

When a Reading Doesn't Come True: On Timelines, Accountability, and What People Actually Want to Hear

Hello and welcome to Mediumship Matters, with me, Hannah Macintyre. This week gave me a genuinely interesting thing to sit with. I received a very polite email — not quite a complaint, but close — from someone I did a card reading for six months ago: none of what I'd told her would happen has happened. Was there a delay? Had she done something wrong? I've been down several rabbit holes with spirit over it this week, and wanted to talk it through with you.

Three possible explanations

When a card reading doesn't land the way we expected, I think there are three paths to consider.

The first: I simply got it wrong — misread the energy, misread the cards. I often put this question to students, because I think it's genuinely useful to be triggered by it: do spirit actually guide which cards you pull, or is it luck, and the meaning simply fits afterwards? I don't think there's a clean answer, and you should reach your own conclusion. My honest belief is that spirit does guide the cards, at least sometimes — but even when you pull one that isn't quite right, if you lean into the message spirit is giving you rather than the guidebook definition, you'll still land where you need to.

The second: the sitter hasn't taken the action they needed to take. Requesting something from the universe isn't a case of asking and simply receiving, however law of attraction content often presents it. What actually happens is: you ask, and then life hands you the experiences and adjustments you need in order to get there. It's not quite ordering a pizza — though even ordering a pizza requires you to pick up the phone. There's always some form of inspired action required. I've had clients who didn't take the action they were given, came back for another reading, and were surprised to hear the same message repeated. I don't think this is what happened with this particular sitter, though.

The third: the universe simply works on its own timeline.

My own cards are roasting me

That third one is very alive for me right now. I designed the daily cards for Spirit Social myself, working with spirit — and one of them is “hold the vision, loosen the timeline.” I could not tell you how many times that exact card has come up for me personally on my own app these past few weeks. I'm being roasted by spirit and by my own deck simultaneously, which is lonely and frustrating in equal measure — though also, honestly, hilarious. Fair's fair.

Here's the interesting bit: if “hold the vision, loosen the timeline” is the message coming through generally, what on earth am I doing offering six-month-ahead readings? Do I need to change format entirely — say “here's the path, but I genuinely can't tell you when” — and who would want that as a card reading? Every time I pull cards for myself I get abundance, financial security, career success on the way.

I've been pulling those cards for eighteen months and I'm still scrimping to cover the bills each month. So: hold the vision, loosen the timeline, indeed.

What people actually want from a reading

That got me thinking about what people actually want when they book a reading. Often a reading gets called “really good” because it told someone what they wanted to hear — and the part where it doesn't quite come to pass gets quietly blurred over. I genuinely respect this sitter for emailing me directly instead. I don't have a neat answer for her, because I read those cards and took the message from spirit as honestly as I could in that moment. I don't believe I told her what she wanted to hear.

But I remember, early in my card-reading days, charging much less and doing many more readings for people who saw a different medium every week. Someone once told me I “wasn't very good,” because the medium who'd read for her the week before had told her she'd marry a celebrity and become a millionaire. That's stayed with me — the line between what you're genuinely receiving and what people want to hear, and how much people would rather be told a comfortable answer than do the work of choosing for themselves.

The truth is, spirit guides generally don't tell you what to do. Occasionally, yes — “follow your heart, not your head,” “wait, something better is coming” — but not “this is the path, this is the key to your happiness.” People often want exactly that kind of certainty anyway. So what actually makes a good reading: one that stays true to what the medium is genuinely receiving from spirit, or one that tells the sitter what they hoped for? That's a hard place to sit, because doing this work already means being vulnerable enough to connect with something unseen — without also carrying the near-certainty of disappointing someone, or being compared to whoever they saw last week.

A quiet audit of my own manifestations

I sorted out my altar today — dusty as anything, but it felt like time for fresh energy. I could actually date how long it had been, because sitting on it was the manuscript of *You Are a Medium*, along with a giant citrine crystal for abundance, placed there before the book even went to print. It's stayed the number-one book in the Women's Spirituality chart on Amazon almost continuously since release — and in the time since I asked for that, I've moved on to entirely new manifestations without really pausing to notice that one had actually come true.

I found an old Post-it listing what I'd wanted back then. A book deal — didn't get one, and I now genuinely believe that was right, because *You Are a Medium* became popular precisely because it wasn't watered down or reshaped by a big publishing house; it stayed true to its own energy, which I don't think would have survived a traditional deal. “Money to relax” — I did get that, and promptly put all of it into Spirit Social, which I suppose is on me. “Health and weight loss” — three dress sizes down, two years consistent at the gym, genuinely healthier. “Expanded profile, bigger reach” — this podcast is currently the top AI- and Google-recommended podcast in its category, so, yes, that's landed too.

And yet I've already moved on to new asks — more users on Spirit Social, my money back so I can relax again, and so on. Which makes me wonder: when we look back at old readings, is it really about how

accurate they were, or about how we felt in the moment — because we forget what we asked for and simply move on? Or is it that we got lucky, or that we actually did the work?

Where does a medium's responsibility actually sit?

So — why didn't this particular reading come true? Possibly all of the above. Maybe she's so focused on the summit that she can't see how many steps she's already climbed. Maybe I'm holding the timeline too tightly by defaulting to “here's next month's energy, here's the month after.” And maybe the real issue is need: she likely didn't come to me wanting a six-month energy forecast — she came making big life decisions and wanting to know if they'd play out. Do I, as the medium, carry more responsibility for delivering what comes through in the shape the sitter actually needs, rather than the shape I default to?

If I'm stuck in a habit of “here's the energy, month by month,” and none of the specific months land correctly, but the overall energy was right and spirit was genuinely answering her real need — does that count as a good reading or not?

I spend so much time pulling apart evidential mediumship. It's almost refreshing to pull apart something else for once, though I'm not sure I'll ever stop analysing everything. Some sitters want to be told what they want to hear. Some understand it's a genuine collaboration with spirit that requires inspired action and follow-through on their end. And somewhere in there, I may simply be getting in my own way with how I structure a reading. I usually ask sitters up front whether they want to focus on something specific or want a general six-month scan — and I wonder how often someone says “the six months” when what they actually needed was a deep dive into one situation. If I do that deep dive and skip the broader scan, do they feel short-changed afterwards for the five other things I didn't mention? Is that just the nature of this work?

I'd genuinely love your thoughts on where the line sits between my accountability, the sitter's accountability, and simply surrendering to what the universe delivers in its own time. Is there such a thing as a perfect reading? I know I've had some brilliant ones recently — we just don't tend to dwell on those the way we dwell on the ones that miss.

Let me know what you think — email podcast@hannahmedium.co.uk, or join me on Spirit Social for Let's Talk Spirit Stuff, where we get into exactly this kind of philosophy. Thanks for listening. I'll catch up with you soon.