

## Can You Hear Me Now?

Looking for guidance on families, romance, and careers, some Twin Citians have turned to psychics and mediums in the hopes of getting counsel from beyond the grave. But do you really want to know what your departed mother thinks of your dating life or driving habits?

THE PHONE RANG. Suzanne Krupp, psychic and medium, was calling; a mutual acquaintance who knew I was a writer and liked good story ideas had given her my number. But I'd been wrestling with a troublesome project that morning, and the last thing I wanted to do was spend time speaking with some medium I didn't know about some psychic skills that couldn't be proven.

If she sensed my resistance, Krupp didn't let on. "Your grandmother is here," she said. "She says you should be very careful about what you put your name on. If it doesn't meet your standards, don't do it."

That got my attention. Roughly an hour before the call, I'd been contemplating that very conundrum. So I kept listening. Krupp proceeded to describe, perfectly, one of my partners on that project. She nailed other problems I was having with the job. She suggested I drink more water with lemon—the favored remedy of my grandmother, who died in 1975. And by the way, she added, "Your mother says to quit driving so fast." *My mother was there, too?* "She sits in the back seat sometimes," Krupp said, "and she has to hang on when you go around corners."

This made me laugh. I wasn't buying it, but I was curious, not only about such purported medium skills but also about those who sought them out. I had first heard about Krupp at the Thomas Charles Salon in St. Louis Park, where stylist and master storyteller T. C. Reddin frequently regales his clients with tales of the psychic's amazing knowledge. But I hadn't sought a reading. And it scared me—the prospect that someone else might know what I was thinking or, worse yet, might be bearing messages from the other side.

An estimated 70 percent of the general public (but only 6 percent of National Academy of Science members) believes in the existence of psi, a general term applied to psychic phenomena ranging from ESP to telekinesis and poltergeists. That psi might be used to talk with the dead is hardly a new idea. And now that America's 78 million baby boomers have begun turning 60 and attending an increasing number of friends' and family members' funerals, interest in communication with the other side has grown considerably. In fact, many of the folks who are seeking out psi experts to converse with the dead are not, as you might think, New Age woo-woos: instead, they're your friends and neighbors. Some are prominent Twin Citians whom you'd recognize if they chose to share their stories.

Dean Radin, PhD, author of *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*, has researched psi for AT&T, the U.S. government, and several major universities. Now a senior scientist at the nonprofit Institute of

Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, California, Radin claims that new scientific ideas go through four stages. One: skeptics claim such ideas are impossible because they violate scientific laws. Two: skeptics concede possibility but cite weak effects. Three: the mainstream realizes the ideas are important and pervasive. Four: former critics want credit. Psi is in stage two, he says, with stage three looming on the horizon.

Full disclosure: I've crossed from stage one to two—the transition Radin deems the most difficult. I'm no longer the skeptic my father, a no-nonsense surgeon and military commander, taught me to be. That was before a friend gave me a psychic reading as a gift, before I published an article about animal communication, and certainly before I experienced three “visits”—so abrupt and unexpected that I swung my head around to look—from my mother, who died in 1995. I saw nothing, but I “got” messages: one of support, one of apology, and one asking me to tell my father she was in a joyful place, which I didn't do for fear of being ousted from the family on my heretical keister.

After getting Krupp's call, I decided to pay her a visit. The vivacious, comedic redhead lives in a modest, well-kept house on a quiet street in Robbinsdale. I sat in an armchair in the living room, attempting to erect a protective shield of skepticism around myself, while Krupp sat on the couch across from me, taking a mental elevator up through various dimensions, invoking the aid of her angel and spiritual guide, Gloria, and working a tape recorder on the coffee table. After a few quiet minutes, the relatives showed up, women on one side and men, including my portly grandfather in his typical white shirt, smoking his traditional cigar, on the other. I was missing the party that Krupp was clearly enjoying. She seemed to see people behind and around me; evidently they were funny, talked all at once, and interrupted her frequently. She was in the middle of a sentence when she suddenly stopped.

“Somebody keeps trying to get through. Who is this?” she asked, clearly confused. “Do you know someone by the name of Thacher? T-H-A-C-H-E-R, or maybe it's T-H-A-T-C-H-E-R, something like that.”

I do. A decade ago, Carol Thacher, an attorney at a large Minneapolis firm, had an office adjoining mine, and we talked often. Now I see her only a few times a year for a quick lunch downtown, and I hadn't thought about her lately.

“Well, this is someone connected to her. Does she have someone in her family with a B. E. name?” I didn't know. Krupp said a man, about 5-feet-10-inches tall, was writing a note. She squinted, then reported its contents: “There is no death. I didn't die. There's more.” It was signed “L.”

When I shared this information with my friend, Carol froze, her eyes big, despite the fact that she views such things as a bunch of hooey. Her mother is named Beatrice, her sister is Becky, and before he passed away, she and her husband, Steve, often discussed the meaning of death. He was 5- feet-10-inches tall. But Carol stayed firmly planted in stage one.

“My main reaction is that this was a very generic message that could have worked for tons of people,” Carol said. Besides, her husband always signed his notes “S.,” not “L.”

But Krupp didn’t show me what she saw. Could she have seen what she thought was a lower-case L—or a stylized S?

### **Hold the Line, It’s Granny**

Scared. Nervous. Freaked. Oh. My. God. The trepidations of the first-time medium visitors I spoke with were remarkably similar. Allison DuBois, upon whose life NBC’s *Medium* is closely based, says in her book, *Don’t Kiss Them Good-bye*, that clients will benefit most from working with a psychic if they share some personal details and affirm correct information as it’s presented. Yet most first-timers aren’t that trusting.

“I didn’t say one thing. I was clutching my rosary the whole time,” says Melissa Gabriel, owner of New Beginnings Face and Body Spa in St. Paul. Nevertheless, she was “astonished” by details her family found “shocking,” including a depiction of her deceased grandfather playing the banjo and singing “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” his favorite song.

Other first-timers were equally tight-lipped. “I tried not to give anything back,” says another woman, who requested anonymity. But the psychic told her things about her daughter, killed by a train more than a decade ago, that no one—not even her husband—knew. “She described the little bags, blue with white ribbons, I’d bought for the cookies we baked together the year before she died,” the woman recalls. “It was astounding.”

During his first visit to Krupp, Reddin thought he could outsmart the medium by asking her the names of his deceased grandmother’s parakeets. Before he had a chance to spring the trap, however, Krupp described his grandmother—with two birds on her shoulder—in perfect detail. “I thought, ‘Uh-oh, I’m in for a ride now,’” he says.

“Most of what she said was scary, because there’s just no way that she’d know it,” says Sherri Hallerman Gould, an attorney with Wells Fargo. Gould had never met with a psychic until she was contacted by Krupp, who had found her by asking a friend of a friend whether she knew someone named Sherri whose mother had died. Gould’s family arranged for a reading.

During the conference call, Gould’s sister wanted to know whether her particular presence was acknowledged on the other side. Krupp described the deceased mother pointing to something on her wrist, something shiny with a basket-weave pattern and something dangling off it. The sister recognized it as the watch—gold with diamonds, a basket-weave design, and a safety chain—that she received when her mother’s jewelry was divided among the family.

Krupp also described bamboo placemats that Gould's mother had once made from old wallpaper. "There's no way that it could be random," Gould says. "There was too much information. None of my friends could ever know about that—my mom lived in Birmingham, Alabama.... I've always thought, 'What the hell do we know?' It's comforting for me to think there's something after this."

Krupp asks visitors to think in advance about whom they want to contact and what questions they want to ask during readings. But particular respondents and answers, she cautions, are not always available on demand. The dead have their own agenda.

"We get what we get," says DuBois. "It depends on the strength and clarity of the energy on the other side, our ability to receive the message, and the willingness of the loved one to whom we convey the message."

### **Words Cannot Describe**

If you want to stump a medium, ask her how she does it. "Words are so limiting," laughs Maureen Pelton, an adjunct faculty member with the University of Minnesota's Center for Spirituality and Healing, where she teaches health-care professionals to tune into their own intuition. "I can actually see people's frequency, coming in through the top of their head. It's vibration I can see, feel, and hear—that's what I connect to," she says. "Literally every human being has their own unique ray, and I tune into the ray. I'm really talking to their souls."

Pelton says she can read people pushing their carts down the grocery aisle, a disconcerting side effect. Krupp encounters the same dilemmas. "I go to buy makeup and there's somebody's grandfather at the Clinique counter," she says. She once described to a bank teller the woman she saw standing next to her, and the teller asked her colleagues to call the police; Krupp was escorted out. Now she is more careful to ask whether someone wants information before she offers it.

"I'll get an image or sense, and then I'll hear myself talk about it. I don't think, I just say it," says Jet Sophia, who describes a sort of cloud containing images or visible features. Sophia (who recently changed her name from Nancy Evechild) developed an insatiable curiosity about psi when she took a class in 1980; by 1987, the mother of three had left behind bus-driving and shoe repair to be a full-time psychic.

All these women, who charge from \$40 to \$175 for an hour's session, made mid-life career moves to become professional psychics. Krupp owned a temporary employment agency and an executive-recruiting business. Pelton practiced traditional psychotherapy. While their styles differ, they do share similarities in their approach. They provide clients with tapes of the sessions. They often say, "Let me look"—but none of them needs to have met the person they're dealing with to do a reading. Krupp prefers working over the phone because people are more relaxed and less emotional. Sophia can read from an e-mail or letter. Most

psychics are stingy with specific predictions, however. Sophia says they represent only the future as viewed from one point in time. Pelton considers them disempowering, a denial of free will.

What is most uncanny is the psychics' ability to capture—whether from the other side or the client's own unconscious—a departed one's expressions, the cadence of his or her voice, and themes that marked the person's life. During my visit with Sophia, for example, she told me my deceased father was smoking, a lifelong habit he never managed to break, and that he wanted me to quit worrying: "He says to tell you there are more toxins in worry than in cigarettes," she reported. It sounded like something he would say.

Psi is a talent like any other, usually showing up in childhood and available in degrees, these mediums insist. Krupp doesn't like to do other-side readings for any particular client more than once a year. Pelton believes her skill has been passed down through maternal lineage; her daughter shares it.

"It's like playing the piano. Many people have the ability to play the piano. Some find a teacher, practice, and turn it into a skill. Others never even see a piano," Sophia says. "And if you ask someone how they play with such feeling, I don't know how they could answer."

Scientists can explain psi no better than mediums do. In his new book, *Entangled Minds: Extrasensory Experiences in a Quantum Reality*, Radin focuses on interconnectedness, long a precept in Eastern philosophy. Reality is nothing like clockwork, as we used to think, he says. Instead, it's "woven from strange, 'holistic' threads that aren't located precisely in space or time. Tug on a dangling loose end...and the whole cloth twitches, instantly, throughout all space and time."

"I love all those theories. I could sit and listen to physics, metaphysics, and stories about morphic resonance and other dimensions for a long time," Sophia says. "But I'm happier with The Church of Who Knows. That's my belief system."

## **Blithe Spirits**

Minneapolis clothing-store owner Josi Wert says she was amazed when Krupp described her grandparents, imitated her father's "cowboy way of talking," and disclosed details of her stepfather's suicide. And when Krupp insisted that Wert had three daughters, Wert, mother of twins, "totally got chills"—early in the pregnancy, she had carried triplets. Chills aside, Wert remains a "super-pragmatic" person. "When I get stuff that makes sense, it's cool, but it's just more information. I don't live my life by it," she says.

"Even if you don't believe a word she says, it's entertaining," says Carol Brooks, Wayzata mother of three and Animal Humane Society board member. Brooks hasn't tried to reach the dead, but she has asked for Krupp's assistance in dealing with serious family matters. She also learned from Krupp that her horse,

Wally, didn't like his plain name. His stall now boasts a new nameplate: Sir Wally III. Animal communication is "always a hoot," Brooks says.

Some people seek out mediums for life guidance—a sort of inspired coaching. St. Paul teacher Eve Johnson Blackwell says that Jet Sophia has guided her through job transitions and advised her on sensitive family matters. "I believe she confers with my spirit guides, higher self, whatever you want to call it," she told me in an e-mail message. "She is impeccable and hasn't ever been wrong, in my estimation."

As for contacting the other side, which Blackwell also has done, comfort is the primary goal. Several families of individuals lost in the 9/11 terrorist attacks sought, and continue to seek, Krupp's aid, which the psychic offers gratis. Alison Crowther, whose son Welles died in the attacks, was referred to Krupp by another family. But she was cautious when she first called the psychic.

"I didn't know if it was legitimate, and I didn't want to be taken advantage of. I didn't tell her who I was," Crowther says. At first she was disappointed: "Right away, she began describing my son in ways I thought weren't accurate," Crowther recalls. "I figured she just didn't know."

Krupp kept referring to someone in a stairwell, wearing a white shirt. Crowther had assumed her son, an equities trader, was trapped in his 104th-floor office and was wearing a suit; months later, however, Welles's unburned body was found at Ground Zero—an indicator that he must have been below the crash area. Crowther also happened upon a published eyewitness account describing a man wearing a white T-shirt and a red bandana who worked with firefighters to get people out. She recognized him as her son, a trained volunteer firefighter since age 16, who always carried a red kerchief (as did his friend, snowboarder Tyler Jewell, to honor him during the recent Olympics).

Crowther, a former sales management executive who says many people in her family take all this with a grain of salt, stays in touch with Krupp and has embarked on a spiritual journey of her own. "I have a belief in the possibility of psychic work, tempered with the understanding that this is an area ripe for being abused," she says. "What has transformed me is that I, without question, own the knowledge that there's life after death, and that is a powerful thing."

Jenette Nelson, who teaches art and conflict resolution in Stanley, North Dakota, lost her daughter Ann, a bond broker for Cantor Fitzgerald, in the 9/11 attacks. A former student who knew Krupp suggested that Nelson seek help with her intense grief.

"She has called many, many times, and it's always when I'm in my most acute stage of suffering," Nelson says, recounting a time when she'd cried all night and Krupp called first thing in the morning, saying she hadn't wanted to wake her earlier. Once, when Krupp reported that Ann was ice skating on the other side with Amy and Aaron, close colleagues who died with her, Nelson contacted the

coworkers' parents. She learned that Aaron played hockey and that ice skating was Amy's chief hobby.

Nelson says Krupp once just called to tell her that Ann "liked the stones"—whatever that meant. Nelson knew immediately; she and her husband had just been choosing stones for a fireplace. "She tells you such little things that nobody else would ever know," she says. "They're not really significant things, but they're unique things."

Nelson says that before her daughter died, she never would have sought out a psychic; the church in which she was raised frowned upon such things. But her current place of worship is more accepting. "This is a whole new level of spiritual thinking for me," she says. "It's been so comforting."

The mediums say they enjoy helping people. "I'm in service to the one that is God, and that's not a man in the sky with a beard, I might add. God to me is all of us, because we're all connected," Pelton says. Adds Sophia: "I had one woman who came in distressed and crying and left smiling. Nothing had changed except that she could see her situation from a different perspective. We bring to light people's own wisdom and ability to heal."

### **Scam or Solace?**

Of course, there must be a logical explanation for all this mystic mumbo-jumbo.

Mediums can surf the Internet for facts. They can read body language for affirmation and denial. They can use information so generic that it will resonate with anyone willing to interpret it for personal consumption. Often, they can drag details right out of you without your realizing it. But do they?

"And what are the dead doing?" Carol Thacher asks. "Are they just able to figure out who the mediums are, then watch who their appointments are with so they know when to come and when not to? It's basically absurd. But is it comforting? You bet. How wonderful it would be to believe [my husband] Steve is up there getting messages to me. How much more tranquil I'd feel about dying."

Still, in our conversation about all this eerie stuff, Carol points out no one has analyzed the psychics' accuracy rate. (Indeed, I don't buy the vision, offered by one psychic, of my mother on the other side, knitting something pink—she couldn't knit and hated pink.) Carol also notes that positive messages seem to be the rule. Otherwise, who would return? (In their defense, mediums say that they do get negative messages but they couch them: "Exercise more" instead of "You're too fat.")

"The whole thing smacks of a big scam," Carol adds. Yet for the first time, psi has her attention. How did her name wind up in my reading? There are not that many people with the same last name, she says. "Why didn't she choose Olson,

Hansen, Larson?” Carol says. “That’s the thing that absolutely caused my head to spin around. While I’m not in any way, shape, or form converted, I am one little toenail away from being a complete cynic.”

Change, like science, is slow. But as we wait, and I sit here sipping water with lemon, I’ll confess that sometimes, when I’m in the car driving too fast around a corner, I glance at the back seat. Just in case.

*Minnesota Monthly*

*By Cathy Madison, a Minneapolis freelance writer, and former editor of the Utne Reader.*

Contact Suzanne Krupp  
763-504-2470  
[psychic@suzannekrupp.com](mailto:psychic@suzannekrupp.com)