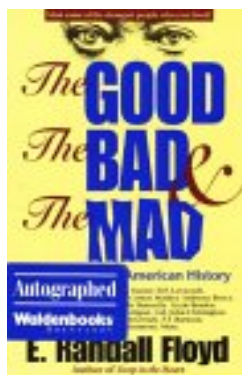




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## Edgar Cayce (1877-1945)



Edgar Cayce is known as one of America's greatest psychics. His followers maintain that Cayce was able to tap into some sort of higher consciousness, such as God or the [Akashic record](#), to get his "psychic knowledge." He used this "knowledge" to predict that California will slide into the ocean and that New York City will be destroyed in some sort of cataclysm. He predicted that in 1958 the U.S. would discover some sort of death ray used on [Atlantis](#). Cayce is one of the main people responsible for some of the sillier notions about Atlantis, including the idea that the Atlantaeans had some sort of Great Crystal. Cayce called the Great Crystal the *Tuaoi Stone* and said it was a huge cylindrical prism that was used to gather and focus "energy," allowing the Atlanteans to do all kinds of fantastic things. But they got greedy and stupid, tuned up their Crystal to too high a frequency and set off volcanic disturbances that led to the destruction of that ancient world. He made other predictions concerning such things as the Great Depression (that 1933 would be a good year) and the Lindbergh kidnapping (most of it wrong, all of it useless), and that China would be converted to Christianity by 1968. He also claimed to be able see and read [auras](#), but this power was never tested under controlled conditions. However, Edgar Cayce is best known for being a psychic medical diagnostician and psychic reader of past lives.

Cayce was known as "the sleeping prophet" because he would close his eyes and appear to go into a trance when he did his readings (Stern). At his death, he left thousands of accounts of past life and medical readings. A stenographer took notes during his sessions and some 30,000 transcripts of his readings are under the protection of the [Association for Research and Enlightenment](#). However, Cayce usually worked with an assistant (hypnotist and mail-order osteopath Al Layne; John Blackburn, M.D.; homeopath Wesley Ketchum). According to Dale Beyerstein, "these documents are worthless by themselves" because they provide no way of distinguishing what Cayce discerned by psychic ability from information provided to him by his assistants, by letters from patients, or by simple observation. In short, the only evidence for Cayce's psychic doctoring is useless for testing his psychic powers. Nevertheless, it is the volume and alleged accuracy of his "cures" that seem to provide the main basis for belief in Cayce as a psychic. In fact, however, the support for his accuracy consists of little more than anecdotes

and [testimonials](#). There is no way to demonstrate that Cayce used psychic powers even on those cases where there is no dispute that he was instrumental in the cure.

It is true, however, that many people considered themselves cured by Cayce and that's enough evidence for true believers. It works! The fact that thousands don't consider themselves cured or can't rationalize an erroneous diagnosis won't deter the true believer. Gardner notes that Dr. J.B. Rhine, famous for his ESP experiments at Duke University, was not impressed with Cayce. Rhine felt that a psychic reading done for his daughter didn't fit the facts. Defenders of Cayce claim that if a patient has any doubts about Cayce, the diagnosis won't be a good one. Yet, what reasonable person wouldn't have doubts about such a man, no matter how kind or sincere he was?

Cayce's defenders provide some classic *ad hoc* hypotheses to explain away their hero's failures. For example, Cayce and a famous dowser named Henry Gross set out together to discover buried treasure along the seashore and found nothing. Their defenders suggested that their psychic powers were accurate because either there once was a buried treasure where they looked but it had been dug up earlier, or there would be a treasure buried there sometime in the future (one wonders why their psychic powers didn't discern this).

There are many myths and legends surrounding Cayce: that an angel appeared to him when he was 13 and asked him what his greatest desire was (Cayce allegedly told the angel that his greatest desire was to help people); that he could absorb the contents of a book by putting it under his pillow while he slept; that he passed spelling tests by using [clairvoyance](#); that he was illiterate and uneducated. *The New York Times* is greatly responsible for the illiteracy myth ("Illiterate Man Becomes a Doctor When Hypnotized," (Sunday magazine section, October 9, 1910). Many of the myths were passed on unchecked by Thomas Sugrue, who believed Cayce had cured him of a disabling illness. In his 1945 book *There is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce*, Sugrue asserts that it was Cayce, not the medical doctors who treated them, that was responsible for the cures of Cayce's son ("blindness") and wife ("tuberculosis").

One of the most common reasons given for believing in the psychic abilities of people such as Cayce is the claim that *there's no way he could have known this stuff by ordinary means*. He must have been told this by God or spirits or have been astrally projected back or forth in space or time, etc. Yet, Cayce's "psychic knowledge" is easily explained by quite ordinary ways of knowing things.

Even though Cayce didn't have a formal education much beyond grammar school, he was a voracious reader, worked in bookstores, and was especially fond of occult and osteopathic literature. ([Osteopathy](#), in his day, was primitive and akin to [naturopathy](#) and folk medicine.) He was in contact with and assisted by people with various medical backgrounds. Even so, many of his readings would probably only make sense to an osteopath of his day. Martin Gardner cites Cayce's reading of Cayce's own wife as an example. The woman was suffering from tuberculosis:

**.... from the head, pains along through the body from the second, fifth and sixth dorsals, and from the first and second lumbar...tie-ups here, floating lesions, or lateral lesions, in the muscular and nerve fibers which supply the lower end of the lung and the diaphragm...in conjunction with the sympathetic nerve of the solar plexus, coming in conjunction with the solar plexus at the end of the stomach....**

The fact that Cayce mentions the *lung* is taken by his followers as evidence of a correct diagnosis; it counts as a psychic "hit." But what about the incorrect diagnoses: dorsals, lumbar, floating lesions, solar plexus and stomach? Why aren't those counted as diagnostic misses? And why did Cayce recommend osteopathic treatment for people with tuberculosis, epilepsy and cancer?

In addition to osteopathy, Cayce was knowledgeable of [homeopathy](#) and [naturopathy](#). He was the first to recommend laetrile as a cancer cure. (Laetrile contains [cyanide](#) and is known to be ineffective for cancer.) He also recommended "oil of smoke" for a leg sore; "peach-tree poultice" for convulsions; "bedbug juice" for dropsy; and "fumes of apple brandy from a charred keg" for tuberculosis.

**See related entries** on [alternative health practices](#), [Jeane Dixon](#), [Nostradamus](#), and [Gordon-Michael Scallion](#).

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**further reading**

**[reader comments](#)**

- [Edcar Cayce Resource Center](#)

- [The Edgar Cayce Web Site](#)
- [Edgar Cayce on hemorrhoids](#)
- [Osteopathy's Sectarian Roots](#) by William T. Jarvis, Ph.D.

[Beyerstein, Dale. "Edgar Cayce," in \*The Encyclopedia of the Paranormal\* edited by Gordon Stein \(Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1996\), pp.146-153.](#)

[Gardner, Martin. \*Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science\* \(New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957\), chs. 16, 17. Cayce's diagnosis of his wife, quoted above, is on page 217.](#)

[Randi, James. \*Flim-Flam!\* \(Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books,1982\), ch. 9.](#)

Shermer, Michael and Arthur Benjamin. "Deviations: A Skeptical Investigation at Edgar Cayce's Association for Research and Enlightenment," [Skeptic](#) Volume 1, Number 3 (Fall 1992)

[Stern, Jess. \*Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping Prophet\* \(New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967\). reissued by Bantam, 1990.](#)

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