regardless of how “silly” the feeling may be. It may

defy logic but nonetheless, it may prove to be a very valid concern. Experience teaches the person that there is a sense that they possess which allows them some insight into future events.

In the above description it would have been easy to dismiss the feeling because there was no support for it. Neither the husband or the mother believed that there was anything to substantiate the premonition and in fact had written it off to something else entirely. This lack of support, in this particular case, did not dissuade the subject from taking the actions that she felt were appropriate. ...*“I had to go home and see what they took.”*

The reaction to what began as “thoughts and feelings” at the end of the description is summarized in this way. *“I have had many similar occurrences and it’s only after the fact that I look back and wonder how I knew. When I experience the feelings I just seem to act on them without really questioning.”*

Notes

- 1) Sunnie D. Kidd and James W. Kidd, *Experiential Method: Qualitative Research in the Humanities Using Metaphysics and Phenomenology* (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990).
- 2) Sunnie D. Kidd, “Thematic Methodology” (inbetweenness.com 2008).
- 3) Sunnie D. Kidd, “A Practical Application of the Experiential Method” (inbetweenness.com 2008).