

What Do You Ask?

The following questions are suggested for certain investigations of apparitions, poltergeists, and hauntings. Keep in mind that these questions may have to be chosen according to whether they are applicable to the experience reported and to the family (or office) situation. For these questions, besides some of my own composition, I have drawn on those suggested by William G. Roll and Dr. J. G. Pratt (published in Roll's book, *The Poltergeist*, first printed in *Theta*, the Journal of the Psychical Research Foundation, Number 16, Winter, 1967), and a questionnaire developed by Cynthia Siegel and Sharon Solfvin.

Also, remember to ask the applicable questions not only of the people directly involved (those who actually witnessed something or who live or work in the situations) but also throw them at any secondary witnesses (e.g., neighbors or police or priests) who may have learned what was going on.

INITIAL QUESTIONS (to help determine whether an investigation is warranted)

1. Please give a general description of the occurrences.
2. Please list the names and ages of all those living/working in the situation where the disturbances have taken place.
3. Please list the relationships of all those in household/office to one another (their place in the family in relation to everyone else; positions in the office and works with whom; etc.)
4. Are there any pets?
5. What are the occupations of those in the location who are or have been working?
6. Please give educational background of all those in the location.
7. Where have the occurrences taken place? Address and specific locations within the premises, please. Describe the premises, please.
8. How long have you lived/worked there?
9. Any disturbances noted at previous addresses?
10. When did the current disturbances begin?
11. What sorts of things went on at the beginning?
12. What did you think of them?
13. When was the most recent incident?
14. Would you say the occurrences are frequent? Are they occurring with any apparent regularity?
15. Have the disturbances been increasing in frequency and severity since they first began?
16. Who are those people directly involved? What did they experience?
17. Any witnesses from outside the household/office? Please give their names, occupations, and phone numbers. What did they experience, as far as you know?
18. Is there a pattern of any kind to these disturbances that you've noticed (i.e., when the events occurred, what sorts of objects were affected, what locations were involved, who was around at the time, etc.)?

19. Have you looked for ordinary, normal explanations? What makes you sure the events are paranormal?
20. Have you or any of the others involved had any psychic experiences in the past?
21. Have you (or anyone else who witnessed the events) been interested in psychic phenomena for a while? Has family discussed psychic phenomena in the past? If so, in what context?
22. Does anyone involved have a theory as to what may be going on?
23. Have you contacted any "experts"? (Such as, obviously, a parapsychologist, or psychologist, police, priest, rabbi, psychic, etc.)
24. If so, what did/do they have to say?
25. What kinds of books or articles have you read about psychic phenomena or the occult/supernatural/unsolved mysteries?
26. Have you seen films like *Ghostbusters*, *Poltergeist*, *The Entity*, *The Amityville Horror*, *Dreamscape*, *Resurrection*, *The Exorcist*, *The Fury*, *Carrie*, etc.? Which ones?
27. What did you think of them (in terms of how they portrayed psychic experiences/disturbances)?
28. How about others involved? Reading? Films? TV shows?
29. What are your feelings/beliefs regarding psychic phenomena or the spiritual world? Religious background (both family and your present religious status)?
30. Have you ever taken any courses on parapsychology, the occult, or any self-development or psychic development courses? The others?
31. Have you or any of the others ever been to see a psychic?
32. Has there been any publicity of these events? In other words, has the press found out about what's going on? If so, which members of the media, and how can we contact them? If not, can you be sure there won't be any publicity (can you keep this quiet... the press tends to disrupt investigations)?
33. What would you like done to help you?
34. Would you allow me and perhaps some colleagues to do a serious investigation of the occurrences in your home/office?

The above questions should give you a good handle on the beliefs, background, and thoughts of at least the person being initially interviewed (which we generally do by phone), and a general idea of what the psi disturbance might be. The answers to these questions will certainly give you enough to decide whether or not to go ahead with an investigation. Again, you might want to ask some of these questions of the others involved, when you get to them. In addition, the background questions in the above group will help you assess the kind of people you're dealing with.

You also might want to ask everyone involved to fill out the survey in Appendix D, to get a feel for the kinds of experiences they may have had.

Who/What/When/Where/How

These questions will help you narrow down the general patterning of the disturbances/experiences. You could, of course, ask these questions from the start, but you may get a better handle on what's going on if they are asked when you are actually in the location where the incidents are occurring. In some respects these questions do duplicate some of the aims of the above questions, but it helps to ask some of the same questions in different ways, since by doing so you can often pick up different pieces of the puzzle (in other words, the answers may differ slightly).

1. Have you connected the disturbances with any particular people witnessing or living/working in the location? With any particular visitors?
2. If there is an apparition seen, does the apparition represent anyone identifiable (does anyone know "who" the apparition represents)?
3. Are there particular activities going on when the incidents occur (such as eating, watching TV, arguments, etc.)? Explain.
4. Are there certain times during the day or night when the incidents appear to be more frequent? If so, when are they?
5. Are the events seen to occur more in one spot (or in more than one place) than in others (certain rooms or parts of the room)? Where are these places?
6. Are certain people seemingly more affected than others? Who? What reactions do the people in the situation have when confronted by one of the disturbances?
7. Do all witnesses to the events have to be around for anything to happen? If not, give examples of such incidents where not everyone was around, and who was there.
8. Have any disturbances been noted to occur when no one was around (i.e., has anyone noted the after-effects of a disturbance that may have occurred with no witnesses, perhaps by objects having been moved)?
9. Has any one person appeared to be very close to the starting points of moving objects? Do you think there's any chance that that person could have physically thrown or pushed the objects to simulate a paranormal event?
10. Is there any reason to think that someone in the home/office might fake the events?
11. Have you thought about normal explanations for some or all of the events? Have you taken note of outside sounds, vibrations, etc. (such as a truck rumbling down the street) when the occurrences happen?

The Phenomena

These questions will help you get a good picture of the actual goings-on. Remember not to jump to any immediate conclusions about the events being paranormal. Always look everywhere for normal explanations for the events, whether considering fraud or problems with the electrical system or earth movements, before making a "paranormal" judgment. Also, I want to say not all of these questions are applicable to any one situation, given that many of them

relate to physical disturbances (like those in a poltergeist case) or to a haunting where there may or may not be noises heard or objects affected.

1. Please describe the disturbances/experiences in terms of what you actually observed. (Note: this should be asked of everyone involved, both in separate interviews and later in the presence of all witnesses.)

2. Were there any unusual feelings or emotions associated with the disturbances/experiences?

3. How often do they occur?

4. Who first noticed them? When were they first noticed? Under what circumstances?

5. Please describe the experiences/observations of the others to the best of your knowledge.

6. In terms of movement of objects, describe the movements and what was unusual about them. Did objects seemingly take flight or visibly move by themselves? Were there unusual flight patterns (in other words, did they move like someone had pushed or thrown them, or did they make unusual curves in the air or on a surface, such as making right-angle turns)?

7. Could someone have been near enough to an object to move, push, or throw it, either purposely or by accident?

8. Did objects hit their final resting point with unusual force?

9. Did they make unusually loud noises when they struck something?

10. Were breakable objects seen to move and strike something without breaking?

11. Were heavier objects seen to move or rearrange themselves (such as furniture being piled up, especially in such a way that one person could not have done it)? Describe, please. Were these objects seen in motion, or were they simply discovered in rearranged fashion after had been moved?

12. Has anyone seen an object start its motion? In other words, have there been any witnesses to an object disturbance beginning with the point just before it took flight or began to move?

13. What were the objects affected? Any particular kind of object affected more than others? Any particular single affected more than others? If yes to either one, are any relationships between the object(s) and any of the people in the household/office?

14. Have you noticed any metal objects particularly affected? Bent silverware, for example? If yes, are you certain no one could have had access to the pieces and bent them normally? Any chance that the pieces of metal/silverware could have already been bent through normal use (and that you simply never noticed the bends)?

15. Have there been any unusual electrically related effects? Have appliances, TVs, stereos, lights, or computers been affected? If so, to what extent and how frequently? When any particular person(s) were around?

16. If certain persons were associated with the appliances/ devices, what are their attitudes towards the function of those devices (i.e., if a vacuum cleaner,

does the person hate housework? If a computer, does the person dislike computers)?

17. Have there been any occurrences of unusual noises? Have these sounds been found to have a cause connected with them, or have they occurred with no seeming cause? Describe the sounds and why you think them unusual.

18. Have any of the sounds been connected in any way with the movement/disturbance of physical objects?

19. When the others who have witnessed the events had their first experiences, were they aware of previous encounters or observations or experiences by those who first noticed them? What did they know about them, if anything?

20. Have there been instances where one or more persons saw an apparition (ghost)? If yes, please describe what was seen.

21. If nothing was seen, yet you (and others) are sure there is something there (a presence or "entity" or "force"), what makes you so sure?

22. Have voices been heard, either with or without the appearance of an apparitional form? Were attempts made to see if the voices had a (living or mechanical) source?

23. Have unusual smells been noticed? What was unusual about them? Have they appeared at only certain times or only in certain areas? Have they been localized, yet mobile (confined to a specific area in the air, yet that area has been observed to move about)? Were attempts made to find a natural source of the smell?

24. Who has been around in each instance of a visual apparition? Of voices? Of unusual smells?

25. Have you or anyone else gotten unusual feelings in a particular place or at particular times (example, do you sense a "presence" or get "cold chills" under certain conditions/in certain locations)?

26. Has the temperature of the location been affected unusually? Have normal causes been looked at as being behind such effects?

27. Have there been times when apparitions/ghosts, smells, voices, footsteps, or odd noises have been experienced by only some of the people (or just one person) and not by others at the same time? Please describe these instances.

28. Have the images been associated with particular people or events? Have they been associated with particular people who are witnesses to the events or whom you know (example, maybe the ghost is that of your Uncle Harry from Cincinnati)? Were these images connected with the past (the past of the people present or of the house) or with the present (could the images represent living persons or current/future events)?

29. How about the noises or the smells (if present)? Could they be connected with persons not present (living or dead)? Or can they be connected with the house or building (past or present)?

30. Did the witnesses who had the experience of seeing/hearing a ghost know about that person (whom the ghost represents) before the experience?

31. In the case of images seen, did everyone who saw something see the exact same thing, or were there the kinds of differences one would expect if the apparition had been a living person, there in the flesh? (In other words, if one person stood in front of where the apparition appeared, and another behind it, did the people see the figure from the proper perspective [front and back] or not?)

32. Describe the behavior of the apparition(s). Does the apparition repeat the same activity every time it appears? Or does it seem as if it is aware of your presence as well?

33. Is there attempted communication on the part of the apparition? Have you or anyone else who has experienced the apparition tried to communicate with it? Any results (like communications back, reactions on the part of the apparition, changes in behavior of the phenomena, etc.)?

34. Would you say the apparition seems to be one that is conscious or aware of its surroundings, that it is an intelligent "entity"?

35. If not, would you say that the experience might represent a past event repeating itself like a video "instant-replay"?

36. What is known about the house/building? Previous owners? History of the location it stands on?

37. How did you feel just before the experience(s) (physically, mentally, and emotionally)? Any common factors between each of the experiences?

38. How did you feel while the experience was actually happening?

39. How did you feel/react after the experience(s) was completed?

40. Did you discuss the experiences with anyone (witness or not) just after it happened? Describe the discussions.

The above questions should give you a fairly complete picture of the phenomenon itself, what may be going on, paranormally or otherwise. Keep in mind that all witnesses and others connected should be asked their opinions and given the chance to answer all relevant questions, so as to help form that complete picture.

Interactions and Symbols

Given that I (and the folks I interviewed for the "Handbook" section of this book) have talked about looking at the incidents as symbolic of underlying psychological and interpersonal dynamics, more or less viewing the disturbances as dreams come to life (but dreams nonetheless), you should try to pick out the symbolic meaning of the experiences. I have a few suggested questions below, but really one needs to explore the lives of the people involved, the relationships, their history as a family or work group, to get that overall picture of how to deal with the phenomena.

1. Do you see the events as representing any emotions or tensions that you or others may have at the moment?

2. Have there been any changes in the daily routine/ lives of the people involved (such as new job, new, school, divorce, marriage, death of relative or

friend, etc.)? If so, what are they? When did they happen in relation to the disturbances?

3. Do you see the way the disturbances/experiences are happening as being symbolic of anyone's emotional state or thought processes?

4. Are the events perhaps symbolic of any problems that may be going on between people in the affected group (here, not just direct witnesses, but all those with relationship to the people having the experiences)?

5. If you were to pretend this were all happening in a dream, what would you make of it (the "dream," that is)?

6. Are there any visible problems between the people having the experiences and anyone else?

7. Is anyone particularly tense or frustrated or under some stress? What do you think this may be related to (job, friendships, housework, sexual relationships, school, lack of leisure time, etc.)?

8. What would you say your overall health (both physical and mental) was before the experiences began?

9. What would you say your overall health (both physical and mental) has been since the disturbances started?

10. Are you taking any medication or non-prescription drugs? What are they?

11. Are you drinking alcohol, drinks with caffeine, or taking in a lot of sugar, or smoking tobacco? Which one(s), and how much?

12. Was there any change in your diet or use of the above substances before the initial experiences?

13. Has there been any change in your diet or use of the above substances since the disturbances began?

14. Are you or any of the others currently under the care of a doctor or psychological counselor/therapist?

15. Do you practice: yoga, meditation, self-hypnosis, biofeedback, relaxation exercises, or physical exercises?

16. Would you be willing to work on any social, psychological, or physical problems that may be related to the incidence of the disturbances?

17. Would you be willing to see a counselor, therapist, or doctor if that is the most positive way to help deal with the experiences?

18. Are you interested in participating in future parapsychological research, or in learning more about the field?

There you have it. If you apply these questions to the experience and ask the appropriate ones of all involved, you should have an excellent idea of what may be going on, not only as far as potential paranormal events are concerned, but also as far as the underlying problems are concerned.

I mentioned earlier that Gertrude Schmeidler and Thelma Moss came up with a way to help understand what may be going on in haunting cases (whether there's an apparition or not): that is, to have a group of psi sensitives each give independent assessments of what they think is going on. They came up with a list of activities and adjectives to help pin down the apparition/haunting. The use

of this checklist, which I have added to, is appropriate for everyone involved in the situation, whether witnesses to phenomena or not. One can take all independent lists and see if the perceptions of what is going on are similar or not.

The list was first published in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (Volume 62, October 1968) in an article entitled "Quantitative Investigation of a 'Haunted House' with Sensitives and a Control Group."

Instructions: Circle those descriptive terms that seem to relate to the ghost's activity or intent. Cross out any terms that are opposite to what you think relates to the ghost or presence. Those terms that are not applicable you can just leave alone.

Afraid
Angry
Annoying someone
Attacking someone
Bored
Building something
Cautious
Cold/nonfeeling
Compassionate/warm
Cooking something
Communicating
Crazy
Crying
Dancing
Depressed
Eating
Fearful
Floating above the ground
Flying in the air
Fun-loving
Gesturing in a specific way
Getting rid of someone/something
Happy
Harassing someone
Helping someone
Hiding himself
Humorous
Insulting someone
Intelligent
Laughing
Lonely
Loving
Lying down
Mischievous

Mocking someone/something
Musing
Nonthinking
Obnoxious
Pacing restlessly
Passive
Peering around
Playful
Playing a musical instrument
Playing a game
Protective (of someone or something)
Purposeful
Pursuing someone
Puttering around
Reading
Repairing something
Resting
Restless
Running
Sad
Sarcastic
Searching for someone or something
Sensual
Serious
Sewing
Shy
Singing
Sitting
Standing up
Stealing something
Stern
Talking
Threatening someone
Trapped
Vengeful
Violent
Walking/moving in a definite direction
Wandering aimlessly
Writing

In addition to the above list, you might add a few more descriptive adjectives that relate to the activities the images or presences or ghosts are carrying out, or to the accompanying emotions or behavior.

Also, you may ask all to take down physical descriptions of sights, sounds, smells, and their own feelings.