



# Formal Bio

Diane Hennacy Powell, M.D.

Author, public speaker, researcher and practicing psychiatrist

She has spoken in venues that vary from international scientific conferences to news and talk shows, including Dr. Phil. Her education has been both broad and deep. She feels honored to have trained and worked with some of the best minds of the century, including several Nobel laureates.

## Early Years

Biophysics and neuroscience captivated her attention as an undergraduate at Ohio State University. While taking classes, she worked in neurochemistry, biophysics and neurophysiology laboratories and published an academic article in neurochemistry. Her experiences in the lab helped her realize she wanted to understand human consciousness, which meant going into medicine rather than graduate school.

## Medical Training

While attending Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, she was taught by giants in their fields. Vernon Mountcastle and Sol Snyder taught her neuroscience, and Alan Walker was her anatomy instructor. Hamilton Smith oversaw her microbiology lab. She co-published research on the genetics of Alzheimer's Disease with Marshal Folstein and did neuroscience research in Joseph Coyle's laboratory. After receiving her medical degree in 1983, he stayed at Johns Hopkins to complete postdoctoral training in medicine, neurology, and psychiatry.

In January 1987 she trained for six months at The Institute of Psychiatry in London, England with Sir Michael Rutter, who was knighted for his work on autism. In July 1987, Dr. Powell joined the faculty of Harvard Medical School where she taught neuropsychiatry, and gained experience in cross-cultural psychiatry and mind-body medicine. She moved in July 1989 to engage in molecular biology research at the University of California at San Diego during the Human Genome Project.



### **Original Work**

In 1990, Dr. Powell was invited to join a weekly discussion about gender differences led by Maureen O'Hara, a Professor of Women's Studies at San Diego State University. There was a wealth of research on psychological differences between men and women coming from respected sources, such as the Stone Center at Wellesley College. Using her neuroscience background, Dr. Powell found correlations between these and neuro-anatomical and genetic differences in the brains of men and women. This information had never been mentioned in the popular press because it was considered politically incorrect during the 70's and 80's.

After Dr. Powell constructed theories about the relative contributions of biological and cultural influences on gender, she taught an upper division course at UCSD based on this research and her theories. In 1996 she became one of the original members of a think tank, the La Jolla Group for Understanding the Origin of Humans, which included such world-renown scientists as Floyd Bloom, V.S. Ramachandran, George Palade, Fred Gage and Francis Crick.

### **The Brain and Consciousness**

As she delved deeply into science, it became increasingly apparent that our model for the brain and human consciousness was seriously flawed and incomplete. She chose to continue her research in the private sector and served as the Director of Research for the John E. Mack Institute (JEMI) after John, a former colleague at Harvard, passed in 2004. Her research interests included the neuroscience of extraordinary states of human consciousness and anomalous experiences. This is discussed in detail in her 2008 book *The ESP Enigma: A Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena*.

In 2010, she was invited to participate in a private symposium on Wasan Island, sponsored by the Brueninger Foundation. Jeff Kripal, Sudhir Kakar, Dean Radin and others also were in attendance. The 2012 book, *Seriously Strange: Thinking Anew about Psychological Experiences*, is an academic compilation that arose from this gathering with each participant contributing a chapter.

### **Clinical Practice**

Dr. Powell's clinical practice has been diverse and international in scope. She has been the Assistant Clinical Director of the Consultation-Liaison Service at Harvard's Cambridge Hospital and the Chief Psychiatrist of the Emergency Room



at Brockton Multi-Service Center. She provided training and psychotherapy to Soviet psychologists in Moscow in 1990.

In the early 1990's she co-created and served as Clinical Director of the McCandliss Center for Women in Chula Vista, California. It was a treatment center for survivors of sexual assault, mothers with post-partum depression, and women with eating disorders. In 2001, she started the psychiatric program for Survivors of Torture, International in San Diego, California. It still provides treatment to refugees and asylum seekers from countries where genocide, torture, and terrorism have resulted in severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

### **Pioneering Work**

A strong advocate for human rights, Dr. Powell is the great niece of the famous peace activist Ammon Hennacy, and is descended from a long line of Quakers. She is a co-founder of the International Association of Women for Change, and participated in the United Nations Conference on Women and Children in Beijing in 1995.

Dr. Powell was one of the panelists for the PBS documentary, *The Science of Peace* and the principle author of *The 2007 Shift Report: Evidence of a World Transforming*, which was published and distributed internationally by The Institute of Noetic Sciences. Jean Houston purchased several hundred copies and gave them to members of the United Nations when she spoke before them later that year.

Dr. Powell has also contributed a chapter to *Beyond Forgiveness: Reflections on Atonement*, a book with chapters by writers on spirituality and human rights including Huston Smith, James O'Dea, Arun Gandhi, and Michael Beckwith. She also serves on the board of The Jean Houston Foundation, whose "mission is to promote positive social change by developing international communities of leaders in Social Artistry to apply a wide range of cutting edge leadership and human potential development skills for finding innovative solutions to critical local and global issues. The Foundation offers training, research, consultation, leadership, and guidance with the aim to advance individual, social and cultural development both locally and globally."

[Continue Reading About Dr. Diane](#)