

## Anyone Can Have a Mystical Experience

Ron Pappalardo  
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The mission statement of HJ International Graduate School (formerly Unification Theological Seminary) says one of its goals is to help its students "enhance their relationship with God."

The founder, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, in his 1985 commencement address to UTS said, "I have also endeavored for this campus to be a place where the students can develop deep personal faith and authentic spiritual communication with the Spirit of God."

Most religious people long for a deeper relationship with God, hoping to have their own personal mystical experience, but oftentimes become discouraged because of how difficult that can be.



*Ron Pappalardo*

After having a few experiences myself, years ago I began teaching others. In addition to writing, I have conducted classes, workshops and training seminars around the world demonstrating techniques shown to facilitate mystical experiences.

The three main techniques I use are the practice of hands-on healing, guided meditations, and a writing technique I call "Journaling with God."

### **Three Techniques that Can Trigger a Mystical Experience**

**Hands-on healing:** For this technique, I divide a group into pairs. One person sits in a chair, and the other person stands behind the chair and lays their hands on the sitter's shoulders. Then I lead those standing to imagine that divine white light is flowing down their arms and through their hands into the sitter while repeating the following mantra: "God's love is flowing through me, for the purpose of healing [sitter's name] now." After a few minutes, each couple reverses positions, and the mantra is repeated again.

**Guided meditation:** I employ several different guided meditations; here I describe the one I use most often during my workshops. After giving patient and detailed instructions to the participants, I invite them to close their eyes and imagine they are sitting alone on a beautiful beach. It's a bright sunny day, and I call their attention to the warm sun on their skin, the feel of the sand on their toes, and the peaceful rhythm of the waves coming up to their feet and then retreating back down the shore. Next, they focus on the bright sun right in front of them, high above the ocean. The meditation culminates with each participant imagining they are sending a beam of light from the center of their heart out and up towards the bright sun in the sky. The moment their beam of light connects to the sun is often when the mystical experience is triggered.

**Journaling with God:** Participants are guided through a thorough and detailed explanation of how to perform this exercise. Then they are given perhaps half an hour or more to write a "letter to God." They are encouraged to be absolutely honest, and try and communicate what is most deeply on their heart. At the exact moment they finish writing, they are instructed to add the following sentence to the end of their writing: "Is there anything You would like to say to me right now." Without pause, they must immediately write the first thing that pops into their mind, even if it seems nonsensical. After they finish writing the first thing that enters their mind, they must continue writing the next impression, and the next, until the inspiration stops. Oftentimes, they are surprised to receive communication that conveys deep compassion and affection for the participant. In countless cases, participants have received long, detailed and profoundly personal communications from their Heavenly Parent.

### **Believe It Is Possible, or We Might Block the Experience**

The biggest challenge I have faced in my ministry is helping participants deal with belief systems that act as an impediment to the mystical experience. First and foremost is the self-identification of a participant as too inadequate or sinful to have a direct encounter with God.

I remember vividly one female participant at my Italian workshop who came to the moment during the guided meditation where she was on the cusp of uniting her light with the Light of God. Just as she and

God were about to embrace, she shut down the experience, and was acutely aware she was the one who had done so. She avoided the mystical encounter and was quite upset about it, but didn't understand why she made that choice. Through a translator, she asked me if I could tell her why she had chosen to end the encounter just before the mystical union.

I got her to calm down and asked her to close her eyes and place her hand on her heart. "Ask your heart why you shut down the experience," I said.

After placing her hand on her heart, almost immediately her eyes popped open with a knowing look on her face. "I know why I did it," she said. "It's because I did not believe I was good enough to have such an experience. I didn't believe I was worthy."

The woman, although Unificationist, came from a Roman Catholic upbringing. Self-identifying as a sinner unworthy to be embraced by God is a strong characteristic in many Catholic cultures. I remember as a child singing a Catholic hymn entitled "O Lord, I Am Not Worthy" that begins with these words: "O Lord, I am not worthy, that thou should'st come to me..."

It would be interesting to find out if this obstacle is experienced less often among those from faith traditions that do not emphasize sin and inadequacy -- Buddhism, for example.

My method for overcoming this impediment is to guide one to go beyond the analytical mind to tap into the intuitive wisdom – their own divine nature – that is accessible through the doorway of the heart.

### **Successful Cases**

Here are three examples from individuals who used these techniques to have a mystical experience:

#### **Japanese female, 50+ years old, Unificationist. Guided meditation technique**

This event took place at a workshop I conducted in Milan, Italy, in 2014. Although the woman was Japanese, she was married to an Italian, and shared the following testimony in Italian:

I started to meditate by following him (indicates Ron).

Truly it came right away just like a light, slow at first and then stronger and stronger, and like a wave vibrating, small vibrations at first, then wider, going into this sun, and as I was searching for my light (indicates forehead), I found a strong reference point with white light, and as I was trying to bring it toward my heart, a word came "Thank you," "Thank you," I did not understand why, but "Thank you, I was searching for you for so long."

(She pauses with emotion)

Truly he (God) gave thanks and said, "I have been searching for you very much."

And my heart was saying "Thank you, truly this moment is very important, finally we met."

It seemed like this sensation of not wanting to leave this strong moment, a moment of an encounter with someone with a strong, strong embrace, who did not want to leave me; my hands were vibrating, and I was feeling this deep love, this strong warmth, like a mother who embraces (hugs) from the beginning, and who will never leave you.

And this was a strong message, and calm and tranquility came to me, and truly I had been waiting for this encounter, and I gave thanks, "Thank you." I did not want to leave that moment, and he (Ron) said he was going to cease, and leave little by little, but I did not want -- I could not leave this moment of an encounter so important, something that my heart was searching for from the beginning.

(She pauses with emotion)

So, we now understand that God is always with us. He was living within me in silence, I who did not understand that He gave us this sense of feeling the love of God.

This woman later told me that she had been a Unificationist for over 40 years and had never had an experience like this. She was deeply moved to discover that God knew her personally. "He knew my name," she said.

Language is not an insurmountable challenge to the efficacy of the techniques. This woman's native language and culture was Japanese. I led the meditation in English, while being simultaneously translated

into Italian. The woman shared her testimony in Italian, which I later had translated into English. Even with all of the language and cultural differences, the technique was successful. Her experience was so moving that even as I was adding it to this article, I was overcome with emotion.

### **American female, 15 years old, Mormon background. Guided meditation technique**

This participant had been struggling with depression and was practicing self-injury by cutting herself. We were also concerned she might be suicidal. This account is excerpted from my 2012 book *Reconciled by the Light Book II: Spirit Messages from a Teen Suicide*:

During the guided meditation exercise at one of my weekend workshops, I spiritually saw a rotating vortex of energy in front of her face. She was weeping as she was completely immersed in this energy. When the meditation finished, her face was drenched in tears.

I asked each person if they wanted to share what had happened to them during the meditation. When it was her turn to speak, she was still crying a little bit:

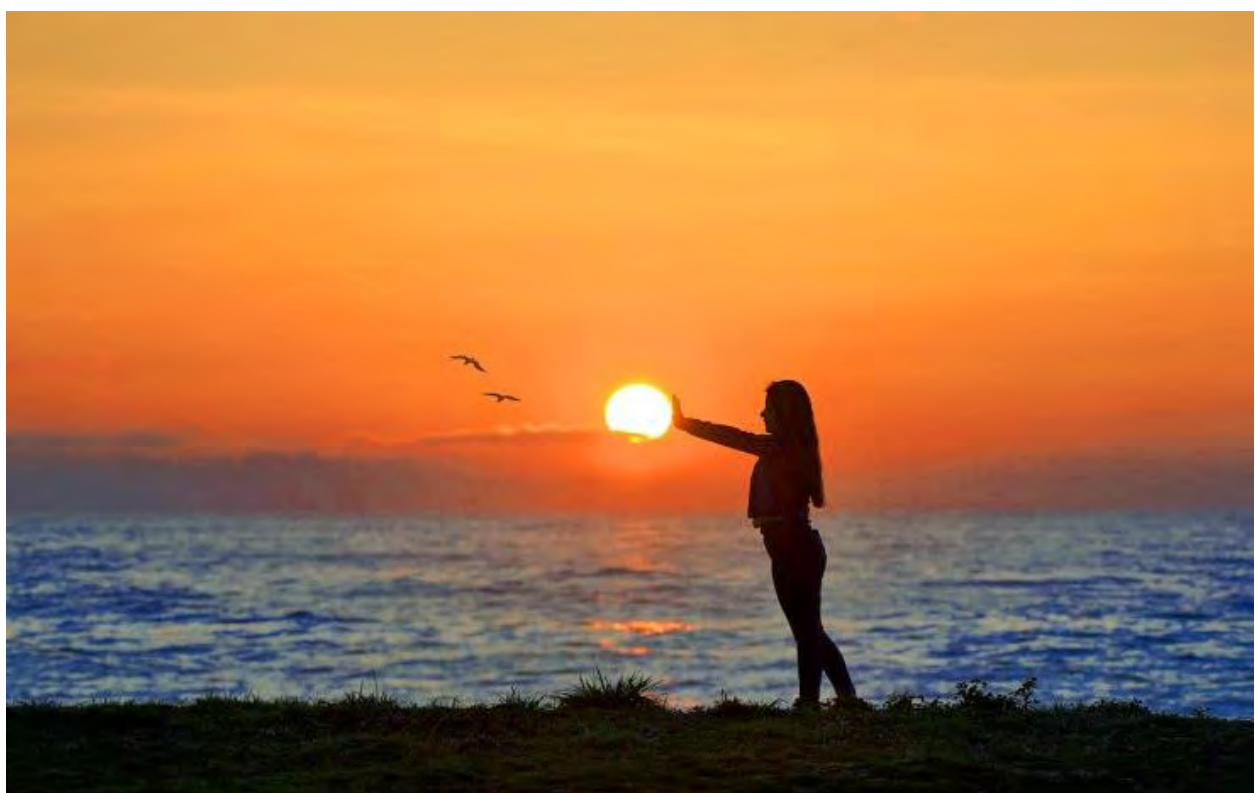
"After I got relaxed into my chair on the beach, I looked down the beach to my left, and I saw Joshua (Ron's deceased son) down there ... So, I jumped out of my chair, ran down the beach as fast as I could, and tackle-hugged him. It was so great to feel his embrace. I just stayed there and talked with him. I told him how grateful I was to him for being my friend and for all he had done to help me.

"He just held me for a moment and then he spoke to me. He told me 'Actually, you really shouldn't be thanking me. There's someone else who is really the one who helped you the most, and I'd like to introduce you to him.' Then he pointed to his left. When I looked over there, there was this bright white light. It was coming from the person standing next to Josh. As I looked to see who it was, I knew right away that it was God.

"I felt kind of nervous -- I mean this was God! So, I told him I was sorry -- sorry because I felt I had been kind of ignoring him and didn't have a very good relationship with him.

"Then he said 'No, I'm sorry. I'm sorry that you have had such a difficult childhood. I'm sorry for what you have had to go through; it was never my intention that it should be like that.' Then he just hugged me, and I really started to cry then. I could actually feel him holding me. The feeling is just impossible to describe. I felt so accepted and loved -- so loved! I didn't want it to end.

"Then he said, 'I've placed certain people in your life to help you. Joshua is one of them, but there are others on earth also. They are there just for you, because I love you so much! I am here for you also, whenever you call out for me! I also want to encourage you. You have so much love inside your heart, I hope you will share it with others -- give it out. If you do this, it will be very good for you.'"



I have found during my ministry that participants from a Unificationist background are somewhat more apt to receive a mystical experience. However, people from any faith tradition may do so. This girl was raised in a Mormon home, and it presented no obstacle to her mystical experience; also, her young age was no impediment.

A few weeks after the workshop, I asked her if anything had changed in her life as a result of her mystical experience:

"Oh, yeah," she said. "Lots!"

"Can you give me an example?"

"Well, in the past, if I saw some geeky boy wearing a ridiculous shirt to school I might say something snarky or sarcastic to him. I *never* do that anymore. I'm a lot kinder and patient with people now."

This comment epitomizes the goal of my ministry. I am convinced that creating an ideal society, or what religionists may call the Kingdom of God on Earth, begins with transforming individuals. Because of her experience with God, especially the unconditional love of God, this young lady now understands her immeasurable value as a daughter of God. When one receives this deep into the heart, it becomes very difficult to harm another person. Therefore, she has stopped bullying other students at school. I love the motto "Peace begins with me" because I don't believe we get a peaceful world without creating peaceful individuals.

This event took place more than 10 years ago. The young lady has survived, and the transformative effect of her mystical experience ended her practice of self-injury and had an overall positive effect on her life.

#### **African-American male, 60+ years old, Unificationist. Excerpt from "Journaling with God" technique**

This man attended one of my workshops a few years ago and had a mystical experience while performing the journaling technique. He continued using the technique, and shared with me this subsequent experience through journaling a couple of years later:

Dear Heavenly Parent,

Yesterday I was inspired by the new information I discovered on the Research Institute for the Integration of World Thought website. It was a link to Unification Thought classes and hopefully development of ideas based on current scientific discoveries. I am interested in partnering with this group if they are open to new ideas and discoveries.

God: Good work. Keep your faith and you will keep your promise to me to be my son of love and joy and happiness. I know what you are doing makes you happy.

Yes, Father. I am happiest when I try to serve others and serving others in the biggest possible way makes me happiest.

God: You are in a strange time when what seems up is down and vice versa for many people. The Kingdom of Heaven that you speak of so often is here but not visible to them. You are trying to make it visible. You are the first impression as an individual of what anyone will see of the Kingdom of Heaven with their own eyes. Thus, your attitude is important to convey what possibilities are there for them when people see you. Be kind is what I always tell you because not offending people keeps their heart open. What comes next is to be accurate and humble. They are correct in their opinions because no spoken truths are completely accurate and must be defended by the person speaking it. Humility will help you get through the rough parts that people don't accept. My heart is with your efforts. Keep calm, you sometimes get too excited, and your point is lost because the emotion is covering it up. At all times be kind and gentle. You will feel frustrated with people, but Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was, too, but he loved those who opposed him to the end. Don't worry about rejection because it is temporary. My will is being done all over the world now and you are a part of it. People like you will meet in the future and laugh about how crazy the world was but cry because it was so painful, too – so many had to suffer and endure during the transition period.

How long will the transition period last?

God: I don't know. It depends on humankind's tolerance for pain. As long as people's hearts are closed, pain will be inflicted and prolongation of my heart's desire for human happiness will continue. It's up to you...

## Countless Mystical Experiences

I have accumulated countless testimonies like these from the thousands of people who have attended my programs. In my experience, the door is wide open for anyone to have experiences like these. I'm excited because these experiences can be and often are life transformative. When a person has a direct encounter with God, they come to know that they are loved and valued beyond measure. They awaken to a stronger sense of empowerment. In my view, realizing this brings the Kingdom of God another step closer to fulfillment.

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*Ron Pappalardo is a student in the D.Min. program at HJI, and author of five books, most recently What I Learned from the Dead: A Psychic Medium Survives his Son's Suicide through Spiritualism (2022). More information on the techniques discussed in this article can be found in his 2015 book Experiences with God: Stories About Mystics: A Guidebook to Your Own Divine Encounter.*

*Photo at top by Frank McKenna (courtesy of Unsplash); photo of woman and sun by Eyup Belen (courtesy of Pexels).*