

# In the beginning

I've always had an affinity with children. In fact, I don't know any other adult who gets on with children better than I do. If someone asks me my age, I tell them that I am 40 years old. Deep down though, I'm really only eight. I've always felt eight years old, apart from when I was younger than eight, when I felt my real age. Now, no matter how many birthdays I've had, I've never really grown up. I'm not Peter Pan and would never want to be. I have the body of a 40-year-old man but in my mind I know the truth: I am eight to those in the know and 40 to those who aren't. I am a child at heart and always will be.

Apart from being eight, I am also a psychic medium. I help those on the other side to communicate with the loved ones they've left behind. Actually, that's not totally true. I don't communicate with the spirit world – spirits communicate with me. I've also been talking to babies and small children telepathically for a number of years.

I know that in some people's minds this is even stranger than talking to the dead, but in many ways it's almost exactly the same. The difference is that I only occasionally see the dead, whereas I always see the children I connect with. The dead communicate with me on three levels, as do children: I can hear, see and feel the energy that both dead people and children send me. Sometimes I get a little stressed out, especially if I have a number of dead people or children talking to me at the same time. Luckily, every signal is sent to me on a different frequency so I never get confused, no matter how many babies or ghosts are in the same room! It's very much like the different stations on a radio. Sometimes these differences are rather subtle but I've grown to understand them very well over time.

I love my job and enjoy the work that I do. If someone had told me years ago, when I was running my music shop or making my million in the bar and club world, that I'd be doing what I am now, I'd have told them they were off their head. It's funny how life turns out in the end, and isn't it strange how your dreams may stay just dreams if you don't trust in them enough?

I have many memories of the hopes and dreams that I had as a child and then as a young man. Since then there have been happy and sad times, huge successes and bitter disappointments, friendships I've kindled and pals I've lost

along the way. I realize that I am lucky. I haven't lost faith and am still enjoying this rollercoaster ride called life.

I'd no idea that babies and toddlers could communicate telepathically with me until I visited a young mum for a private reading in her home. Normally I would ask for there to be no distractions, but she hadn't been able to find a baby-sitter for her daughter, who was around two-and-a-half years old.

I vividly remember sitting in her flat in Glasgow. There were a couple of spirits there that I'd noticed the minute I entered her home. However, I instantly became aware that her child's psychic energy was very strong. I could feel her trying to communicate with me in a way I'd never known before. I really wanted to start talking to the spirits who were in the room but she and I immediately connected, and the images she sent to me came thick and fast. Surprisingly, I could easily picture them in my head. These images were also very easy to understand, much easier than the messages I'd sometimes get from the spirit world. I could feel the build-up of this information in the centre of my brain and I just couldn't hold back the words. I opened up and started telling her mum lots of details about her life.

'Your daughter's telling me that she loves Jaffa Cakes. She wants you to get her one from the kitchen.'

‘Yes, she seems to like them. She cries for them all the time,’ said the now bewildered mum. ‘How on earth did you know that?’

‘She also tells me that her daddy is a taxi driver and has been separated from you since your daughter was a baby.’

The little girl went on to tell me that her tummy had been sore for a few days and that she liked to go driving with her granny in the red car, although her granny smoked and always kept the front passenger window open. ‘Your daughter loves the bucket and spade that her granny just bought her. She’s looking forward to going to the seaside and playing with it.’ All these details rolled off my tongue, just as if a spirit had told me. It was like a normal conversation, although this wasn’t normal at all. No-one had uttered a word. The information had all come from this young child to me through our minds. Nothing else!

I recall the mum’s reaction as if it were yesterday. She freaked! I remember having to think on my feet and panicking inside about what to do as I wanted to appear in control of the situation. I just stayed as cool as I could and quickly tried to calm her down and appease her by telling her that her child was obviously very clever. Inside, however, I was praying that this was a one-off and that this young girl was just special in some way and had a gift like mine. I knew I had to carry on with the

reading in order to bring some normality back to the proceedings so I tried to contact the spirits she had initially wanted to receive messages from. Spirits did come through, thankfully, and the rest of the evening went without a hitch.

My experience with this mum and her child left a bad taste in my mouth. The last thing I wanted was to upset anyone through my work. On the way home in the car I was still pretty shocked. Was this occurrence really a one-off? Maybe I had some amazing gift that had been lying dormant for years, or perhaps I'd been ignoring another aspect of my psychic abilities. Were most babies and toddlers psychic, and if they were could they all communicate fairly easily with me?

When I think about my childhood, my mum was always around. There doesn't seem to have been a moment when she wasn't cuddling me or reassuring me that things would be all right. My mum really loved me, and I was a very lucky little boy to have someone who cared so much about my wellbeing. I love my mum and suppose I've always been a bit of a mummy's boy. Mum's been a tower of strength when I've needed her and an adviser when I sometimes didn't, but she's always been there through thick and thin, and that's been a blessing to me.

It hasn't all been a bed of roses though. Mum's been great – don't get me wrong – but she and I have had the strangest relationship over the years. Like many mothers and sons, we know how to hurt each other and how to wind each other up. Mum and I now seem to have an understanding. I think we are just beginning to come to terms with our differing personalities. It's a pity it's taken all this time.

In some ways I've always felt a disappointment to my mum. When I was a child, she'd tell me I was going to make a fine husband and dad. This made me feel bitter because I knew, even from a very early age, that this would never happen. I think that's why I'd get so angry with mum when she'd say something that upset me. I just wanted her to love me and not the person she thought I was. I felt awful about that.

I was also highly sensitive and a bit of a loner as a child. I would love just being at home, and would disappear into my own little world with my Lego set or watch *Blue Peter* on television. Mum would always get upset with me because I wasn't out playing and getting into mischief with the other boys on our street. I guess it was around that time when I started to get a bit of a chip on my shoulder about life. My attitude was 'I'm going to show everyone when I'm older that I'm as good as them.'

I was born in Paisley, Scotland, in 1965, the younger of two children. My loving sister Elaine was four years older, and very protective of me. Like any brother and sister, though, we fought like cat and dog when we were young. Elaine used to pull my hair whenever we had a fallout. To this day I blame her for my lack of thatch on top!

My dad was a heating engineer who worked for British Airways at Glasgow Airport. He has always had a wonderful work ethic and I have learnt a great deal from him. When I was a youngster, however, there were times when I didn't see dad for days or even weeks. He would come home from work, have dinner and then disappear into the night in order to plumb in someone's washing machine or sort out some problem with their central heating. Dad tells me that he never let anyone down and always turned up for a job, no matter what. If only today's workmen lived by those rules.

It would be really interesting at this point to mention that I was the son of the seventh son of a seventh son, but I wasn't. My dad did have five other brothers but he was his parent's sixth son and that, I'm afraid, is that. My dad had an Aunt Minnie, though, who was a fortune-teller. Minnie seemingly used to hold psychic nights in her house in St James's Street in Paisley and read people's tea leaves. I never met Aunt Minnie but my father assures me that she was the real deal. He told me that Aunt Minnie

met with him one night when he was still courting my mum and, after the obligatory cup of tea, read his leaves. She told him that within two or three years he'd be working at Glasgow Airport and would fly all over the world with an airline. True to form she was right. I don't think I've inherited any of Aunt Minnie's gifts, though, since I'm not a fortune-teller, but I would like to have met her. I'm sure there's always a chance that she'll come through to visit me when she has the time.

I believe we are all born psychic, and we either choose to use our gifts or we don't. It's as simple as that. From day one, I always felt different from everyone else, although until I was much older I couldn't put my finger on what that difference was and what it would mean to me. When I was around nine or ten, I knew that I definitely had a sixth sense. I remember sensing things that my friends or family couldn't. Although I couldn't tell the future or what a baby or young child was thinking, I did have something. I just didn't know what my abilities were or what they really meant to me, and I never paid that much attention to them.

Around that time our elderly next-door neighbour passed away. For months afterwards I could feel his presence in my bedroom. It was then that I realized what I could sense. I could see dead people! His ghost, or what I now know to be his spirit, used to come and stand at my

bedroom door when I was tucked up in bed, and he would stare at me for hours! The funny thing is that I didn't find this in the least bit scary. I just went along with it and it didn't really bother me at all. I would try to force myself not to go to sleep, just in case I missed out on getting a message from him or – more importantly for me, being someone who believed in God – instructions from what I understood to be heaven. That battle was seldom won, though, and I'd always fall asleep before anything was said! Strangely, over those few months as I fought back the tiredness, he never uttered a word to me and he never changed his expression. He just looked and smiled and that was it. He seemed to be content, though, which pleased me greatly, and no longer in any of the pain he'd experienced before he died.

My ghostly visitor left me with mixed feelings at the time. Although I was pleased that he was okay, this was tinged with a little disappointment since I felt that without some form of communication between us, no-one would believe my story. I decided not to give my parents or his family any information about him as I had no means of providing proof that he was coming through to visit me from the other side. I was also reluctant to tell people because I didn't want to appear strange or, God forbid, different. I just put this down to being me and kept my mouth shut.

Over the years my sixth sense has never left me. I've always known it was there, although I chose to ignore it many times in my life when I felt I had other, more important issues to deal with. If only I'd paid it a little more attention!

I had a fairly normal childhood. I say 'fairly' because if I am honest – which for the first time is probably now as I write this – I was never 100-per-cent happy. I always felt that I never really fitted in. I always felt different.

I didn't have a lot of friends as I never wanted to do what other boys did. Because I didn't like rough-and-tumble games I was thought of as a bit of a sissy. I was awful at football and as this was the benchmark for how cool you were, I would always be looking over my shoulder, especially at school, in case someone wanted to pick on me and have a fight.

I hated school. I just didn't want to be there, although my primary school days weren't that bad. I think this was because I felt special then. I was very clever and always excelled in maths and anything associated with music. I started playing the accordion and singing when I was eight, and from then on wanted to be on the stage or television. I believed that this was my calling. I remember making up my mind from that early age that music would

be my way out of the humdrum life that everyone around me seemed to be living.

From the age of nine or ten, I began to tell anyone who asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up that I was going to be a millionaire and would make my money from being in the music business. How strange, then, that this was to be exactly what would happen. I must have been giving out psychic messages when I was a child, even though I didn't realize it at the time!

My gran has undoubtedly been the most influential person in my life. I was always very close to her. She was, and still is, a wonderful woman. Kind, considerate and the perfect hostess, she was always happy to see me or anyone who came to visit her. Since she crossed over into the spirit world six years ago, my gran has been my guiding light, and I see it as no coincidence that my talents as a psychic have soared since she passed away. I don't think that my gran is necessarily my spirit guide, though. She is watching over me and does give me advice when I need it (and sometimes when I think I don't!) but it's a common misconception that when a close relative passes away they immediately become our guide in the afterlife. Relatives and friends may come through with messages for us and be looking out for us, but that doesn't mean they are our guides or guardian angels.

When I was a youngster, my gran was very supportive and always encouraged me in whatever I did. This is still happening even now but it's being shown in a different way. It seems significant that my gran was taken from me when I most needed her to be by my side and yet she has helped me more than I could ever have dreamed of now she is in spirit. When I was a youngster, I thought I loved her, but over the years I've grown to understand that our relationship is much stronger than that. It's a bond that will never be broken.

I can now see how after-death communication is so precious to those who seek it. The connection I have with my gran is so important to me and something I really treasure.

I remember Christmas Day 1976 as clearly as if it were yesterday. Sitting at the dining table with mum and dad and the rest of the family, I started feeling very, very strange. Something inside my head just clicked and I became fully aware of everyone and everything around me. I could feel other people's pain. I could feel lots of energy, more than I'd ever been conscious of before. I became more vibrant, alert and complete. My brain seemed to have exploded and expanded, and I was suddenly aware of more than I had ever known previously. These few seconds of time were to change my life forever.

Everyone who was sitting around the table with me on that eventful Christmas Day was totally oblivious to this. They carried on eating and having a chat. However, experiencing this totally crazy event had changed me. I now felt that I was a piece of the people around me and in them. I was a piece of everything and in everything. I was still me, Derek, but I was also aware of this something else. This was something I wouldn't get to grips with for another 20 years, something I would put to sleep in my head and try to ignore until it resurfaced at the most unlikely time in my life.

During my final couple of years at primary school I became very friendly with my classmate Susan Lee and her younger brother Graeme. Graeme was eighteen months younger than me but we were around the same height and build and looked to be the same age. Graeme and I got on well and never fought or fell out. There was another boy who played in the street whose name was Eamonn and he was a year older than me. Graeme and I were inseparable during the long summer holidays. Things changed, though, when I went to secondary school and we didn't see each other much after that. Eventually we lost contact. I regret that because I really loved him.

Graeme died on 28 March 1984, when he was 17. I was 19 at the time and had just come home from college

when mum gave me the news. My gran had been to visit us the previous day and had mentioned that the bus she'd been on had driven past a car accident. I hadn't given this a second thought, and would never have dreamt for one second that Graeme would be the only passenger fatally injured in that crash. His death really affected me, though I kept those feelings close to my chest. Graeme was my first love and I've never told anyone until this moment. I couldn't even tell him. I was too scared to do something like that. It was the 1970s, and being gay wasn't as accepted as it is now. I was just an 11-year-old boy confused about my feelings for my closest friend, and that was that. I kept it quiet and tried to deal with it in the best way I could. I was glad that Graeme stopped calling me when I went to high school, and we didn't see each other as often. It hurt me just to be around him because I loved him so much. I did see Graeme when it was his turn to come up to the big school. I kept my distance from him, though, because I still had feelings for him and didn't want to be friends for all the wrong reasons. I respected him too much for that.

I miss Graeme to this day and think about him. What would he be like now? Would he and I have kept in touch? Would he have a wife and family and have reached his full potential in life?

When I think about Graeme it just makes the pain of his loss all the harder to bear. Graeme's spirit has been to

visit me on a few occasions, and as I write this he is by my side. He usually turns up when Eamonn and I are together, when I'm least expecting it, and sends us both messages. He loves to talk about the countless games of football and badminton we played when we were just boys. He misses those days and us as much as we miss him. He now realizes I had feelings for him and laughs about it with me, which is amazing. I loved Graeme, and although it's taken me 30 years to say it, I'm glad that I have. Those were great days and he was the best friend I ever had.

During my first couple of years at secondary school I found it very difficult to fit in. My cheery demeanour was just a front. Deep down, I hated just about every second of school life. I didn't want to tell my mum and dad or let on to anyone about my problems because I was worried what their reaction would be. I couldn't let anyone into my real world. How could I tell friends I could sense things I thought they couldn't? And, more importantly, how could I tell them I was gay? I just kept my head down and tried to get through those horrid days as quickly as possible.

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't change how I felt about boys, and this was beginning to prove embarrassing for me at school. I would get flustered when I saw boys I liked, and found it difficult to hide these emotions.

Inside, I became very angry about my situation. From this point in my life, I became determined to be a successful person. I wanted to hit back at the world for inflicting me with this 'gay disease' and giving me a sixth sense.

Around this time I stopped sensing the spirit world. Almost immediately, I became very insecure about myself and started to worry about what people thought of me. It was difficult enough knowing I was different because I was gay, but this was exacerbated by my ability to tune in to classmates and feel their energy. By my third or fourth year, I started finding it difficult to sit in class without having panic attacks, so I started sitting at the back whenever I could to hide away from everyone. I'd got it into my head that because I could feel energy, everyone else could as well. I thought that they just dealt with it better than me, which was why they hadn't mentioned it! Looking back, all of this seems crazy, but it was my way of dealing with my issues. Deep down I knew I was on my way to having an emotional breakdown.

I was clever at school but in no way reached my full potential. I struggled through my final years of schooling, sat my exams and ended up with enough qualifications to go to the local technical college. In many ways it was decided for me that I should do an engineering degree, so in order not to upset the apple cart I applied, signed the forms and was accepted.

I hated my course. I just didn't want to be an engineer. I wanted to be a pop star and on television. The problem was that I didn't know how to go about doing this so I forced myself to go to college and get a qualification, just in case my pop career didn't take off. It wasn't to be one of my better decisions.

I didn't fit in at college from day one. I wasn't the engineering type and had no real aptitude for or interest in it. In my second year, I had what I thought was a nervous breakdown. When I initially went to the doctor and told him I was having panic attacks on the bus and hot flushes in lectures, he told me I was just going through an awkward stage in my life. He suggested I might subconsciously be finding the pressures of college life a little difficult, and struggling to come to terms with the possibility that my childhood dreams weren't going to become reality. It was all very man-to-man, 'it's time to grow up' stuff but I knew there was more to it than that. I understood the reasons better than anyone but didn't want to share them in case I was ridiculed.

I went along with the doctor's theory that the pressures of college had made me unwell. This was not a total lie because I did hate every second of it. However, the truth was that I was finding it really difficult to cope with being gay and couldn't handle lying about my sexuality any longer. Additionally, I was even more conscious of energy

at that time, and could ‘feel’ things from people, especially my fellow students. I could sense their health problems and personal issues which, quite honestly, were sometimes a great deal more than I needed to know. I really thought I was going mad. I knew I had some sort of sixth sense but hadn’t realized why I had it or, more importantly, how I should use this ability. At that time it was more of a hindrance than a blessing, and I thought I needed some professional help in order to get these crazy thoughts out of my head.

I was never honest with the psychologist who was assigned to look after me. Within the first few minutes of meeting her I realized that all she understood had been programmed into her by her profession, a profession that had a total disregard for all things psychic. I had to face reality – what I thought I needed wasn’t going to come from her.

What I’d been trying to cope with was draining me every day. I was exhausted, both mentally and psychically. My nervous breakdown took its toll, and I was forced to repeat my second year at college. When I went back to college after the summer break I felt slightly better about myself. I was more confident and was beginning to come to terms with my situation, albeit in a rather weird way. I had made some decisions during the holidays. I was going to put my worries about being gay and psychic in a little

box, lock it and throw away the key. I decided that the more I ignored my issues, the less they would worry me and the happier I would become. I didn't even stop to contemplate what this decision could do to me psychologically. I would pretend I was just a normal, straight guy, and this was the image I would portray to my new college buddies.

My new fellow students were very different to the ones I'd been with in my previous years. They were friendlier and more socially aware, and I quickly made friends with a group of boys who would become a great influence in my life, although I didn't know it at the time.

One summer, I was looking to make some money, and one of my college pals, John, offered to go busking with me in Glasgow. John played guitar and I accompanied him on my accordion. We both had a go at singing but after a few hours it started to rain and we tried to find somewhere to shelter. John noticed that there was a music shop nearby so we went along to have a look as he was thinking about getting a new guitar.

I hit it off immediately with the music shop owner, Peter Bryce. I suddenly realized that if I bought a few guitars out of local papers or from students at college I could clean them up and sell them on in my new-found friend's music shop, hopefully making a profit. Within a few months, after much negotiation and wheeling and

dealing, The Guitar Store in Glasgow was born. I had new dreams now and knew that I had to follow them or I would be miserable for the rest of my life, so I left college during my finals, much to mum and dad's annoyance, and set my sights on being a businessman.