

Integrating Spiritually Transformative Experiences

**Marie Grace Brook, PhD,
Spiritual Director**

SAI 2022 Conference
Spiritual Awakenings International
June 11, 2022

1980 ~ My first Spiritually Transformative Experience (STE)



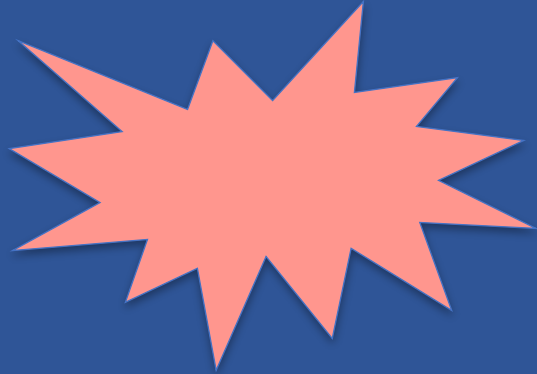
Mystical experiences, rapid sequence of revelations, telepathy, clairvoyance, energetic openings, shifting paradigms of reality

Sept 1980-Aug 1981

Beginning of my Spiritual Emergency



Sept 1981 . . .
How long did integration take?

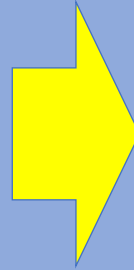


Various Awakenings

- 1980 Kundalini Psychic awakening
Called to motherhood. Found myself a healer
- 1992 Awakening the Heart of Christ
Called to ministry. Found myself a spiritual director
- 1996 Unleashing Divine Feminine Energy
Called to study psychotherapy. Found myself a social worker
- 2009 Kundalini Re-Alignment-sacral illness
Called to earn a PhD. Found myself a researcher
- 2012 Reaching Bindu and Boddhisatva
Called to a 3rd marriage. Found myself creating a retreat house

1981 to 2022

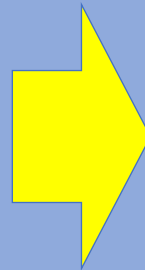
Failed relationships, divorces, highly sensitive to crowds, EMFs, sounds, bright lights . . .



becoming a calm, resilient, less high-maintenance wife



Overwhelmed mother



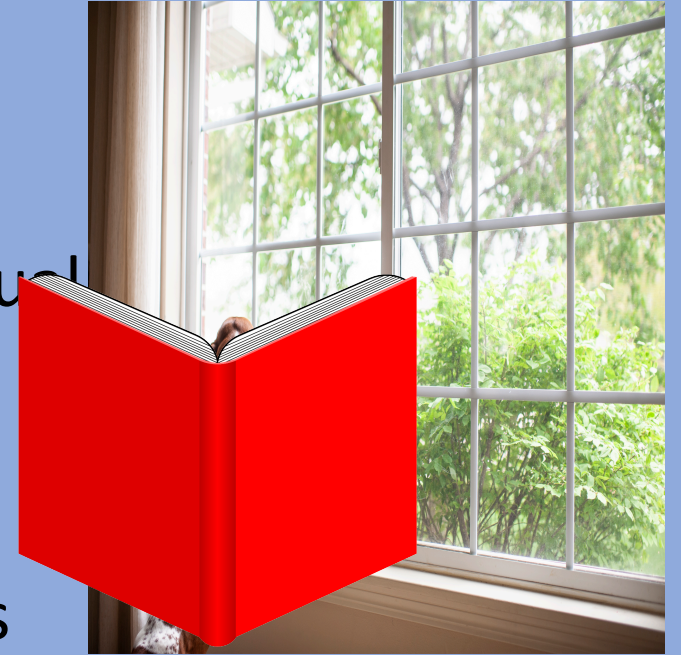
becoming a graceful grandmother

And more to look forward to . . .

Multiple
part-time
jobs,
getting
fired,
moving
on . . .



Serene spiritual
direction
practice and
finishing my
Book on STEs



Tough work,
menial
labor, no
future in
sight



becoming a
Principal
Investigator
for STE
research

Integration of Spiritually Transformative Experiences Inventory (ISTEI) Survey Research Study

Marie Grace Brook, PhD

Brook, M. G. (2021). Struggles reported integrating intense spiritual experiences: Results from a survey using the Integration of Spiritually Transformative Experiences Inventory *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 13(4), 464–481. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000258>

Created ISTEI Inventory

Compiled 84 practices, habits and behaviors
that assist in integrating STEs
Using research from experts in the field

Yvonne Kason

David Lukoff

Ryan Rominger

Yolaine Stout

Yvonne Kason, MD

Author of book

Farther shores:

*Exploring how near-death,
kundalini and mystical
experiences can transform
ordinary lives, 1994*

**– 35 survival techniques
for STE integration**



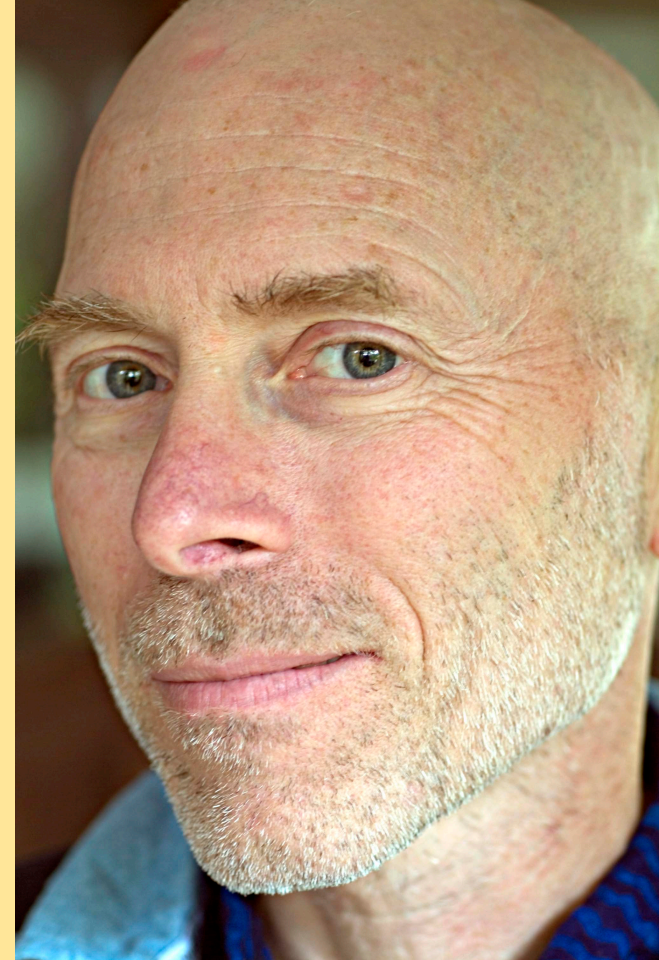
Kason, Y. (2008). *Farther shores: Exploring how near-death, kundalini and mystical experiences can transform ordinary lives*. Bloomington, IN: Author's Choice Press of iUniverse. [first published 1994]

David Lukoff, PhD

Introduced new category to the DSM-IV called

“Religious or Spiritual Problem”

– **9 therapeutic interventions
for STE integration**



Lukoff, D., Lu, F. & Yang, C. P. (2011). DSM-IV Religious and spiritual problems. In Peteet, J. Lu, F. & Narrow, W. (Eds.) *Religious and Spiritual Issues in Psychiatric Diagnosis: A Research Agenda for DSM-V*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.

Ryan Rominger, PhD

Doctoral work in field of STEs. Researcher and former board president of ACISTE.

**– 4 situations that
ease STE integration**



Rominger, R. (2004). Exploring the integration of the aftereffects of the near-death experience: an intuitive and artistic inquiry. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.

Rominger, R. (2014). *Integration models for the STE*. Presentation at ACISTE Annual Conference, Nov. 7, 2014 in Dallas, TX.

Yolaine Stout

Leader and investigator in
the field of STEs.
Organizational founder of
ACISTE

**– 6 challenges in
integration of STEs**



Stout, Y. M., Jacquin, L. A. & Atwater, P. M. H. (2006) Six major challenges faced by near death experiencers. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 25 (1) pp.49-62.

84 practices, habits, and behaviors assigned to 8 groups

1. Social Situations – 13 items
2. Supportive Environments – 6 items
3. Supportive Activities – 14 items
4. Spiritual Practices – 9 items
5. Self-exploration– 19 items
6. Seeking professional clinical help – 7 items
7. Adjusting to heightened sensitivities – 8 items
8. Healthier Nutrition Habits – 8 items

Have you experienced a spiritual event that transformed your life?
--that took months to years to integrate?

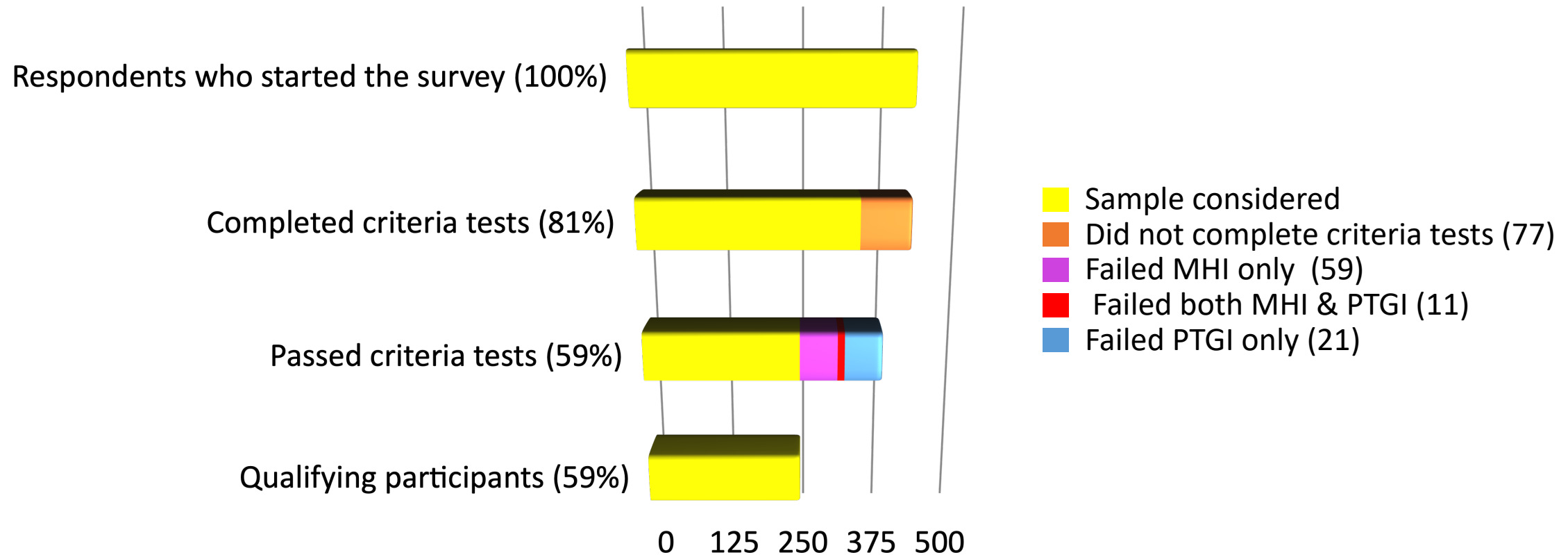


Integration of Spiritually
Transformative Experiences
Inventory (ISTEI)

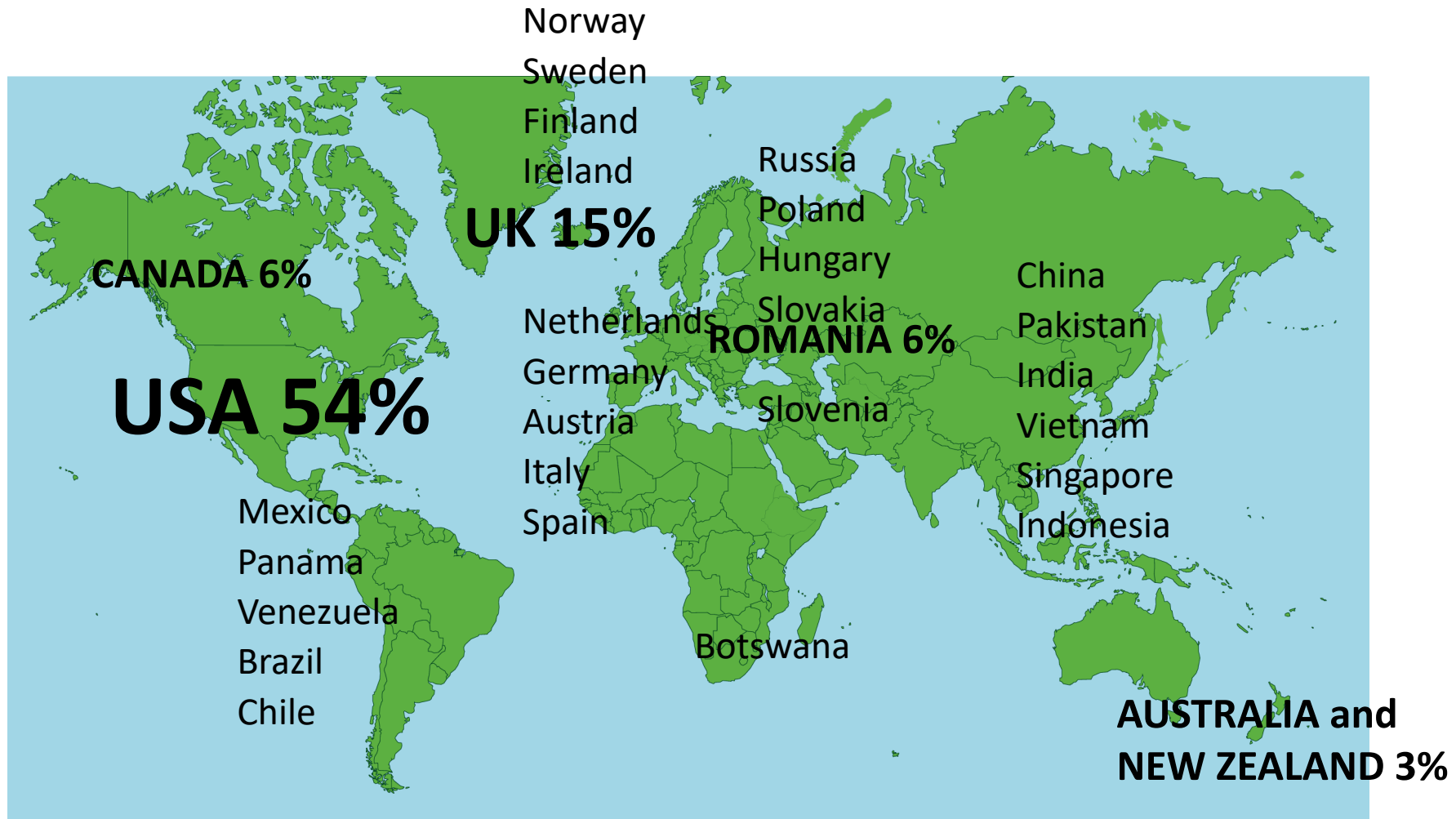
Sample from survey

413 started survey (Respondents)

234 met criteria (Participants)



Nationalities (33 Countries)



STEs in Spiritual Emergencies (from text-box narratives)

intense mystical experiences

near-death experiences

extreme trauma or illness

kundalini awakenings

shared crossings

meditation or yoga related

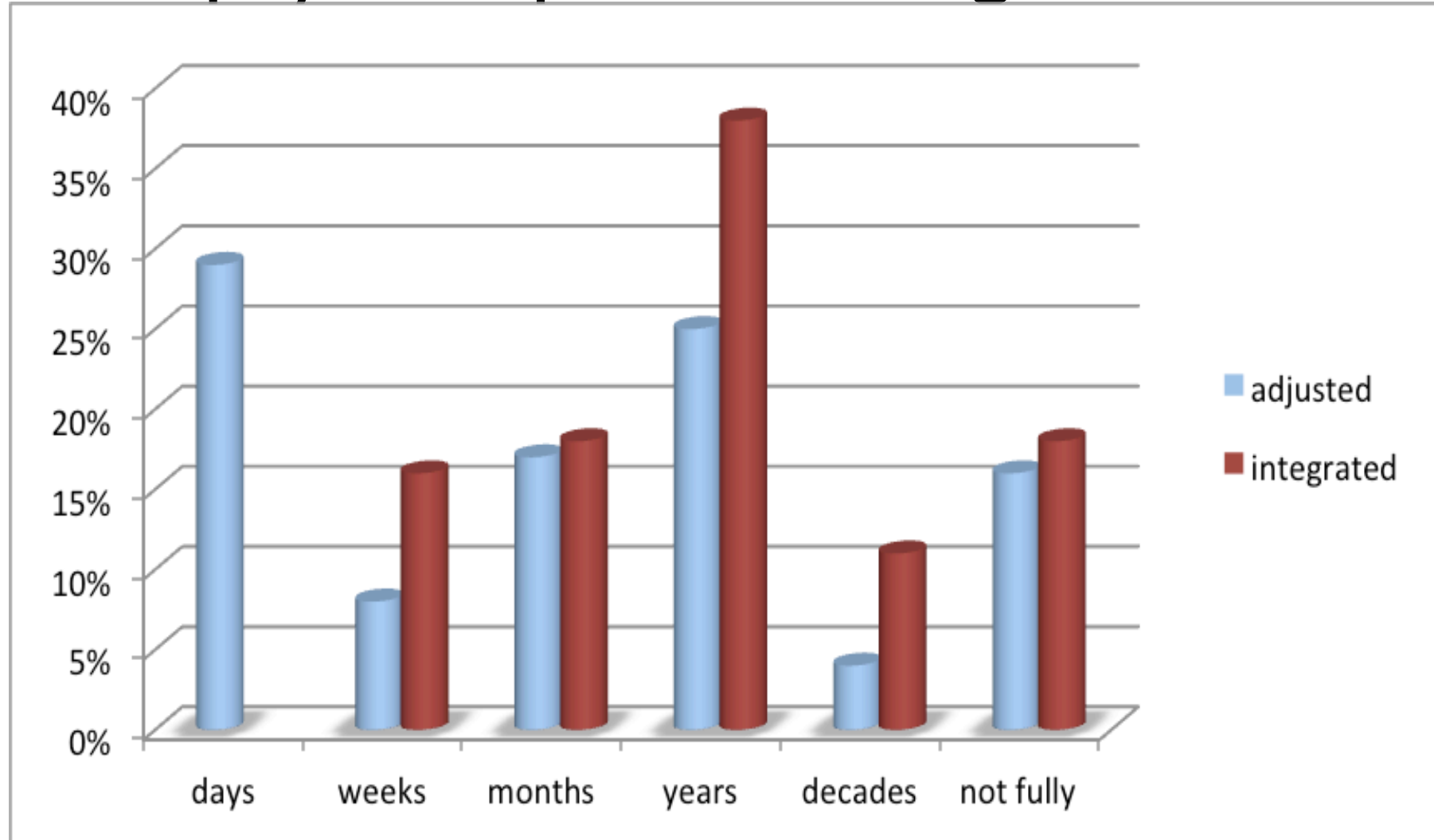
childbirth

conversion experiences

shamanic initiations

paranormal experiences

length of time for societal adjustment and psycho-spiritual integration



1. *Research assumption was correct:*

Various of types of STEs have
basic commonalities in methods
of integration

$(p < .0001)$

2. Correspondence of Use to Helpfulness:

People undergoing spiritual emergencies can be trusted to know best what they need
($p < .0001$)

3. Regarding psychiatric treatment:

Be cautious with psychiatry ~
Medication may be unhelpful
or detrimental

($p < .001$)

4. Essential practices:

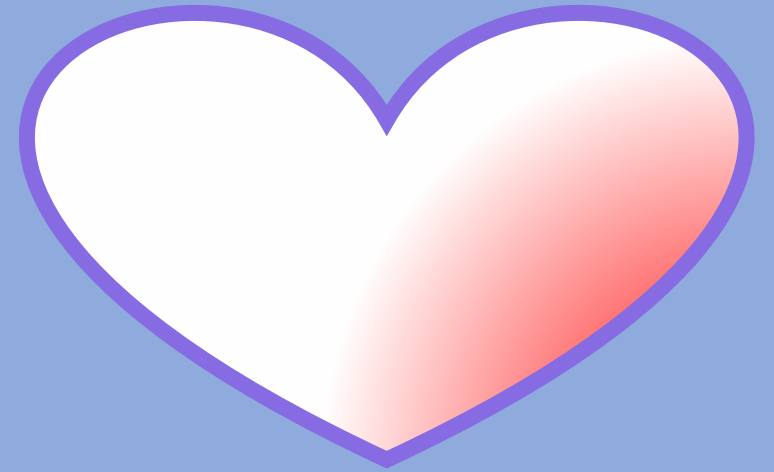
1. Compassion, forgiveness, humility, honesty, gratitude
2. Calmer environment, time in nature
3. Adjust to new sensitivities
4. Find at least one person to confide in
5. Allow the unconscious to surface
6. Creatively live a revised purpose in life


(rated essential by 100% of participants)

5. TIME



My gratitude . . .



- Spiritual Awakenings International 
 - Bringing STEs into the public eye
- Spiritual Emergence Anonymous (SEA)
 - Continued group support & inspiration

And . . .

**My gratitude to you,
my fellow companions
along the journey**



- Showing up here
- Bringing your presence
- Bringing abundance of divine blessings

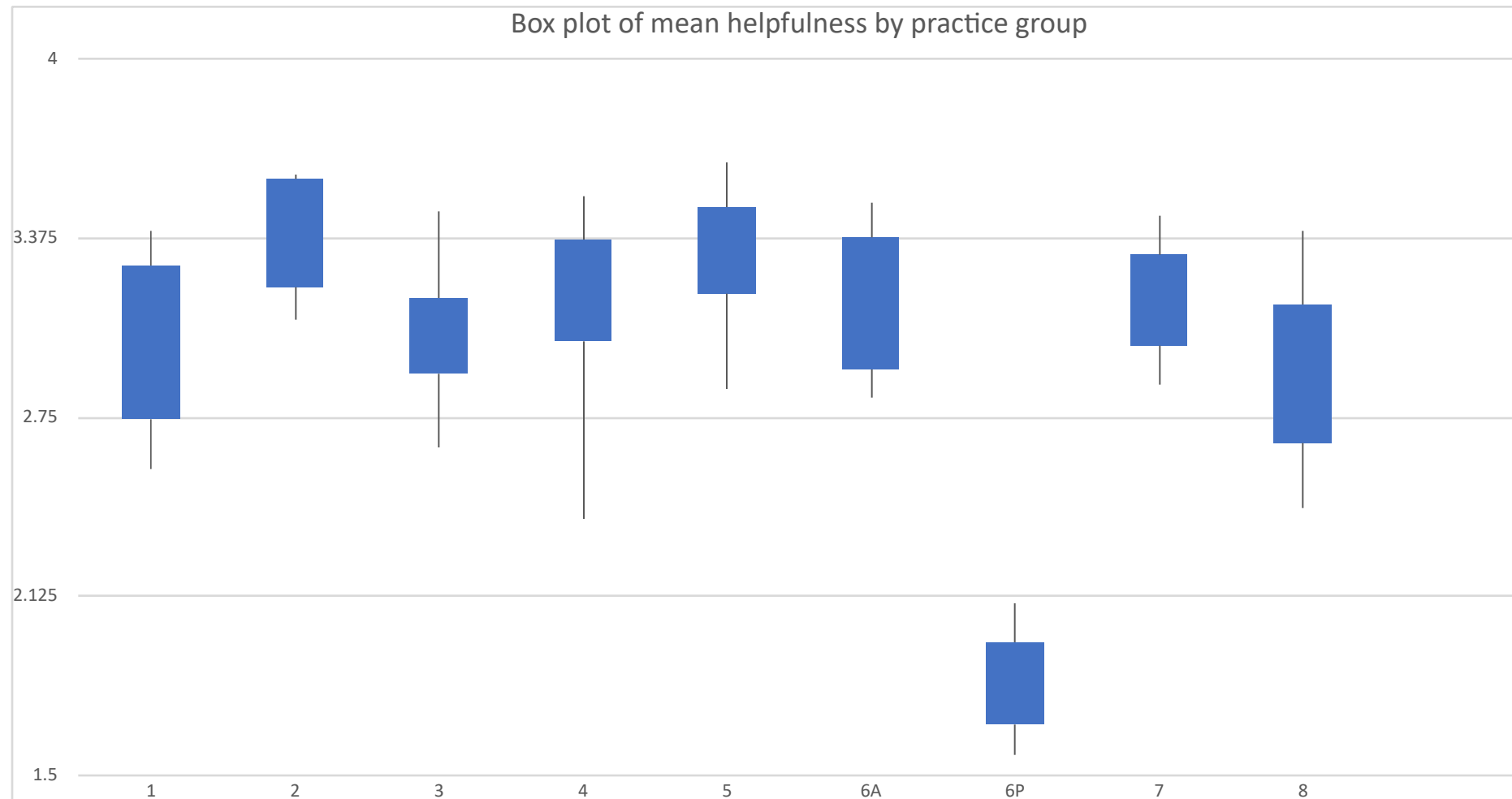
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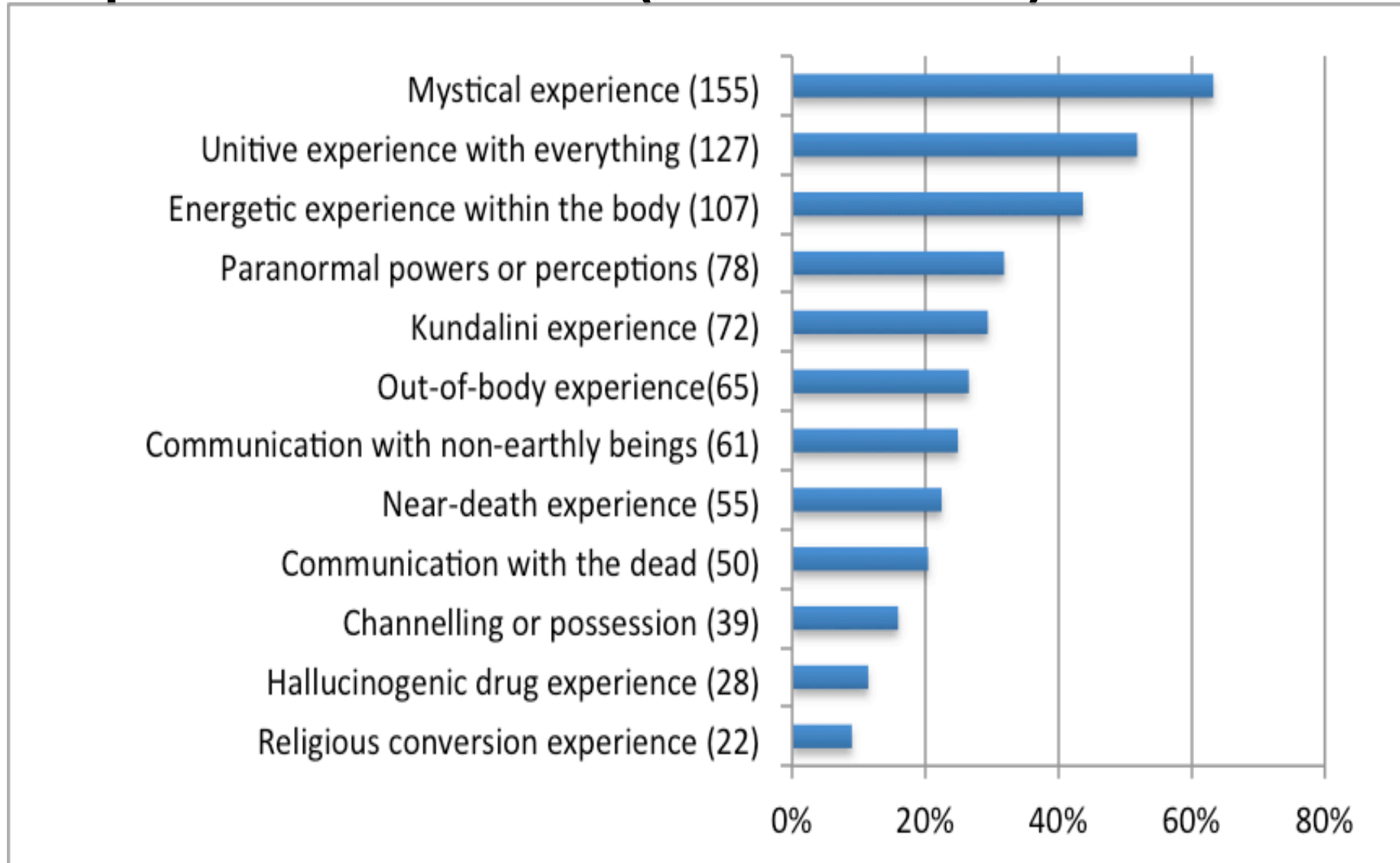
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Pair-wise comparisons between Group 6P (psychiatric care and medication) and other thematic groups



Descriptions of STEs (from ISTEI)



Definition of Spiritual Emergency

. . . a crisis that occurs when emerging spirituality happens faster or more powerfully than is possible to gracefully integrate. This can create imbalance or cause disturbing psychotic effects until the person is able to adjust to grounding this new awareness.



Common Problems of Spiritual Emergence: psychic gifts and nervous system sensitivities



- Sudden awareness: compassion, suffering, vulnerability
- Hypersensitivity: to other people's feelings and inner sensations
- Paranormal abilities: telepathy, clairvoyance, and seeing, hearing, or sensing non-corporeal beings.
- Environmental hypersensitivity: noise, odors, artificial light, electromagnetic fields, toxic chemicals.

Physiological and psychological distress



- Fear, disorientation, resistance, embarrassment.
- Disorienting sense that the past is disintegrating faster than the future can take its place.
- Adrenal states of 'fight-flight'
- Sleep deprivation, manic episodes, debilitating fatigue, mental confusion
- Energetic or mood swings and inner psychic confusion, temporary psychosis.

Lack of support in our culture

- Mystical experiences labeled pathological or demonic.
- Little mainstream acknowledgment of spiritual transformation.
- Spiritual commercialism growing



Lifestyle challenges

- Relational strains, including divorce
- Intolerance of work situations including losing or quitting jobs.
- Craving to “return” to mystical states of consciousness may drive some people to withdraw from society, jump into spiritual cults, take drugs, or commit suicide.
- Psychiatric treatment exacerbating the problems.



Spiritual Bypass

- bypassing personal emotional self-reflection and development
- chasing the blissful experience
- self-aggrandizement, spiritual pride, narcissism
- potential to misuse one's power
- lack of humility needed to keep ego in check

