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LESSON ONE - Past Life Therapy

Past Life Therapy (PLT), sometimes called Past Life Regression Therapy (PLRT), raises the important question as to whether or not we have a spiritual evolution on earth that is fulfilled through successive incarnations. Many oriental cultures have accepted pre-existence and reincarnation in one form or another for millennia. Furthermore, due to the cross-fertilisation of ideas between cultures, these beliefs are becoming increasingly popular in the West. Indeed, these ideas were the norm in the West too before the arrival of Christianity.

In this course I am not going to ask you, the student, to subscribe to any particular religious, spiritual, scientific, or any other view of what actually is occurring during the performance of a past life regression session. You should carefully analyse the evidence and, after gaining experience from carrying out PLT, form your own opinion.

In essence PLT as taught in this course involves the use of hypnosis and the hypnotic trance to assist the subject in moving his or her mind back through time to a point before they were born. On reaching this point you, the therapist will then carry out a question and answer session with the subject, drawing from them the impressions that they are forming in this (putative ?) time before birth.

The course will teach you in detail how to assist your client to enter hypnosis and how to regress them to this time before birth. Contrary to what you may have been informed, creating the correct environment for your subject to enter hypnosis, assisting your subject to reach a suitable level of hypnosis, and then releasing them from hypnosis is relatively easy to achieve. This course of study will provide you with the information that you need to achieve this effectively. The real work comes when the client is in hypnosis. That is to say, the work of carrying out regression and analysis.

Generally speaking the prevalent view amongst past life therapists is that one is dealing with reincarnation. It would be very remiss of me if I did not point out the possibility of other explanations and provide you with possible reasons for each. Some possible explanations for what happens during a past life regression session are :

- Reincarnation.
- Cryptomnesia.
- The Collective Unconscious.
- Genetic Memory Transmission.

Reincarnation.

"As long as you are not aware of the continual law of Die and Be Again, you are merely a vague guest on a dark Earth." : Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

There are probably as many theories of reincarnation as there are believers but the basic idea is that, when a person dies, the only thing that actually dies, that is to say experiences "death", is the physical body. The mind, which contains a person's mental impressions, continues after the body's death. When the person is reborn, the "birth" is of a new physical body accompanied by the old mind with the impressions, behavioural patterns, and memories from previous lives. When the environment becomes conducive, these behavioural patterns and memories can be brought to consciousness and allowed to reassert themselves in the new (current) life.

It is generally believed that this process does not continue on an eternal cycle of life death-life-death-life It is believed that when we attain complete self-realisation, the law of karma is transcended (or fulfilled). At this stage the Self gives up its identification with the body and mind, and regains its native freedom. It is deemed to have found perfection and a state of bliss or Parinirvana (the final stage of Nirvana).

Reincarnation is often thought of as a Asian import, something originating in Hinduism and Buddhism. This may be true but the import happened thousands of years ago. I will cite just one Welsh Celtic belief as evidence for this. The Mabinogion tells us that Arianrod is the Welsh mother goddess. Her name is interpreted variously as meaning 'silver wheel', 'silver circle' or 'high fruitful mother'. She is the weaver of the threads of life, the stern mistress of fate. Her home, *Caer Arianrod* ('The Castle of Arianrod' or 'the Castle of the Silver Wheel'), is the place of death and rebirth. As the silver wheel turns constantly so does the cycle of life, death and rebirth. Another name for *Caer Arianrod* is *Caer Sidi*.

"My Chair is in Caer Sidi, where no one is afflicted with age or illness. Manawyd and Pryderi have known it well. It is surrounded by three circles of fire. To the borders of that place come the ocean's flood, A fruitful fountain plays before it, Whose liquor is sweeter than the finest wine."

From 'The Defence of the Chair' by <u>Taliesin</u> the Bard, translated by John Matthews

So the Castle of Arianrod is the old Welsh name for the place where we rest between incarnations. It was said that after being "three times in the Castle of Arianrod a soul would have experienced everything and overcome all challenges and would no longer need to reincarnate. This is the same as the Hindu / Buddhist concept of Parinirvana.

It should be kept in mind however that three is the mystical / symbolic number of completeness so should not be taken to literally mean that just three lifetimes are enough. The actual number could well be hundreds, thousands or even millions of lifetimes. The Celtic bards were wise enough not to commit themselves on this point using a purely symbolic number instead. If you wish to read more on this subject I highly recommend <u>Celtic Myth & Legend</u> by Charles Squire

So we should not consider reincarnation to be a strange foreign idea. It is in fact deeply routed in the beliefs of ancient Britain. It is part of our own native spiritual heritage.

It is interesting to speculate why the old Celtic religious tradition in Britain is so similar to Hinduism and Buddhism. This really is beyond the scope of this course but I will just mention in passing that some scholars believe India to be the original home of the wandering Celtic people who migrated across Asia and Europe over some thousands of years. See the classic work, <u>Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations</u> by James Cowles Prichard.

<u>Karma</u> is the Hindu / Buddhist name for the law of moral causation or cause & effect. The theory of Karma is a fundamental doctrine in Hinduism and Buddhism. Observation of life provokes questions such as:

• What is the cause of the inequality that exists among people?

• Why should one person be brought up in the lap of luxury, endowed with fine mental, moral and physical qualities, and another in absolute poverty, steeped in misery?

• Why should one person be a mental prodigy, and another an idiot?

• Why should one person be born with social responsibility and another with criminal tendencies?

□ Why should some be linguistic, artistic, mathematically inclined, or musical from the very cradle?

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Why should others be congenitally blind, deaf, or deformed?

• Why should some be apparently blessed, and others cursed from their births?

Either these inequalities of mankind have a cause, or they are purely accidental. Karma states that in this world nothing happens to a person that he or she does not for some reason or other deserve, although the workings of this are usually completely beyond our comprehension.

Karma also informs us that the definite invisible cause of the present life visible effect is not necessarily confined to the present life, thus by implication the cause may be traced to a proximate or remote past birth.

According to Buddhism, this inequality between individuals is due not only to heredity, environment, "nature and nurture", but is also due to Karma. That is to say, such inequalities are the result of our own past actions and our own present doings. We ourselves, and no one else, are entirely responsible for our own happiness and our own misery. We are the architects of our own fate. We create our own Heaven and we can create our own Hell right here on Earth.

According to the story a young truth-seeker, perplexed by the seemingly inexplicable yet apparent disparity that existed among humanity, approached the Buddha and questioned him about the problem of inequality:

"What is the cause, what is the reason, O Lord," questioned he, "that we find amongst mankind the short-lived and long-lived, the healthy and the diseased, the ugly and beautiful, those lacking influence and the powerful, the poor and the rich, the low-born and the high-born, and the ignorant and the wise?"

The Buddha's reply was: "All living beings have actions (Karma) as their own, their inheritance, their congenital cause, their kinsman, their refuge. It is Karma that differentiates beings into low and high states."

He then explained the cause of such differences in accordance with the law of cause and effect. The law of karma.

Beyond Karma: Another popular view is that the real life lies on the other side of the veil. If so, what is it that we experience on this side? Is life a dream?

"Row, row, row your boat Gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, Life is but a dream" – Traditional

Is life a school where we learn to perfect or existence? Is life an outwards bound course which we take for recreation or to help us build character? Maybe it is all these things and more, much, much more.

If it is these things then it follows that we come here willingly to face the challenges that we choose. According to this theory, "misfortunes" are not the punishments imposed by Karma but the "opportunities" for growth which we have chosen for ourselves.

This theory ally accounts for the amnesia that we experience at birth and why it is so hard to remember our past lives. To benefit from the game we must play the cards we have been dealt (or have dealt ourselves). If we had full knowledge of all that had gone before, and of what is to come, we would not get the full benefit from the experience of overcoming our challenges.

<u>**Cryptomnesia.**</u> Let us examine some data concerning a phenomenon known as **cryptomnesia**. This is a condition in which a person has memories or skills which can be accessed, but which were acquired subconsciously or through subtle, subliminal means. The person in question typically has no knowledge at all of where or when these memories came from. Such memories or skills may be stored for long periods of time before surfacing, which usually occurs at strange times: hypnotic trance, meditation, autohypnosis or even as a result of head trauma (imagine getting smashed on the head and suddenly finding yourself fluent in Portuguese!).

The peculiar and often eerie nature of cryptomnesia may lead those experiencing or witnessing it to the conclusion that these memories are from some supernatural agency, part of a previous life, a demonic or spirit possession or even from divine or angelic inspiration. Researchers often examine purported spirit contacts, past life memories and the like for errors, which may have been published somewhere. This would strongly suggest that the case may be cryptomnesia and not some more mystical source.

An example of cryptomnesia is the bizarre phenomenon of xenoglossy, a condition in which a person may have skills in a language which they have never studied and may even have no memory of having contact with. Another type of cryptomnesia is automatic writing, wherein a person may hand write or type a large amount of strange stuff without consciously willing to do so. The writer may have no clue where the writing comes from, and may not remember knowing anything about the content.

A very famous early recorded case of cryptomnesia occurred in 1874. An English medium named William Stanton Moses claimed to be in contact with the spirits of two recently departed Indian boys. This information was later shown to have been picked up by her from a newspaper obituary days earlier.

Another interesting example of cryptomnesia happened on a television programme in 1977. A woman was hypnotised and told vivid tales of a past-life experience. She recounted a story about a famous witch who was tried and acquitted in 1566, but gave the date as 1556. This date had come from a reprint that the woman had seen in the British Museum.

While some people might feel a little disappointment over the holes apparently blown in some reported cases of past-life regression or spirit visitation, cryptomnesia is an extremely interesting phenomenon from a psychological perspective. Jung made the claim that cryptomnesia is a normal part of the process of learning and the process by which memories are stored and consolidated in the mind. This phenomenon is sometimes termed cryptanamnesia or source amnesia (because the source of the memory is forgotten).

What I have just set down is very much the orthodox "scientific" view. You will note that I write "scientific" in quotation marks. I do this because science demands proof, incontrovertible proof. Since the orthodox view does not provide any proof it can hardly be dignified by science.

The Collective Unconscious.

A view that does not embrace the idea of reincarnation is that, in past life recall, a person's unconscious may be dipping into a universal memory bank. <u>Carl Gustav Jung</u> called this the <u>collective unconscious</u>.

Consciousness is described by Jung as having developed as part of the evolutionary process. The **ego** is considered to be the centre of the conscious personality. Jung considers the ego to be less developed in preliterate cultures as he considers persons from such cultures to have less concentrated reflection and therefore have a smaller "area of consciousness".

Although how Jung could or would have measured this remains somewhat of a mystery. Jung concluded that preliterate cultures are more easily influenced by the stirrings of the unconscious than those more literate cultures of the West.

In Jung's structural hierarchy of mind, the unconscious realm lies below the conscious realm. The unconscious is considered to be the matrix out of which consciousness emerges in each succeeding generation. Immediately below the consciousness is the **personal unconscious.** The character of the personal unconscious is determined by the personal past of the individual. Its contents are the personal experiences of the individual's own lifetime, some of which have been repressed and others which have simply been forgotten.

Within this personal unconscious lie what are referred to as **complexes**. Complexes are ideas and thought that are coloured by emotion. These are splitoff from consciousness as a result of traumatic influences and/or incompatible tendencies in the person's past. Such complexes may help or hinder conscious activity.

A complex, for example the mother complex, can become an autonomous and fragmentary personality within the individual. This fragmentary personality appears to live a life of its own. It dominates the individual's thoughts, feelings and actions. Usually disturbing or harmful, complexes can act positively by challenging the individual to seek new possibilities. Jung believed that such unresolved problems were essential for psychic, that is to say coherent mental, activity.

Deeper yet in the psyche, according to Jung, hidden beneath the layers of the personal unconscious, are other layers that have been formed by evolution over the millennia and in every member of our species. Here, Jung says, lie the deposited residue of the experience of pre-human evolutionary forms. Images retained in the human psyche from our long, uphill, evolutionary struggle.

These layers beneath the personal unconscious form what Jung called the **collective unconscious.** This is probably the most important and controversial of Jung's theories. In the dreams and fantasies of his patients, Jung found ideas and images whose origins, he felt, could not be traced to the individual's personal experiences. The resemblance of these ideas to religious / mythical / spiritual themes led Jung to refer to them as primordial images or **archetypes**.

Jung thought that Archetypes are not memories of past experiences but "*forms without content*" representing the possibility of a certain type of perception and action. Archetypes provide a certain kind of readiness to produce the same or similar mythical ideas over and over again in all people.

Jung considered them to be "*the ruling powers, the gods, images of the dominant laws and principles, and of typical, regularly occurring events in the soul's cycle of experience.*" Archetypes are responsible for that quality that makes us what we are – human beings. They are also active agents that cause the repetition of these same experiences in all of us.

A brief note on mythology. People who do not understand mythology often use the work "myth" to mean an untruth but this is not correct. Myths are like parables. The story itself may or may not be literally true but is intended to convey a deeper, hidden truth. Those of you who are interested in looking my deeply into the role and meaning of mythology may like to read the works of Joseph Campbell.

We can only know of the manifestations of the archetypes, historical and individual, and thus we are able to say very little concerning them. Jung speculated that there are as many archetypes as there are typical persons and typical situations found in human experience. In view of the fact that archetypes appear to penetrate all of human experience, it is not possible to clearly describe them or circumscribe their limits of operation or manifestation. To put it more simply, archetypes do not lend themselves to reductive explanation. To Jung, such explanation or circumscription was neither possible not even desirable.

From his years of experience of psychiatric work and phenomenological research into religions and mythologies, Jung was able to identify several key motifs or roles that archetypes can take. The ones that he believed were of particular importance included the *persona*, the *shadow*, the *anima/animus*, the *mother*, the *child*, the *wise old man*, and the *self*.

The **persona** is the mask we wear to make a particular impression on others. The persona may reveal and conceal our real nature. It is called an artificial personality because it is a compromise between a person's real individuality and society's expectations of what the external personality should be. Generally speaking we can mostly observe that society's demands have a tendency to take precedence. The persona is made up of things like professional titles, roles, habits of social behaviour and so forth. It does have a purpose which is to both guarantee social order and to protect the individual's private life.

The **shadow** is a step further towards self-realisation providing one can recognise it and integrate it. The shadow is the negative or inferior (that is to say undeveloped) side of the personality. It is sometime thought of as being the dark side.

It is said to be made up of all the reprehensible characteristics that each of us wish to deny, including the primitive urges and tendencies that we have inherited from our pre-human ancestors. The shadow is said to coincide with the personal unconscious.

The less aware of the shadow we are, the blacker and denser it is. The more dissociated it becomes from our conscious life, then the more it will display a compensatory demonic dynamism. Sometimes it projects outwards on individual or groups who are then thought to embody all the immature, selfish, or repressed elements of the individual's own psyche. Jung considered that symbols of archetypes such as the devil and the serpent contain elements of the shadow. As an interesting aside, those students who are familiar with the major arcana of the Tarot, will be able to note the significance of card XV The Devil as a representation of the shadow.

Once one has come to terms with one's shadow, one is confronted by the **anima** (female) or **animus** (male). This is the archetype which is said to personify the soul, or inner attitude. It is usually a persona and can often take on some of the characteristics of the opposite sex. The **anima** represents the feminine in men, and is derived from three sources namely, (a) individual man's experience with women as companion; (b) man's own femininity which has its roots in the minority of female genes and hormones present in man's body; and (c) the inherited collective image that has been formed from man's historical collective experience of woman.

The anima often appears in dreams particularly when it remains submerged in the unconscious. It may also be projected outwards onto other women, in the first instance the mother, then lover and wife as the man develops and grows. This projection can be responsible for the passionate attraction or aversion that a particular woman may trigger in a man. It is also responsible for the adult male's general apprehension of the nature of women and of the feminine principle.

Jung was of the opinion that, should a man mistakenly identify with the anima, then the result can be a tendency towards effeminacy or more extremely homosexuality.

The **animus** is the comparable counterpart in the female psyche. It is said to be the woman's image of a man. The animus may appear in a plurality of forms. To Jung this reflected the differences in male and female conscious attitudes. Jung's view was that the woman's consciousness tends to be exclusively personal and centred upon the family, whereas the man is made up of various worlds of which the family is only one.

Those of you who are familiar with the Chinese Tao concept of Yin and Yang will recognise the Taiji symbol (sometimes called the Tai Chi symbol). This shows how the masculine and feminine principles in all things combine to make a prefect complete oneness. In this symbol the white dot and the black dot represent the **animus** and the **anima**.



TAIJI – THE GREAT POLARITY THE RELATIONSHIP OF YIN AND YANG

The range of images of the **mother** archetype are almost inexhaustible. The usual image is some form of maternal aspect. This can manifest itself as the underworld, or the womb for example. The most important form of this archetype is "mothers" taken in the literal sense. It may also be symbolised in various impersonal forms such as temple, church, university, city or country, earth, woods, sea, moon, gardens, caves, cooking vessels, as well as certain animals such as the hare or the cow. In the Western cultural context other symbols include dragons, witches, graves, the ocean, and death.

The **child** archetype takes many forms such as a child (obviously), god, dwarf, hobbits, elf, animals, or objects such as jewels or chalices. It represents original or child like conditions in the life of the individual or the species, and thus reminds the conscious mind of its origins and helps to keep them continuous.

It can also signify the potentiality of future personality development; it anticipates the synthesis of opposites and the attainment of wholeness. The child archetype is said to represent the urge and compulsion towards self-realisation.

The **wise old man** is an archetype of meaning or of spirit. More than often it appears as a grandfather, sage, magician, king, doctor, priest, professor, or any other authority figure.

It represents insight, wisdom, cleverness, willingness to help, moral qualities. As with the other archetypes, the wise old man also possesses both light and dark aspects.

Jung considered that the **self** is the most important of all archetypes. It is called the "midpoint of the personality" and is a centre between consciousness and the unconsciousness.

It signifies the harmony and balance between the various opposing qualities that make up the psyche. It remains basically incomprehensible, as ego consciousness cannot grasp this supra-ordinate personality of which the ego is only one element. The symbols of the self can be anything that the ego takes to be a greater totality than itself. Thus many symbols fall short of expressing the self in its fullest development. Symbols of the self are often manifested in geometrical forms called mandalas or by the **quaternity** which indicates any figure made up from four parts or components. Prominent human figures which represent the self are the Buddha or Christ.

As you will appreciate it is important to gain some understanding of the meaning of the collective unconscious and archetypes. During hypnotic regression it is possible that at times the "past life" being described is being developed out of a series of archetypal projections used to form a story that, while apparently realistic, it not literally true. Sometimes it may be that what is being presented is actually a mythical story in the sense that the mind has created a myth to explain unconscious memories that may be too traumatic to bring fully to conscious recognition. Remember how we defined the word "myth" earlier. Thus the recall of a past life may sometimes be no more than a mask to release repressed memory of traumatic events in the subject's current life. Archetypes may be used to create a symbolic yet highly plausible story giving clues to the true literal reality.

Genetic Memory Transmission.

Another possible explanation for apparent past life recall is that ancestral memory is being transmitted genetically. The majority of neuroscientists believe that long-term memories are built into the brain by creating and strengthening connections between neighbouring neurons. These physical connections called synapses, are believed to join neurons together to form extremely complex networks.

These networks can then recreate specific patterns of brain activity such as recall of memories, long after the initiating event. The problem with this model is that these connections would need to be permanent and stable, and the brain is not. Nearly all the brain's molecules, including those that form the neural connections thought to be involved in memory, are replaced every few weeks. How long-lasting memories can be stored by such an impermanent medium has confounded neuroscience for years.

The idea that our memories are stored in our genes is a very recent and controversial one. It has been accepted since the experiments of <u>Wilder Penfield</u> back in the nineteen fifties, that hidden away in each of us is a permanent record of our past.

We are reminded of it regularly; for example how many times have you smelt a particular smell or heard a particular song, and been instantly transported back to an intense childhood memory? I am quite sure that every student reading this lesson can recall such an event.

So far we are aware of only three memory systems occurring naturally. These are:

1) our evolutionary memory of which tells us how to build the organism.

2) a cognitive memory of events that we have experienced.

3) memory of past infections that assist in the efficient functioning of our immune system.

Since two out of three of these systems are based upon DNA, would we not expect nature to be efficient and seek the easiest way? Surely nature is efficient enough to use the identical tools for the third system as well, and not evolve yet another unique method.

If this theory is true, then our identity, our "self", leaves a permanent mark on our genome. This, like the colour of our eyes, is passed on to our descendants. It has been estimated that perhaps some 40% of known personality traits are inherited, such as introversion/extraversion. This theory could explain how.

If memory is stored in the genes do we have access to instinctive memory? Is it possible to access other ancestral memories located in our DNA? Could this be an explanation for past-life regression? When your client regresses to memories from a previous life, is he or she actually accessing something in their genome blueprint? Perhaps it could it be that he or she is actually recalling details of a life lived by a genetic ancestor.

Hypnosis.

Hypnosis has been found to be an important tool for the exploration of past lives. This is because hypnosis involves the *experience of an altered psychological state*. It is this altered psychological state that makes a person more receptive and responsive to the suggestion of inner experiences.

The past life journey begins in the traditional manner of a hypnotherapy session; that is to say with hypnotic induction followed by deepening. This is followed by suggested regression and it is after regression to a pre-womb time that the client identifies with a character which is not his or her current life self. The first experience reported is usually that of being in a physical body.

The narrative may begin with self-description or the description of a neutral scene in which the client is participating. Alternatively, it may begin with a flashback sequence of events as the past life drama unfolds.

A significant component of past life therapy is the re-experience of a past life trauma. This is done differently with different therapeutic methods and ranges from the temporary (psychic) removal of the client from the painful situation, to the intensification of the stressful experience. Conventional analytical therapists believe that the emotional stress associated with a past life trauma should in no way be attenuated, but should be experienced fully, and possibly intensified, so that the client experiences abreaction and the trauma released. We will discuss abreaction and the release of trauma in later lessons.

Many physical complaints, fears, phobias, compulsions, preferences, dislike and personality traits in the present life have been shown to originate in former lives. The age of onset of a specific psychosomatic symptom in the current life may well be significant, and may correspond to the age when a trauma that is related to the current symptom in the client's current life took place in a past life. Often people re-enact past life experiences in their current life; therefore details of the current problem, and of the age of onset, may provide valuable clues for accessing a past life.

The past life death experience and the after-death are valuable tools for transformation. This stage begins the process of dis-identification with the past life character. There are individual differences in the way the past death and the inter-life are experienced and reported. Most people describe sensations of floating above a scene, moving towards the light and experiencing the spirit world. Almost everybody going through this stage describes bodily sensations of lightness and floating, and an experience of inner peace, joy and freedom.

The majority of reports appear to parallel what is known in current literature as "near death experiences" and thus provide an interesting mutual corroboration. The after-death experience offers the opportunity to review the life just re-lived and to look at the experiences in that life from a different perspective. The client now can experience being more detached and dispassionate towards the events just re-lived. When the perception of a past life traumatic situation is changed or reframed, its impact on the current life is reduced.

A great value of past life exploration is that valuable insights can be gained into current behaviour patterns. A significant amount of healing may result from releasing blocked emotions and from forgiveness.

A turning point in the current life direction is made when a client fully understands and appreciates how past life experiences may have shaped his or her present life and as a result of this is prepared to let go of entrenched beliefs and behaviour patterns and start out on a new path. When past behaviour patterns which operate unconsciously, compulsively and rigidly are understood and released, the opportunity is there to experience freedom from the past and, finally, to become the master of one's own destiny.

A final comment in this lesson; so far, no one has produced any absolutely conclusive evidence either in favour of, or against, reincarnation or any other theory. The existence of reincarnation is not a necessary prerequisite for past life work to be successful. Also a psychic experience or an imagined story created by the unconscious can offer valuable insights to the person being regressed. This, however, *does not in any way detract from the therapeutic value of past life regression therapy*.

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QUESTIONS ON LESSON ONE

Please answer the following questions using no more than 75 words for each, unless stated otherwise. Incorporate the questions within your answers (e.g. the number of days in the year is 365)

1) What is cryptomnesia?

- 2) How could memory of a past life be linked to the collective unconscious? (Approximately 250 words)
- 3) What do you understand by *karma*? (Approximately 250 words)
- 4) Why is hypnosis valuable in past life regression?

Return your answers to either <u>selfstudy@naturalhealthcourses.com</u>

or

tutored@naturalhealthcourses.com

whichever applies.

Do not send any attachments, just type your answers into the body of the email. Please complete the subject line of every email thus:

Full Name – Past Life Therapy (Tutored or Self Study) - Lesson 1

Leave at least one blank line between each answer. Don't forget to keep a copy for your own records

Recommended Reading: http://www.naturalhealthcourses.com/Recommended_Reading.htm