**Astral Projection**

**What is astral projection?**

Astral projection is a spiritual practice and esoteric term describing a deliberate out-of-body experience (OBE). It’s also referred to as astral travel, soul journey, soul wandering, spiritual journey, or spiritual travel.

The phenomenon involves the existence of a subtle body, called the astral body or body of light, which allows consciousness to operate independently from the physical body and move across the astral plane. Suffice to say, it’s not backed by science.

However, there are various beliefs surrounding astral projection and techniques for how to do it – if you’re willing to believe it can be done. It’s a topic of interest in many spiritual and esoteric traditions. Some believe that astral projection or OBEs provide an opportunity for personal growth, spiritual insight, and expanded consciousness.

On the other hand, scientists view OBEs as experiences stemming from mental states similar to dreams or altered states of consciousness. Psychologists and neuroscientists suggest OBEs are related to pathological activity patterns.

Meanwhile, online communities have grown to support individuals who experience astral projection, with influencers offer tips to recognize signs of astral projection and guidance on developing this ability:

In its modern iteration, the practice traces its roots to the birth of theosophy, a movement from the late 19th century. This movement began with Henry Steel Olcott and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky’s interactions with Tibetan and other cultures. However, the practice is based on different cultural backgrounds that go back much further than this movement.

Historical references to the practice can be seen in older literature, such as The Secret of the Golden Flower, a 17th Century Chinese handbook on alchemy and meditation. It also has roots in Hindu, Inuit, Taoist, and Waiwai belief systems. In these, the practice and the manner of projection may differ, but there’s a shared consensus of being able to leave one’s physical form to achieve other feats.

**How to perform astral projection**

Here’s a simple way to try it out:

* Find a quiet, comfortable space. Lie down and relax your body completely.
* Clear your mind of distractions and focus on positive thoughts.
* Once relaxed, picture the astral cord extending from the third chakra into the astral plane (the astral realm/world where all consciousness resides).
* Mentally affirm your intention to have an astral projection experience.
* As you feel yourself getting lighter or experiencing sensations like floating, remain relaxed and aware.
* If successful, you may find yourself “out” of your body. Once you reach this other world, you’re likely to experience a feeling of weightlessness and relief – this is why it’s used to help release tension and heal unresolved traumas.
* Explore your surroundings calmly and with curiosity. Remember, you’re still connected to your physical body, so there’s no need to worry about getting lost.
* When you’re ready to return, think about your physical body and gently guide your awareness back.

If you have no previous experience with astral projection, we recommend researching it thoroughly and finding an expert in the field to help guide you in the right direction.

**What does an out-of-body experience feel like?**

As stated, an out-of-body experience and astral projection are similar but not the exact same, as the latter is intentional. While it’s hard to narrow down exactly how they feel, an OBE and astral projection can feel like:

* A feeling of floating outside your body.
* An altered perception of the world.
* The feeling you’re out of your body, looking down at yourself.

Astral projection can also be explained by delusion, hallucination, and vivid dreams, according to psychologist Donovan Rawcliffe in his book The Psychology of the Occult.

A white open doorway that leads from a wooden floor to a moonlit lake.

**Is astral projection safe?**

The notion of astral projection is ancient. Many people, from New Agers to Shamans worldwide, practice it as a form of self-care and spiritual healing. An article on Elite Daily features an interview with Dr Deganit Nuur of Nuurvana Clairvoyant Healing. She is a world-renowned spiritual teacher, clairvoyant, and doctor of acupuncture. Nuur says that astral projection should be practiced carefully and intentionally. This is because when a traumatizing event confronts humans, they can end up astrally projecting and losing a sense of control. Nuur explains:

We can do it unconsciously, when we’re not feeling safe… the spirit leaves the body, and projects elsewhere… When not practiced responsibly, you can lose a sense of authority and seniority over your own body, it can be really disempowering.

**Astral travel and science**

While astral projection may be a philosophical experience, there’s currently no way to scientifically measure whether or not a person’s spirit can leave and enter the body during sleep or meditation. The simplest explanation for out-of-body experiences is that the person fantasizes or dreams. Live Science also sums it up like this:

Though astral projection practitioners insist their experiences are real, their evidence is all anecdotal — just as someone taking peyote or LSD may be truly convinced that they interacted with God, dead people, or angels while in their altered state. Astral projection is an entertaining and harmless pastime that can seem profound and, in some cases, even life-changing. But there’s no evidence that out-of-body experiences happen outside the body instead of inside the brain.

Some further studies also explore the link between astral projection and dissociative disorders, with the following discovered during a study of one individual who was experiencing this:

On further evaluation, a diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder and dissociative fugue was formulated. The patient showed improvement after undergoing abreaction, hypnosis, and relaxation training along with supportive psychotherapy. Dissociative disorders occur due to an internal conflict between ego and self, when a person is unable to successfully repress a traumatic experience, or when a repressed memory or experience comes out of the cocooned barrier, leading to an altered state of perception and self-experience, which is described by the patient as OBE.

Ultimately, astral projection is a difficult thing to prove scientifically. There seems to be an empathetic approach to the phenomena with regard to cultural practice, but no concrete studies guarantee its existence.

Astral projection vs. out-of-body experience

Although both terms are used interchangeably, Healthline states there are distinct differences between the two:

An astral projection usually involves an intentional effort to send your consciousness from your body. It usually refers to your consciousness travelling out of your body toward a spiritual plane or dimension.

An out-of-body experience, on the other hand, is usually unplanned. And rather than travelling, your consciousness is said to simply float or hover above your physical body.

OBEs – or at least the sensations of them – are largely recognized within the medical community and have been the subject of many studies. It’s linked to several medical and mental health conditions such as epilepsy, anxiety, or dissociative disorders.

Astral projection, however, is considered to be a spiritual practice.