

# THE EXPERIENCE OF TOTALITY

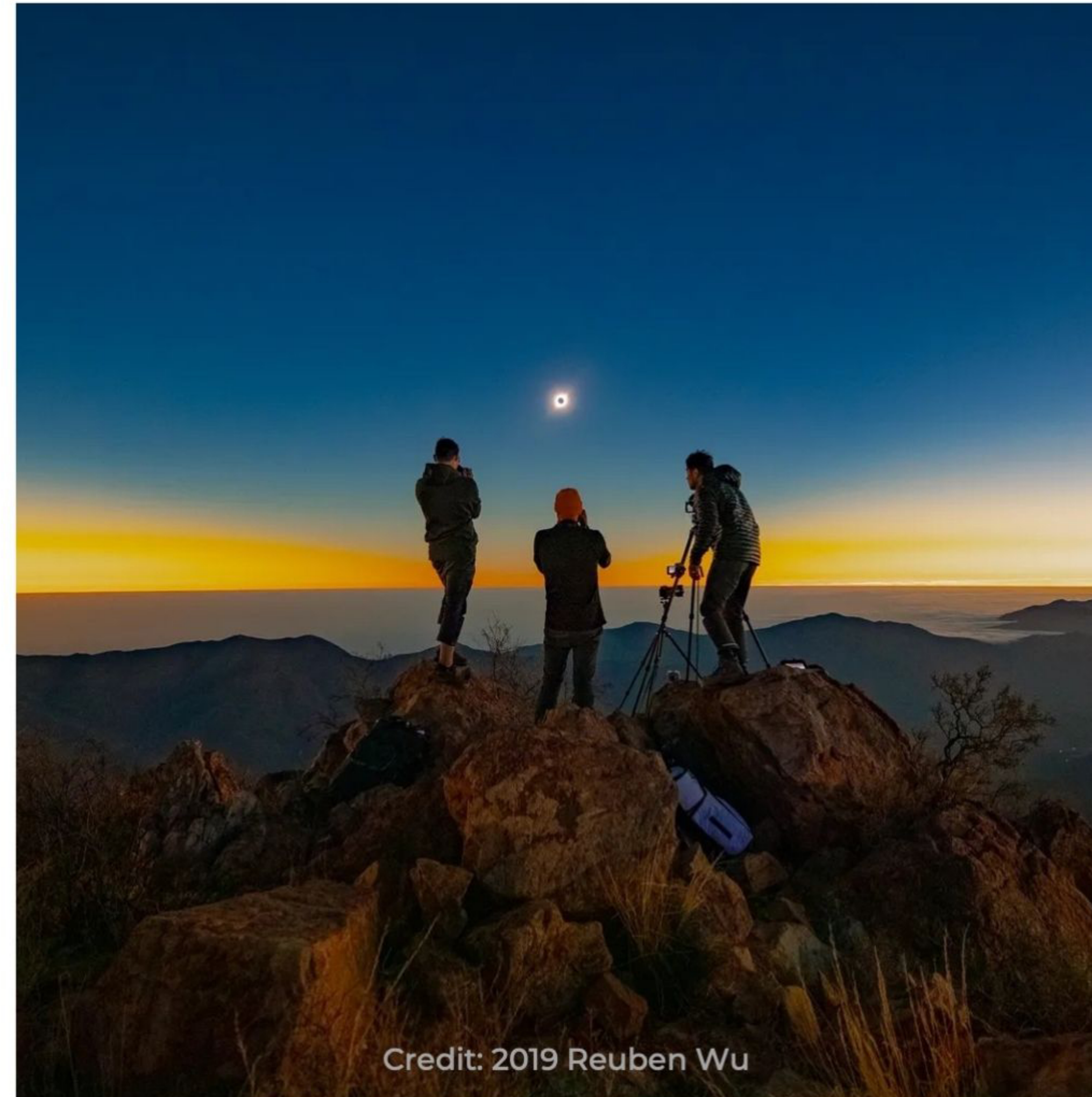
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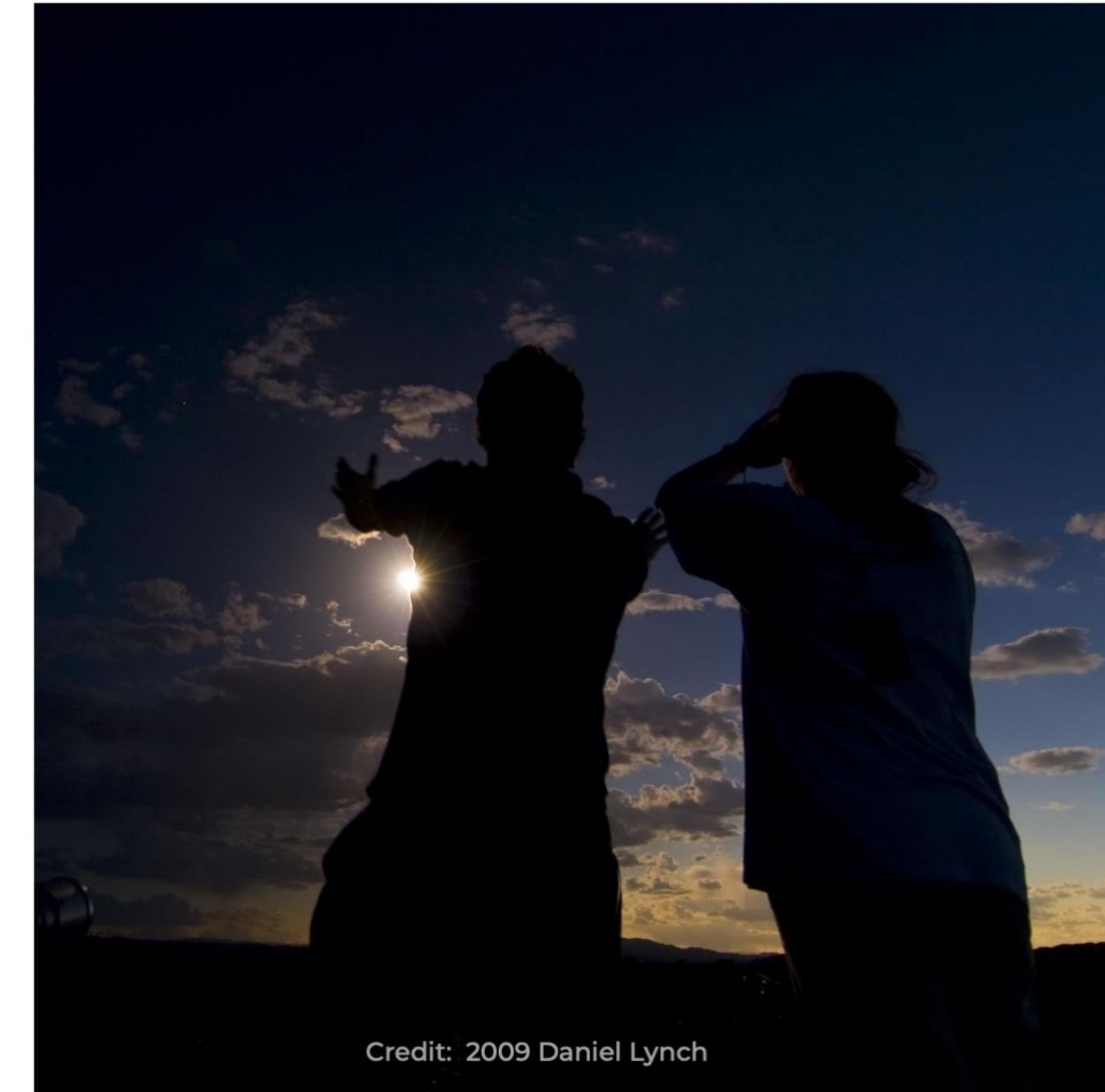
## ABOVE YOU

The only time you can see the ethereal solar corona, and some beautiful features such as the diamond ring, Baily's beads, prominences, and chromosphere



## AROUND YOU

The temperature drops as the Moon's shadow dramatically casts an eerie darkness, with gorgeous sunset colours on the horizon



## WITHIN YOU

A range of unexpected and intense emotions occur over a short period of time. For some, the experience is profound.

The crowd would cheer whenever the Sun would appear from behind the clouds.

*I felt a sense of calm during totality, almost as though everything 'stopped' just for that two minutes.*

The vibe from the 10,000 or so people could be felt and their energy and expectation was almost palpable.

*I did feel small and insignificant yet at the same time a part of it all.*

*The total solar eclipse was a very serene experience. I can't explain it any more simply, and I think to try and explain any more would be to overstate it: it was a very serene and peaceful moment.*

*I was a little frightened during totality. It was quite eerie on many levels and I had a sense that anything could happen.*

*I have felt in awe before, but this was something else entirely.*

*It was similar to the build up to an approaching cyclone but without fear for one's life.*

*I watched it on a hill with 10,000 other people. At first I didn't think I would feel comfortable but the feeling of sharing something so beautiful with so many people was overwhelming.*

*I felt at one with the world - belonging to a greater good. A feeling of being connected.*

*It's just really difficult to describe. It does give you all of those feelings - the goosebumps, and the intense emotions that everybody said it would. It was there.*

*I was so excited in the build up to the eclipse. I loved it, but was left a bit empty afterwards.*

*At the start of totality I got goosebumps.*

The totality experience is INEFFABLE - difficult to describe coherently using words, and impossible to convey in short media soundbites in a way that can be easily understood. As an eclipse-chasing psychologist, I continue to collect experiences and share my research widely.

**TOTAL ADDICTION: THE LIFE OF AN ECLIPSE CHASER (Springer, 2012)**  
I interviewed experienced eclipse chasers, with the diagram below attempting to visually capture the totality experience.

**TOTALITY: THE TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE OF 2012 IN FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND (2013)**  
I captured the experiences of everyday people experiencing totality for the first time, with some quotes included here.

**BEING IN THE SHADOW: STORIES OF THE FIRST-TIME TOTAL ECLIPSE EXPERIENCE (2017)** These are detailed in-depth accounts from totality first-timers who were able to coherently describe 'the ineffable'.

**SENSE OF WRONGNESS**  
**PRIMAL FEAR**  
**AWE**  
**CONNECTEDNESS**  
**EUPHORIA**  
**DESIRE TO REPEAT**

Fig. 13.1 An visual overview of what it is like to experience totality

The slow build up during the partial eclipse was as much an excitement in itself. Then I wondered if it will go wrong, will some cosmic force intervene and will we see the Sun again?

*If we weren't aware of the eclipse, you would think something cataclysmic was happening. A very eerie feeling.*

Looking at the total eclipse and seeing the darkness of the Moon with the halo of sunlight behind was an incredible sight.

*I was surprised by how light it did stay, how large the corona was, and the sudden change in contrast.*

*I had never seen the Sun before - it was a beautiful sight through the solar filters.*

*The very last shining light was a surprise, as it really does send out a very bright diamond flash of light before it's finally covered.*

*I felt some fear in the way that all this is massive beyond our comprehension and out of our control. I was exhilarated and wanted it to last forever but at the same time I wanted the Sun to hurry back out.*

*I was surprised that it was dark, but not the same way that it is dark at night. It was also unlike dusk because I could see stars, and it felt like night. It was a really eerie kind of darkness.*

*I imagined how terrified ancient civilizations would have been if they saw this happen.*

*Totality illumination was noticeably brighter than a full Moon lit night. I did see a few stars.*

*It was such a rush of emotion. Everything was happening so quickly. When total darkness started, the change in light was dramatic and the wind sprang up. It was very eerie.*