



# ESP fact or fiction?

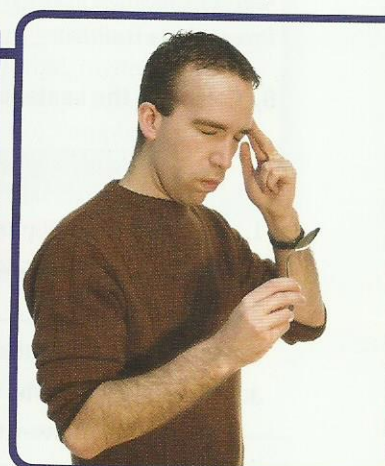
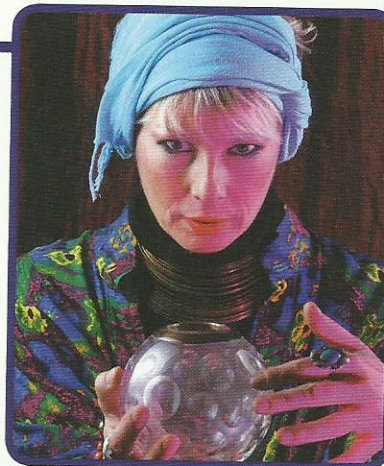
Have you ever had a dream that's come true? Or a feeling that someone was going to phone you and they did? If you answered yes, you're not alone. Almost everyone has at some point or another experienced the phenomenon of extrasensory perception.

Extrasensory perception, or ESP, occurs when we receive information about a person or an event which does not come to us through our five senses. We have a feeling that something is going to happen or has happened, but we simply can't explain why. Though the scientific community remains **unconvinced** that ESP actually exists, there is some fascinating evidence of the phenomenon which provides interesting food for thought. ESP is divided into four areas: telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psychokinesis.

**Telepathy**, or 'mind-reading', occurs when a person communicates thoughts and ideas to another person without speaking. In 1971, during the Apollo 14 mission to the moon, American astronaut Edgar Mitchell conducted an experiment to find out whether telepathy works, especially across great distances. Each night, Mitchell pictured a series of symbols in his mind which he 'transmitted' to four friends on Earth. The results were surprising: Mitchell's friends correctly guessed what he was thinking 51 out of 200 times. **Initially**, Mitchell asked his friends to keep the experiment a secret, but it wasn't long before the media found out and the astronaut was widely criticised for his attempts to prove the existence of telepathy. Still, Mitchell was pleased with the results, and when he returned to Earth, he announced that he was planning to set up an institute in order to further examine the capabilities of the human mind.

**Clairvoyance** occurs when a person demonstrates the ability to 'see' people, places and events in the past or future. This person has no **prior** knowledge of these people, places or events and seems to receive the information from an outside source. One of the most famous clairvoyants of the twentieth century was the American, Edgar Cayce. Cayce claimed that when he entered a trance state, he was able to give answers and guidance to his clients. His particular specialities were dream **interpretation**, past lives and health and business advice.

Once, a blind musician visited Cayce to ask for his assistance with a particular problem. The man mentioned to Cayce that he loved railroads and that he had a great interest in the American Civil War. Cayce told the man that he'd been a soldier and a railroad worker in a previous life, and that his name in that life was Barnett Seay. Cayce then advised the musician to travel to the state of Virginia to get Seay's army records. The man did as he was told, and later said that once he'd found the records, he **miraculously** regained his sight in one eye.



**Precognition** is similar to clairvoyance and is defined as the ability to see events in the future. Psychics claim to have precognitive abilities, and possibly the most famous psychic of all is the sixteenth-century astrologer, Nostradamus. Nostradamus made a number of accurate predictions during his lifetime; for example, he once told Catherine de Medici, the wife of French king, Henry II, that her husband would die in a jousting accident, and he was proved right. Nostradamus also wrote a book called *The Prophecies*, in which he listed his predictions for the next two thousand years. Some of his predictions, such as the two World Wars and the moon landings, have actually come true.

**Psychokinesis** is another aspect of ESP and is a term used to describe the mind's ability to move or distort objects. A person who claims to have psychokinetic ability can move an object without ever touching it. In 1988, *Jurassic Park* author, Michael Crichton, wrote a book called *Travels*, in which he described a 'spoon-bending party' that he had once attended. Crichton said that many of the guests at the party seemed to be able to bend spoons and forks with their minds, though some had warmed the objects with their fingers beforehand. He added that he had also witnessed eight-year-old children bending large metal bars, and that he had no explanation for what he'd seen.

Whether ESP exists or not, we can't deny the fact that the human mind is capable of great things, and its full **potential** has yet to be explored.

## 5. POST-READING

### Discuss.

- Have you, or someone you know, ever accurately predicted an event in the future?
- Would you consider visiting a clairvoyant? Why/Why not?