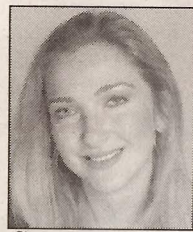


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Lifestyle Editor and columnist. Call Anne on 0113 2432701 ext 8501 with your news and opinions.



CARMEN BRUEGMANN
Women's Editor. Carmen will be pleased to hear from you if you have a story to tell. Call her on 0113 2432701 ext 1323.



DR ALISON LYON
Your own agony aunt. Write to her at Women, Yorkshire Evening Post, Wellington Street, Leeds, LS1 1RF, fax on 0113 2388536, call the 24-hour helpline on 0113 2388889.



ANGELA BARNES
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Beyond reason

Sceptics dismiss them as hocus-pocus, so why is a trip to a psychic becoming as routine as visiting the dentist? CARMEN BRUEGMANN steps into the unknown to find out

TAROT cards, crystal balls, mystic candles — it's enough to make any rational person scoff into their Guide to Common Sense.

Or is it?

A fairground gypsy with promises of tall, dark handsome men may prey on the sad and vulnerable, the types who would rather hop across a busy high street than walk underneath a ladder, so why then are so many seemingly intelligent people consulting the likes of mediums and clairvoyants?

Amongst those who are believed to consult spiritual guides for advice are Richard Branson, John Major, the Princess of Wales, Hillary Clinton and, of course, the Duchess of York, whose so-called private talks with

Madame Vassos were blazoned across the tabloids. It's suddenly acceptable to visit a psychic. It's even fashionable. Says celebrity psychic Stephen O'Brien, a regular visitor to Leeds: "As a vogue, it seems to be in at the moment. It's always been popular but the media have decided to start covering it. There are fashions in the media and covering the

DEFINITIONS

A PSYCHIC is a pure telepath who claims to make a link soul to soul, mind to mind with a client.

A MEDIUM claims to make a direct link mind-to-mind with departed souls.

A CLAIRVOYANT claims the power of perceiving things beyond the natural range of the senses.

paranormal definitely seems to be one of them." Indeed, look at the popularity of such television programmes as *The X Files* and *Strange But True?* while films about the spirit world such as *Ghost* virtually guarantee box office success.

Mystery

People love a mystery. The paranormal is fascinating because it has no definite answer. One friend tells me how she once visited a clairvoyant who told her she would end her relationship with her current boyfriend and marry someone called Chris. She did. Was that coincidence, sixth sense or had she simply found herself on a mission to find a man called Chris? There is the danger that ideas can be planted into someone's head. Another woman was given the name of her partner, the number of her house and given advice on what to do about her career. She was so intrigued and surprised, that she decided to go back a month later for more counselling.

"One friend tells me how she visited a clairvoyant who told her she would end her relationship with her current boyfriend and marry someone called Chris. She did"

● JULIE CRYER:
'A good medium should be able to talk specifically about people's lives and give you detail'



PETER THACKER

Then two weeks later. Soon she was incapable of making a decision without consulting a psychic first.

It is something that Selby-based medium/clairvoyant Julie Cryer is quite aware of. Dressed in ripped blue jeans and a baggy shirt with no mystical gimmicks in sight, she recommends that clients should not return within a year of their last visit and a consultation every two to three years is usually sufficient.

She explains why clients come to see her. "People are becoming more aware of the stresses they are carrying nowadays and they are trying to look at ways of getting rid of that.

Trust

"Some people go to a medium because they have lost their parents or a child, or because they have lost their way in life.

"I think more and more people in the world of fame are turning to it because they have so many people they can't trust."

Some of Julie's regular clients include academics, celebrities and TV producers and half of them are men.

"One of my most entertaining readings was with Larry Grayson. He came to my house and he was the most amazing character. He hadn't been on TV for years but I told him that within three months he would get the chance of being on a major television programme. He went on to star in the Royal Variety Performance.

"There were a lot of things I knew about him from the media but then the reading took a personal note.

"He was very honest with me and we even discussed the Michael Barrymore issue before it came out."

Client confidentiality is of upmost concern to Julie. She has refused to spill the beans on Larry Grayson's reading to a national newspaper and was shocked at Madame Vassos' behaviour. "I was absolutely appalled by it. I would say to anyone if they

start sitting you under a pyramid and asking you about your sex life in detail, I would be very concerned."

Mediums such as Stephen O'Brien and Julie Cryer rely on their reputations. Julie never advertises but is booked until April next year while Stephen's shows are always sell-outs.

"A good medium should be able to talk specifically about people's lives and give you detail," adds Julie.

Deciding to put her on the spot, I asked Julie to give me some details about my own life. She told me which relatives were alive and which were in the spirit world. Talking to my father's father, she was able to state my age and tell me specific details about my life that I have shared with very few people.

Coincidence or a taste of the supernatural? We can argue until we're blue in the face, but one thing's for sure, once we find the answer, we will lose the mystique forever.

● Julie Cryer can be contacted on Selby (01757) 700799.

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