

## **From the Beginning Through Feast or Famine**

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*Note from Senior Editor, Jayne Gackenbach: Krisanne Gray is a housewife and mother of two who runs a day care center in Spokane, Washington. Her story, as well as the work of Deborah ArmstrongHickey, is of theoretical interest to the field of lucid dreaming, not because of the process she went through in figuring out what is real (this is a familiar one to anyone who has worked on becoming lucid in sleep), but rather because she went through it at such a young age. Due to her youth, other mechanisms came into play which adults don't normally deal with. Mrs. Gray may be a "consciousness savant" somewhat like a very young child who shows early mathematical aptitude.*

*Before I comment on the potential theoretical significance of this case let me say that I have spoken to Mrs. Gray at some length and believe that she is in fact honestly communicating her experiences as accurately as she can. As is often the case when I stumble upon an individual who evidences unique sleep consciousness, if they are genuine and uninformed about the area of lucid dreaming, they are amazed to discover that everyone doesn't dream lucidly all the time. In 13 years of working on lucid dreaming I have only found four individuals (outside of long term meditators) like this. In all cases they were ignorant of lucid dreaming work, amazed that their style wasn't the norm, and with intensive interviewing I was convinced that they fully understood what I meant and that they were honest, sincere and perhaps humbler than most. In fact, in a recent chance encounter with an Alberta businessman, who is virtually always conscious in sleep and has never meditated, he became quite uncomfortable with my interest in his sleep experiences. I hope yet to be able to convince him to come into the sleep laboratory.*

*Theoretically, such consciousness savants offer us a clue as to the role dreaming may play in the development of thinking. This was pointed out at the 1988 meeting of the Association for the Study of Dreams by Alan Moffitt of Carleton University. He presented a new theory of the function of dreams which dramatically goes beyond a mere "information processing" perspective. Because REM sleep is the stage of sleep in which dreams almost always occur, Moffitt argued, that "dreaming is the motor for human development." That is, it is the part of our biological system which forces us to move from one level of intellectual capacity to the next. When we work with dreams, then, we are working with the cutting edge of our own intellectual development. Moffitt pointed to lucid REM dreams, rather than ordinary nonlucid REM dreams, as particularly clear examples of the driving mechanisms pushing us from stage to stage*

*in our intellectual development. "Lucidity enables the further development of intentional action within the dream state," explained Moffitt. "In effect, one can develop a new form of competence, a type of skill not available during the waking state. With these considerations in mind, Lucidity Letter offers you the story of Krisanne Gray.*

Remembering back as young as six or seven months of age, I was afraid to sleep—that was an, as yet, undefined state in the face of which I felt helpless with fear. Although I cannot recall even the smallest detail of those early nightmares, I do remember the fear they instilled in me.

It was in response to those nightmares that I developed the "skill" of lucid dreaming. I found rocking (first on all fours, then from side to side) soon became a means to gain the control I needed. The rhythm helped me to focus thought. Thoughts, I quickly found, had considerable power. Also, I knew that I had to control the fear I felt. This rocking motion helped me to focus on other things. I remember early nightmares were more on a feeling level than a visual one.

At age two I remember the nightmares becoming more visual. I tried to find a way to tell if this state was "real" or not, if this was a dream because I was experiencing feelings of hurt and pain. I remember being very angry when people would say, "Oh, it's just a dream, it won't hurt you!" I became more aware that my feelings had a strong influence on my nightmares but not as much of an impact while awake. I continued to try to define reality. I found that it helped to have a set sleep schedule as it told me that this was either awake time or nightmare time. By the age of four, I felt it was very important to tell myself when I knew I was in a dream. Knowing I had to define "real" more clearly, I found that dreams had no rules and no boundaries while reality had many. Thus I began to define reality more by its limitations. So in order to find out what real was, I had to discover what it was not!

At about five years of age, I developed my first "control"—a term I gave to the cue giving me conscious awareness in a subconscious state. The mechanics were simple. I would define the state I was in. At this point I would use the control of the state to stop an obvious nightmare. Then I shook my head, hard and fast, and I would awaken immediately.

These control methods developed as the ways of testing the state developed. If I could leap tall buildings in a single bound, I was dreaming. Dreams seemed to be easier to define, and my control seemed to work every time. Or did it?

At about age of eight or nine, I had my most challenging nightmares. It seemed that my mind was intent on this lesson of wits. As I learned about various states of mind

through my mind's deceptions, I grew in my control of my conscious and subconscious thoughts.

The following nightmare is a composite of memories that typify my dreams of that period:

I wake up. It's morning. I can hear my mom calling me from downstairs. I stretch and yawn. I sit up in bed and look outside—a beautiful day, blue skies, and lots of birds singing. I slip my legs over the side of the bed and feel the cold, hardwood floor under my feet. Suddenly, a clawed hand grasps one foot and the other. I fall to my knees on the floor, screaming in terror! I realize this can't be real! I quickly use my control action and wake instantly in my bed. Still shaking, I slowly peer under my bed. Nothing is there, and I sigh with relief. I hear mom again calling me for school. She knocks on my door and tells me I'm going to be late. I quickly jump out of bed and dress. I run downstairs to find my sister munching down breakfast, and I join her. As I'm pouring my cereal, I see my sister laughing. Her bowl is filled with live snails! She's crunching down another spoonful. I realize she wouldn't do this (not live ones anyway!) and know I'm dreaming. I shake my head, longer this time, to awaken. Again, I hear mom calling. Once again I check under the bed. I try to go through a wall but hit it instead. This must be real! Again I dress and run downstairs. I check the cereal situation out carefully. Everything seems normal, so off to school my sister and I go loaded down with books. School seems to reassure me. I couldn't dream this long! Classes end, and I race home. I am immediately stopped by a locked door. My sister runs past me with her girl friend and lets me know they'll be at her friend's house. I pound on the front door, thinking my mom is asleep. The door flies open to reveal the face of an old woman. I ask as I push past her who she is. By now I know something is very wrong. Nothing inside is the same. The TV is gone. There is a big clock in the corner that wasn't there before. I ask where my mother is. The old woman replies this is her house and has been for the last ten years. I run out of the house and turn to look at it. I realize this is not real, it's a nightmare! I shake my head, and, again, awaken to my mom calling me.

This time I knew I was awake. You can see why I spent a great deal of time developing this nightmare control. Once I realized that I was the one who wrote, acted, and reacted within this realm, I was able to control the outcome. I soon changed nightmares and then learned to rewrite them.

## Feast or Famine

As an adult I have been able to channel this ability to deal with personal concerns. At one time I was faced with a serious dilemma—how to lose 25 unwanted pounds on a 5'2" frame, pounds which had been gained when I quit smoking. After careful analysis, I decided my regimen would include a new diet, a new craft to occupy me by day and lucid dreaming at night.

Knowing that my main enemy was those unwanted, howevermuch enjoyed calories, made the answer clear. I had to satisfy my appetite while eliminating the unpleasant side effects: calories, convenience, cost. I knew only one place where this and more was easily obtainable—a place where I could eat an unlimited variety of foods, under any conditions, within any surroundings I chose. This place, found only within my imagination, has only the boundaries I impose. This clearly has its advantages. My theory was based on the idea that if I could satisfy my mind's appetite, then perhaps my body, too, would be content. So I set up trial dreams.

I can no longer remember most of these specific dreams; however, the technique was always the same. First, I make plain my intention both outwardly and inwardly. I then begin to "program" the night's dreams. A few times during the evening I imagine a favorite restaurant, a favorite food. I try to focus on only one place or food. Then, just before I fall asleep, I again focus my energy on that idea. I detail my imaginary description, including smell, taste, and texture.

Once the technique of reaching a lucid dream state had been mastered, dream control enabled me to choose a few dinner guests to join me or included the choice of the finest clothes. Then I fell asleep:

I find myself sitting at a huge crudely built wooden table. I am rubbing elbows with a huge hulk of a man to my left, to my right a dainty wisp of a girl dressed like a fairy princess. I step outside myself for a moment and find I am dressed in a beautiful gown of soft iceblue, covered in lace. I am very pleased to find myself so wellheeled. I am completely aware that I am dreaming. This gives me a wonderful feeling of complete control. This alone has a positive effect on my mood both asleep and awake. I look around at the faces of the medieval royalty dining with unrestrained enthusiasm upon what appears to be roast pork and roast turkey. The smells fill my nose with flavors. Formal eating habits aside, I, too, reach across the table to tear a drumstick savagely from what is left of the turkey. So, with all the flavor and texture of food eaten while awake, I indulge myself for what seems like hours. I remember being distracted by the eating habits of my dinner partners. Conversation seemed limited to

lipsmacking and contented groans of satisfaction. I felt right at home, as I run a day care facility. I was even beginning to feel too full!

When I awakened, it took me a few minutes to realize I wouldn't need that bicarbonate after all. I felt very full. In fact, for several hours after my night's feasting, I felt very content. Also I discovered an additional aid in looking forward to the next night's meal. I could put off that tempting treat until I could afford the calories, expense, and time.

Understand, however, that it takes many years of practice to reach this lucid dream state on demand. Even though I have practiced for years, I can't always reach a specific dream place every time. I find that my odds of "waking up" where I want to in a dream are about one in three. However, almost every night I can enter a dream and turn it into a lucid one. So I could change my dream to accomplish the goal.

There is a difficulty in this, however. Dreaming a particular thought is not as difficult as keeping in focus my intended goal. It seems the problems and concerns of waking life have importance while dreaming. There are subtle differences in values and not all concern moral beliefs (to my knowledge). Teaching yourself to focus is the most effective way to gain control. With that control an entire world becomes yours for the taking and helps you to achieve daytime goals as well. This works, and has worked, many times for me. As of now, my "diet" dreams still help me to maintain the weight I chose, just as it helped me lose those unwanted pounds many years ago.

Sleep is a very welcome time of day for me. I can go anywhere, do anything, be anyone I choose. I enjoy lucid dreams almost every night, and still find myself amazed at the possibilities available to.