

Conscious Mental Stillness in Dreams . . .

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Editor's Note: This excerpt from a much longer account presents a dream that shows an especially clear progression from nonlucid dreaming to lucid dreaming to another state of consciousness. It is obvious from the language that the dreamer had not previously heard of "pure consciousness." Rather than a reorganization of memory, this dream is an unprecedented experience; its primary "message" to the dreamer, perhaps, is that spontaneous new experiences of other states are possible.

Lucid Dream Within A Dream (8/2/84-2)

Dreamed I was in Center City Philadelphia after midnight, on the northeast corner of 16th Street and the Vine Street Expressway, waiting to catch a bus to go home. I was very tired and struggling with myself to stay awake. I leaned against a telephone pole, drowsily trying to remain upright and conscious while my mind clouded and dipped. Fatigue made every part of my body feel full of sand. Finally I could remain conscious no longer. I sat down on the curb, leaned my head against the pole and went to sleep, hoping I would wake when the bus came.

I immediately started to dream a lucid dream. In this dream's dream, my consciousness cohered into a lucid clarity that was in marked contrast to my mental functioning in the first part of the dream. I looked around alertly, head high, without feeling any sense of tiredness. I was on a railroad station platform with a male companion to my right. We were waiting for a train. "Lucid," I said to myself under my breath. As I continued to look around and take in this dream environment, I saw that it was late at night, and the train was rolling up. The wind blew my hair against my cheek with a distinct physical sensation, and I felt how this dream-hair was black, not my usual light brown. I also felt taller, thinner, and healthier.

This sensing of my characteristics as "different" made me think of that self that was asleep, leaning against the telephone pole . . . and it was THAT sleeping self I mistakenly thought of as the self that was dreaming the dream, not the real physical self at home in my bed in Berwyn. In other words, even though I was completely aware that I was dreaming, and thought I was thinking clearly, I wrongly identified the situation of my physical me as being the one sleeping against the telephone pole.

My companion and my lucid dream-self climbed into the train as soon as it came to a halt. We found that it was separated into compartments, like some European trains

are, so we went into one of them. My companion was a quiet, good-natured, moderately good-looking, scholarly fellow, who immediately settled down to read a book. I felt a need of sleep, but it was quite different than the desperate way the first "I" needed sleep. The lucid "I" didn't exactly feel tired, but just felt the need of stopping the movement in my mind for a while. The need presented itself as a kind of knowledge rather than a physical sensation.

I lay down on the seat facing my companion, with a sense of nonworry, because I knew he would wake me when we arrived, or if anything untoward occurred. However, as soon as the train started up, I had difficulties because the rocking movement threatened to pitch me off on the floor. As I struggled to stay put, I dipped in and out of sleep. Finally I got up and lay down on the floor, twining my arms around one of my trusted companion's legs, and using his foot as a pillow. He raised his eyebrows in an expression of mild surprise, so I explained, "The ground is one place you can't fall down from." He sat very still, perfectly immobile so as not to disturb me, and returned to his reading. I felt secure in my sleeping place, and in the atmosphere of caring that he exuded.

Then I fell into a deep sleep, but it was an odd kind of sleep, because I did not black out into unconsciousness. I remained lucid, still aware I was asleep, but all mental movement stopped, all thinking of ideas halted. Maybe instead of having a lucid dream, with ideas, feelings and a plot going on, I was having a lucid sleep. My mind and all the rest of me was simply clear, like a deep transparent lake where all currents have been stilled. This mental immobility felt like it lasted for a relatively long duration . . . fifteen or twenty minutes, or maybe even an hour. I don't mean that during all this time there was an image of a lake in my mind, but that's the best likeness I can think of to point to the big transparent stillness that just sat there, with no thoughts going on.

Then I "awoke" from this deep lucid sleep, not into the lucid dream, but into the original nonlucid level of the dream. I felt tremendously refreshed, but alarmed, because I felt it was now 1:00 a.m., and I might have missed the bus. I thought about the "dream" I had just had, and suddenly realized what a dope I was to be standing here and waiting for the bus. I should be taking a train, just like in the dream, because all I had to do was walk a few blocks, six blocks or so, and I would be at the train station (the waking-life distance is about four blocks), and I could go directly home. I thought, 'I must have been really tired to just stop here and start waiting for this bus, when I would have had to change busses, and besides, Philadelphia busses are not reliable anyway.' I wondered if one of the busses had already passed me by. I decided to "take my dream's advice" (as I put it to myself), and go immediately to the train station. I woke just as I started to walk down the street.

When I woke from this dream, which included an experience I had never had nor even heard of before, I did not feel so much ecstatic or excited as enormously NORMAL and very healthy (which was unusual, since I was leading a frantic life mothering five children and working in the computer industry at the same time). The picture of my exhaustion at the beginning of the dream was a good representation of the way I felt most of the time when I went to bed, and sometimes when I got up, too. The distinct sense of deep refreshment from what I then labeled "mind-stillness" was carried into the waking-life day. My notes from that time show that I felt great for a number of days, not just one. I conjectured at the time that if I knew how to do this at will, I would need very little sleep to operate at optimum levels. I thought I might even live longer as well as feel great.

This seems just the opposite of conventional wisdom, which has it that you need to black out into a deep unconscious sleep to be really refreshed.