

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.) If so, what did/do they have to say?
24. What kinds of books or articles have you read about psychic phenomena or the occult/supernatural/unsolved mysteries?
25. Have you seen films like *Ghostbusters*, *Poltergeist*, *The Entity*, *The Amityville Horror*, *Dreamscape*, *Resurrection*, *The Exorcist*, *The Fury*, *Carrie*, etc.? Which ones?
26. What did you think of them (in terms of how they portrayed psychic experiences/disturbances)?
27. How about others involved? Reading? Films? TV shows?
28. What are your feelings/beliefs regarding psychic phenomena or the spiritual world? Religious background (both family and your present religious status)?
29. Have you ever taken any courses on parapsychology, the occult, or any self-development or psychic development courses? The others?
30. Have you or any of the others ever been to see a psychic?
31. 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)?
32. What would you like done to help you?
33. 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.