



# The Importance of Physical Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing in the UAP Discourse

John Priestland  
24<sup>th</sup> April 2025

**69%** of academic faculty  
were concerned that  
conducting UAP research  
would lead to **ridicule**.

Yingling & Yingling (2024)

## ***Stigma* (n)**

a strong feeling of disapproval  
that most people in a society  
have about something,  
especially when this is unfair

Cambridge Dictionary

# About uNHIDDEN

**uNHIDDEN is a not-for-profit foundation, led by doctors and clinical psychologists, whose mission is to encourage better conversations about UAPs and promote more effective support for people who have had ‘exceptional experiences’.**

Our focus is on improving mental health and reducing the anxiety and disorientation – referred to as “ontological shock” – that can arise from encounters or the growing awareness of NHI.

Key activities of uNHIDDEN include promoting public health strategies, raising awareness about the potential implications of NHI and advocating for thoughtful, compassionate disclosure policies.



uNHIDDEN is led by a **Medical Advisory Board** made up of doctors and clinical psychologists. This ensures that everything we do is patient-centric and based on best medical practice.



We also have an **Academic Research Group** made up of psychologists, sociologists and medics from some of the world’s top universities such as Harvard and Imperial College, London.

As a Foundation we have special provisions in our articles of association that ensure that any profits can only be used for the stated special objects. This gives donors and supporters additional comfort and reassurance.

# The uNHidden team

## Trustee Board

**John Priestland** – Chairman  
**Dr Vinod Arujuna** MBBCh, MBA.  
**Dr Rachel Pugh** FRCP  
**Dr Daniel Weaver** BSc MBBCh

## Medical Advisory Board

**Dr Rachel Pugh** FRCP  
**Dr Daniel Weaver** BSc MBBCh  
**Flamine de Bonvoisin** DESS  
and MA (Clinical Psychology)  
**Prof. Gabriel G. De la Torre**, PhD

## Academic Research Group

## Our Ambassadors



**Dr Jacques Vallée**,  
Distinguished  
researcher,  
mathematician,  
astronomer and  
venture  
capitalist



**Alex Dietrich**,  
former US Navy  
Pilot, UAP  
witness and  
aviation safety  
advocate



**Dr Beatriz Villarroel**,  
Astronomer, UAP  
researcher, and  
founder of the  
VASCO Project



**Dr Tim Gallaudet**,  
Rear Admiral  
(U.S. Navy  
Retired) and  
Oceanographer



**Jay Stratton**,  
Defense  
Intelligence  
Senior Exec  
(Retired)

In addition, we have a range of volunteers in the UK, US and Australia – who make up our **‘all hands’**.

**People matter**

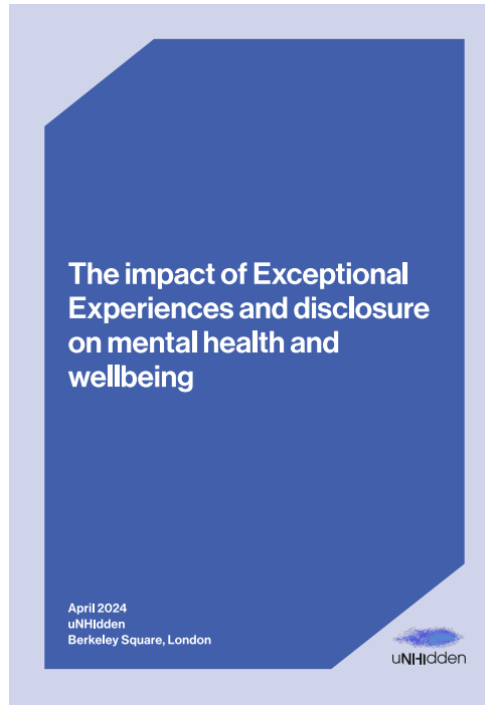
# Three groups of people affected

Pre-disclosure {  
1. Experiencers  
2. Anyone anxious about the lack of a trusted narrative

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Post-disclosure {  
3. Potentially everyone ('ontological shock')

# White Paper on mental health and wellbeing (2024)



An **Exceptional Experience** is:

*“a rare, spontaneous or provoked experience, involving from the subject's point of view a non-ordinary interaction with his or her environment. It often generates intense emotions, both positive and negative, stemming from its unusual and strange nature.”*



**Prof. Thomas Rabeyron** (2010)

University of Lorraine and Founder of CIRCÉE

# Experiencers

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*“First, I would like to know what I saw. But secondly, I want **validation**. I want to know that people take what I am telling them seriously.”*

**David Pearce, Experiencer,**  
speaking to uNHdden

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Further, if they see their doctor, the experience may be confused with or reduced to a medical condition.

*“This **pathologization** of anomalous experiences can sometimes even induce a “secondary trauma” when the person attempts to share such an experience and has the feeling that it is reduced to a mental disorder.”*

**Rabeyron (2021)**

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*“I could have screamed with frustration, I wanted to tell him [the doctor] the truth but knew that it would make my situation even worse. It was better to let him think I was a liar than to say what really happened and risk having the words ‘mental illness’ added to my notes.”*

**Paul Sinclair**, Author

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*“We are trained to take a focused history exam and then make a clinical judgement, usually along the lines of:*

- 1. Is there something here I can treat?*
- 2. Is there something here I need to investigate?*
- 3. Does this person need referral to secondary care?”*

**GP** talking to uNHidden

# Experiencers

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*“I try to adopt a non-judgmental approach to patients with Exceptional Experiences, but I am worried that if I stray from the line that allegations of UAP encounters are caused by anything other than recognised prosaic explanations, then I will be open to criticism from colleagues, especially if my cases are reviewed.”*

***Clinical psychologist talking to  
uNHdden***

# Experiencers

UAP encounters have a transformative effect on people's lives.

*“...UAP had a clear psychological impact on witnesses, with a transformative effect, and a benign form of a **non-pathological obsessive-like interest** in the topic...[this is] characterized by UAP topic being present in a witness's mind daily, with a self-recognized interest and appreciation for the topic and a need to talk about UAP topic, not necessarily the event they experienced. UAP appear to have a very specific impact focused on extra-terrestrial aspects and the phenomena itself, which is experienced as a life-changing event by direct witnesses.”*

**Prof. Gabriel De La Torre** (2024)  
University of Cadiz

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University of Cadiz

*"Your whole world view shatters. It makes you wonder what else is real. I keep asking, 'am I living a lie?'"*

**Mario Pavlovich, Experiencer**  
speaking to uNHdden

# Ontological shock

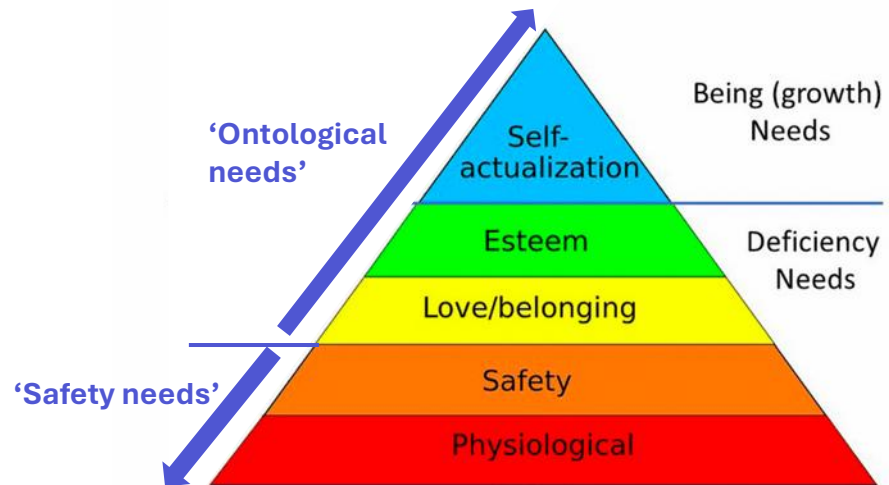
Ontological shock is the term used to indicate the disorientation and anxiety that people encounter when they learn of the existence of non-human intelligence (NHI).

*“Abductees also experience what I have called “ontological shock” as the reality of their encounters sinks in. They, like all of us, have been raised in the belief that we on Earth are largely alone in the universe and that it would simply not be possible for intelligent beings to enter our world without using a highly advanced form of our technology and obeying the laws of our physics. Abductees tend to persist in the hope that a psychological explanation for their experiences will be found.”*

**Prof. John Mack** (1994)  
University of Harvard Medical School

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Ontological shock is the term used to indicate the disorientation and anxiety that people encounter when they learn of the existence of non-human intelligence (NHI).



'Ontological needs' and 'safety needs' overlaid on Maslow's five-layer *Hierarchy of Needs* model

*"Threats can take two forms, physical threats to life and ontological threats to identity or social being... The physical threat, of course, is that ET presence in "our" solar system would indicate a vastly superior technology to human beings', raising the possibility of conquest and even extermination... The ontological threat is that even if the ETs were benign, their confirmed presence would create tremendous pressure for a unified human response, or world government."*

**Wendt & Duvall (2008)**

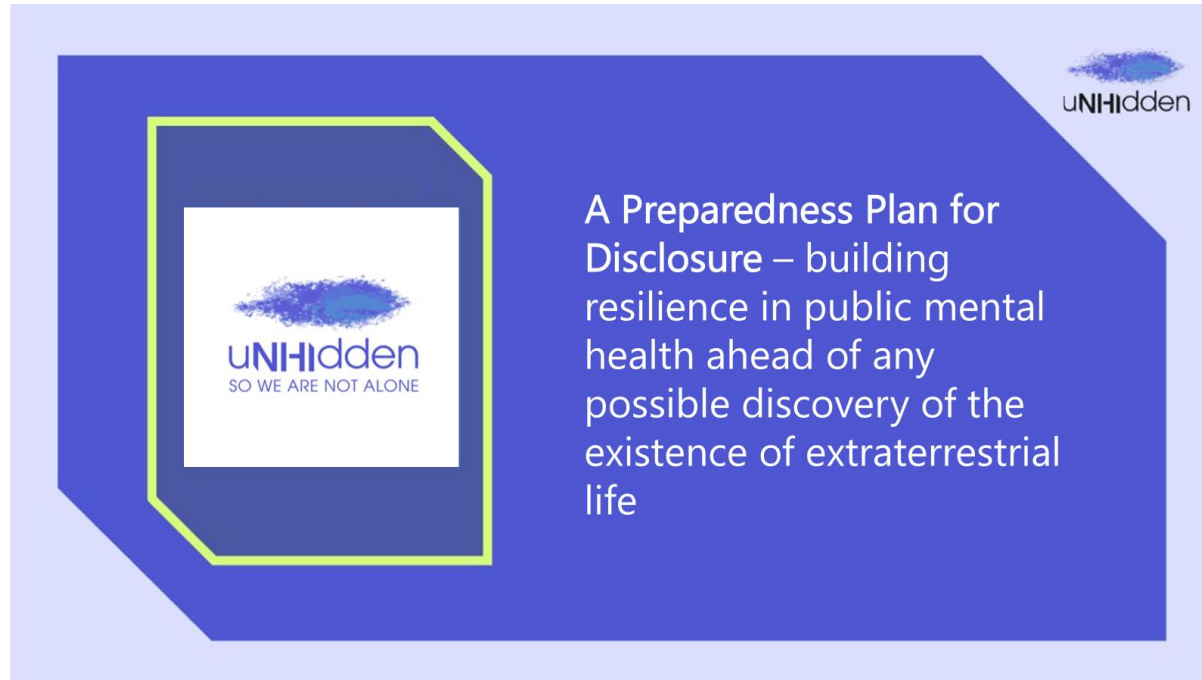
# Ontological shock

In 2010, the Royal Society convened a two-day Discussion Meeting on the topic of ‘the detection of extra-terrestrial life and the consequences for science and society’.

*“If extra-terrestrial life happens to be detected, a coordinated response that takes into account all the related sensitivities should already be in place.”*

**Dominik & Zarnecki (2011)**

# A Preparedness Plan for Disclosure



**Preparedness Plan – based on a Health  
Needs Assessment**

# uNHidden's five recommendations

Support for  
experiencers

- 1** The UK Government should publicly acknowledge that UAP sightings and other forms of Exceptional Experiences are real, and that the people who have experienced them may need care and support.
- 2** The NHS and professional bodies should develop guidance for health and social care professionals, to make it easier for them to consult patients presenting with Exceptional Experiences in a non-judgmental and evidence-based manner.

Anxiety / trusted  
narrative

- 3** The UK Government should provide credible information on the UAP topic to the public, and the media needs to play its part by reporting newsworthy stories about UAPs fairly and properly.

Planning  
for and  
mitigating  
ontological  
shock

- 4** The UK Government should commission multidisciplinary research that considers both the medical and psychological aspects of how the general population might react to UAP disclosure, and identifies the most vulnerable individuals, groups, and communities, and what sort of help and support might be beneficial.
- 5** The UK Government should develop a plan for UAP disclosure that brings together multiple branches of government and community groups as a single, open, shared endeavour, putting people and their wellbeing first. This needs to be done in a way that builds trust.

# Summing up

1. People matter
2. Experiencers need care and support, not ridicule and shame
3. Ontological shock may pose public mental health risks – and we need to plan and prepare

# Final word

*“If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive.”*

**Dr Brené Brown**

American academic and  
social work researcher

To download the White Paper:

