

'I follow a path of love and truth'

Actor **William Roache** opens up about the spiritual beliefs that have guided him through crushing court cases and grief

You come from a long line of deeply spiritual people. Can you tell us more about that?

I actually come from a long line of doctors but among my ancestors are some unconventional people who sought the truth in their own way.

My paternal grandfather, William, was a doctor, surgeon, theosophist (religion based on knowledge to understand the nature of divinity and origin of the universe), spiritualist and hypnotist, inhabiting the worlds of both science and spirit. He was interested in all things otherworldly and so were his sisters, Mabel and Mickey. They were Spiritualists at the height of the Spiritualist movement in the early 1900s.

William was an incredibly compassionate and generous man. I never knew him but I'm inspired by his memory. He was instrumental in facilitating the establishment of one of the early Steiner schools, Michael House, by donating half of the garden of our family home – Rutland House, in Ilkeston, Derbyshire – to the Rudolph Steiner Society that promotes education as art.

My maternal great-grandfather, James Waddicor, was a phrenologist (the study of the shape of the skull to reveal character) and a 'medical electrician' administering mild electric shocks to day-trippers on Blackpool's thriving seafront to treat a range of ailments.

Did these family members influence your beliefs as a child?

Absolutely. My mother and father were never curious about the unseen worlds beyond ours, so the quest for answers skipped a generation and landed firmly with me.

When I went to a methodist school in Colwyn Bay, Wales, I couldn't help but challenge the theology master – I was probably the most irritating pupil he had, always wanting answers



William with his wife, Sara, in 2006

'I've explored many paths, Druidry, Hinduism, Buddhism'

and refusing to acknowledge accepted beliefs. I've always needed to know why we're here and what happens after death and I've always felt there's so much more to life than our normal perception of it.

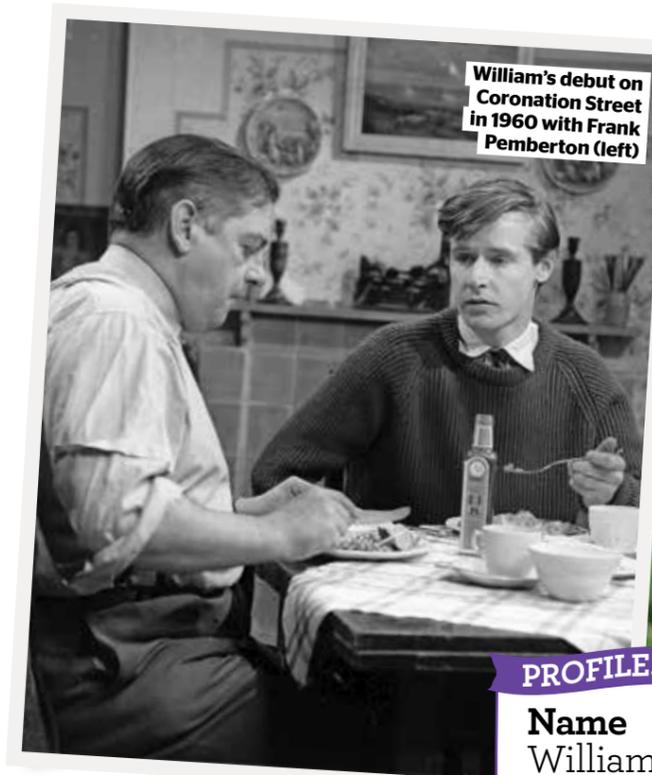
Over the years I've explored many paths, Druidry, Hinduism and Buddhism, theosophy and astrology, as well as the family favourite, Spiritualism. I don't identify with any religion or belief system now. I just follow my own path of love, truth and gratitude to Source, the creator of all that is. My aim is to work in harmony with Source towards the great goal of world peace.

You've suffered tragic losses in your life, losing your 18-month old daughter, Edwina, your second wife, Sara, and your daughter, Vanya, who passed away this year. Do you get comfort from your belief in life after death?

After the death of the physical body, the soul returns to heaven, which is our eternal home. Vanya has gone to a far better, happier place and I don't need to grieve for her. If I grieve it's because I miss her and

that's negative and where she is she'll pick up on that so I send her my love. Of course, for the first few days after her death it was natural to grieve, but within a week I got over it because I know she's in a beautiful place reunited with other loved ones.

Sara died suddenly in 2009. It was a normal Saturday morning and mid-conversation she froze, leaned forwards with an 'oh' like a sigh, then fell to the side and lost consciousness. Her heart stopped that moment in bed beside me. I feel she chose the moment of her passing, her soul made that decision. She was a glamorous, beautiful woman and decided to go when she was still glamorous and beautiful. She didn't like getting old physically, she was fighting it. But she's with me in spirit, love never dies.



William's debut on Coronation Street in 1960 with Frank Pemberton (left)

PROFILE...

Name
William Roache

Career William is the fourth longest-serving soap actor in the world. He's appeared in *Coronation Street* for 58 years, joining the cobbles in its first episode on December 9th, 1960, playing Ken Barlow.

His services to the entertainment industry saw him awarded with an MBE in 2011

Did you know? William believes the universe and angels are on hand to help you through difficult times, you just have to ask them.

True life is spiritual. Earth is a temporary, unreal place where we come to learn about separation. We come here by choice because we wish to learn something and experience our true self. We go back to a place full of schools of learning, singing and dancing. Our loved ones continue to be with us while we're on earth and other souls and entities are with us during our lifetime to help guide and protect us.

What lessons do you think you came here to learn on earth during your life?

We're all learning the same lesson, which is how to remember our true and loving nature.

One of the most important things is to forgive ourselves. When our daughter Edwina died, Sara and I felt terrible guilt, even though we knew there was nothing we could have done to save her. We couldn't have known that the infection that started with a cold would go on to take her life.

We went through every tiny detail of what happened on that terrible night of November 16th, 1984, trying to understand how she had been fine one moment then just 30 minutes later had died in her cot. Your children aren't supposed to die before you. And we were the responsible parents – responsible for our beautiful girl's wellbeing, her development, her happiness.

don't forgive ourselves, we can't love ourselves and be loving to others.

When Edwina died, our other daughter, Verity, was just three. If Sara and I retreated into recrimination and self-loathing, what could we have offered each other or our very young daughter who had just lost her sister? We needed to be able to keep loving each other and give Verity all the love she needed, too.

Do you fear death?

On the contrary, death is something we can look forward to because we'll be going back to our eternal home and will be closer to Source, to love. Of course, it's natural to be worried about dying because we just don't know how it will happen to us in this life. I just trust that all will be as it is meant to be. I focus on the present and look positively towards the future. Fear only



Working with Source towards world peace is William's aim in life

Over many, many months we had to learn to forgive ourselves for not being able to save her. It was a terribly hard thing to do. If we

makes matters worse. You are always protected and looked after. If you look for truth and love, your attempt to solve whatever problem you have will be guided and you'll be helped. Love and truth will always win. Darkness will lose out to the light. Always.

You won a libel action against The Sun newspaper after it published an untrue story in 1990 saying you were as boring as your Coronation Street character Ken Barlow and hated by your TV colleagues. Was that a lesson in forgiveness?

That was a big lesson in forgiveness, along with anger and pride. It was hard not to feel angry. I was bewildered and frustrated and took them to court in 1991.

Even though I won damages of £50,000, because that was the same sum the newspaper had offered me as an out-of-court settlement, I became liable for all the court costs. If the jury had known this, maybe they'd have offered £50,001 and

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Running on the beach during a family holiday



Leaving Preston Crown Court having been cleared of all charges

written the story, when I bumped into him at Euston station. That was the universe offering me an opportunity to let it go, to see that he was just doing his job and that the story would probably be forgotten in a week or two – but I just couldn't.

He said 'hello', and we had a terse exchange that I'm not proud of, which amounted to me saying I'd see him in court. I've had to forgive myself for not taking that opportunity and forgive myself for the anger I felt, too. It was a hard lesson and it took years to recover from it financially. But it was my lesson and I accept that. What happens to us may not be right but we can change how we respond to it. We can choose to step back from anger and respond with love.

You're a big believer in the power of meditation. How did you get into it?

I've been an actor for more than 60 years and have been meditating for around 50 of those. It's so much a part of me now I barely think of it as meditation, just a positive way of being, helping me to be peaceful, happy and look to the future. When I first began meditating back in the 1960s I thought I'd feel instantly calm but I felt stressed and angry. I got the posture right, thought of a peaceful seashore, but my mind and

emotions raced, my body fidgeted and I thought, 'What's going on?'

What was happening was that I was experiencing myself as I truly was. At the time, I was successful at my job, I was earning regular money and most people would have thought 'What's he got to worry about?' But I was very unhappy. The way I was living – drinking, smoking – just didn't feel right. I felt wrong.

Luckily, I found help with a homeopathic doctor in London who also taught meditation. At his weekly meetings, I began to understand my mind and heart needed to work together. Gradually I learned to take no notice of the passing irritations of the mind, gained a larger perspective and saw the nature of my problems become minor. Meditation has helped me tremendously, not only to survive some tough times in my personal and professional life but also to grow as a human being.

In 2014 you were cleared of raping a teenager and sexually assaulting four others in the 1960s and 70s. Did meditation help you through this horrendous experience?

Yes, I meditated a lot. What I always do when faced with a serious problem is look at the situation and take myself into the worst possible scenario. So I did that, thinking, 'This is the law, things can happen that you don't think can

happen.' Then I stepped back and thought, 'I'm going to be very positive and optimistic and look forward to the time out I've got with my family. From then on, it only took about three weeks, with the help of meditation, to feel positive.'

Life will test us at certain times but those tests are there to help us get to know ourselves, to strengthen ourselves and grow. Challenges help to wake us up, get us thinking and open our mind. Because of my daily meditation, I didn't get upset or depressed, I took a positive view of the outcome. Life never gives us more than we can deal with. I knew that. Also, everything passes, I knew that too. So, I knew I would get through it. What I already knew about the universe and humanity was confirmed. We are loving, forgiving human beings.

What's your secret to staying healthy and so youthful looking?

I don't have a special diet or do lots of exercise. I just live in a way that suits me. It's about being relaxed. People who throw themselves into exercise or extreme diets may be missing out because, if we focus intensely on one thing, we're neglecting something else. Everything is one and it's understanding this that's important – way more so than which brand of gluten-free organic rye bread to eat.

When we're not in balance and not feeling that oneness, it can lead to stress, upset and illness. A little bit of eating the wrong thing and not exercising is okay.

Each day, as I come out of the shower, I say, 'Every cell renews itself as a younger, healthier and rejuvenated cell, therefore I am getting younger, healthier and I am rejuvenating.'

You are what you think. That's a cliché, but it's true. If you're pessimistic and looking for trouble, you'll find trouble. If you're optimistic and believe everything is beautiful and wonderful, beautiful and wonderful things are more likely to happen to you. What we think about most manifests in our life, so what we focus on can actually create our reality. In a nutshell, thoughts manifest reality.



Try it now!

William's top meditation tips

Try this five-minute exercise every morning and evening

Meditation is time out from life that helps you live in the present moment. It's your friend in times of stress, on receiving bad news and whenever you need to feel at peace. Persevere and you'll discover your true self through the knowledge that emerges from within,' says William.

He recommends finding somewhere in your home or a spot in the garden where you won't be disturbed. Sitting upright in a comfortable chair, with the soles of your feet on the floor, let your hands rest naturally where they want to. Say out loud or

in your head, 'I've left my worldly life, concerns and worries outside.'

Turn your attention to your breathing. Don't try to control it, just breathe in and out through your nose. Not too deep, not too shallow, with a steady rhythm. Visualise gentle waves on a seashore in a rhythmic ebb and flow. Inhale and exhale with that movement.

If a thought comes into your mind, don't stop it but

'Persevere and you'll discover your true self'

don't engage with it either. Go back to concentrating on your breathing. Your emotions may intrude. You may feel anxious about something. Tell yourself you'll deal with it later and go back to thinking about your breathing. Your body may feel uncomfortable, you may have an itch, deal with it then put your focus back on your breath.

Concentrate on your heart and imagine a protective golden light flowing from it and around you. Say, 'This is how it's meant to be. This is the truth and the way.' Savour the peaceful feeling in your heart. 🌟