

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I would like to comment on how lucid dreaming became counter-productive. Like most everything else I've enjoyed, too much of it could be very destructive.

Living in the dream world became preferable to reality. I would lay in bed, miss work, and wrap myself in a catatonic state in which to spin dreams, dreams, dreams. I would sleep in public places to use various stimuli for my lucid dreams: a park, a downtown bench, the beach, park the car near a school yard of children playing. If you have mastered lucid dreaming, you should try this, it really is incredible. Real and random sounds factor in the dream.

Basically, all I did was lucid dream and nothing else. With a life like that it could be hard to pay the rent. So I just stopped. Over time I lost the ability to lucid dream. Actually, I didn't even try until the experiment which appeared in the April 1987 issue of *OMNI* magazine. I must admit that I had the apprehension a reformed alcoholic has for taking one drink.

I never had a word for what I did until I read the *OMNI* article by you and LaBerge. Although I never regarded myself as having a special ability, it never occurred to me that others did this as well.

I finally "O.D.'d" on lucid dreaming when I stayed in bed for 4 or 5 days, only rising to drink and use the bathroom. I was a hermit with no other ambition.

I got a job where people were counting on me to show up and found within me the motivation to shake the cobwebs from my eyes.



There's a downside to everything. I hope you remember this as you research lucid dreaming.

Mark A. Barroso
Tampa, FL

Dear Editor:

I wish to tell you a dream that might be of some importance to the study of dream lucidity as it points out a potential danger of experiencing this state unguided. This dream occurred sometime in September of 1987 and will stay in my mind forever. The following is my morning after dream report:

I found myself inside a large hallway with plain white walls and no windows. The hall contained many doors to my left and to my right was another hallway. At the end of the hallway in which I was standing I noticed an old wooden desk and chair. Confused and not knowing where I was, I started to walk down [the hall], I was then approached by a couple of young boys of about thirteen years of age. They both were dressed in ragged clothing. They kept asking me for something; I do not remember as to what they wanted. (I think they wanted money but I am not sure.) I yelled at them to get away from me for they were hindering me from trying to get a bearing as to where this place is. Cursing under their breath and disappointed, they went away.

Looking down the hall, I saw one of the doors open up. To my surprise, I see the two boys come out, but they were not alone. They were followed by at least fifty other youths. The oldest of them looked to be 18, and they all looked like they were looking for trouble. They were dressed in cut-off denim and leather jackets with spikes and chains. When they saw me they started to race down the hallway after me. They were after me because I had yelled at the two boys. They shouted that they were going to kill me. I became really nervous and frightened.

Quickly, I opened the door closest to me, stepped in and locked the door behind me. No sooner did I lock it when their banging on the door was heard...I turned and looked around the room, which was plain barren like the hall, for any means of escape. I found it odd that there was no furniture at all here. At the far wall was a window. I began to gain confidence; I might just get out of this, I thought, alive. Next to the window was a chair identical to the one outside. I quickly walked over to it, but as I walked I heard the sound of running shower water and singing. I looked into the adjacent room and saw my roommate taking a shower in the corner. This struck me as very odd for I did not know what he was doing here. I felt concerned for him; I didn't want him to get hurt by the gang of kids. The banging became louder. Not having time to warn my roommate, I quickly picked up the wooden chair and threw it at the window. (The window was 6' X 3' and was on the ground floor for I saw a green hill a tree and a sidewalk.) It just bounced off, leaving the window quivering like it was made of plexi-glass. This seemingly impossible event left me with the conclusion that this could only happen in a dream. Just the fact that my roommate was taking a shower in a corner gave further evidence to this. It was at this point that I became lucid.

Knowing that I was dreaming, and knowing that I could not be hurt, I opened the door to face the gang. To my surprise they did not attack me but instead clapped me on the back and became my friends. It felt as if they were glad that I realized I was dreaming. Their sudden friendliness made me happy but cautious. After being introduced

I was escorted down the hallway. I felt great joy that I was lucid. The kids and the hall had better clarity and detail. As I walked, a thought occurred to me; now would be a great time to do an experiment, to take advantage of this lucid state before something happens to awaken me. I tried an experiment with math problems. It seemed simple enough and not too complicated. I was curious to know if solving math problems was possible at all in a dream. I walked over to the wooden desk, took out a piece of paper I found in the drawer and wrote down a couple of math questions (8×7 , 4×2 , 3×2 , and I think 9×3). By now most of the gang had dispersed, leaving me alone to solve the problems. There was one kid standing by the wall watching me.

The problem I tried to solve was 8×7 . It was extremely difficult to concentrate, and I got the answer wrong. I tried again, but this time I got it right (56). I felt excited. I actually got a math problem right in a dream. The youth next to me approached and asked me if I would join him and the others. I said no and that I wanted to be alone. I then tried another problem. Again it was difficult to concentrate on the answer, but I got it right. Now most of my attention was on solving the math. I began to feel great pressure in my eyes. It felt like the feeling you get when you spin around many times and get that slight headache or when you read in a moving vehicle. I wasn't too concerned though. The funny thing about the whole thing was, and the most unusual, was that with each correct answer, I felt my mind expand.

The dream became more lucid and my peripheral vision was greatly enhanced. I also felt my dream body become more solid, I saw my hands and feet with much greater clarity.

What happened next scared me more than anything I ever experienced in my life. I found my consciousness so expanded that for a moment I could not tell if this was just a dream or reality. The feeling was overwhelming. I became very frightened. Everything around me had become too clear to be just a dream, and it felt as if my physical body, and mind, was converging together with my dream body. It was very frightening. Something in the back of my mind told me that if I didn't stop with the math problems and awaken soon, I will not be able to awake at all and die. This last word stuck heavy on me. I became very, very nervous and started to panic. I immediately dropped the paper and pencil and walked away from the desk. But walking this time was different from any I had experience in a dream. This time I seemed to feel the weight of each foot as it hit the ground. Actual weight. It was like I was there; my physical body. I began to tremble, what was happening was too much for me to comprehend, I just wanted to wake up. When I tried, I found out that I could not. This scared me very badly. The youth confronted me a second time and asked if I was all right. I told him that I was and that I must go. Despite my efforts to wake up I found I still could not.

Out of desperation I tried something else; I tried to focus my mind on my physical body. (I found it much easier to do.) It worked. For an instant I saw my face, in bed, overlap my vision like a double exposure. I then felt my dream body (or more accurate my mind) being sucked up into a vacuum and into a tunnel. The feeling was most unusual; I had never felt it before. This tunnel feeling was the closest thing I could think of to describe the experience. I then felt I was jerked into my physical body. When I

awoke I had that pressure in my eyes still and it lasted most of the day. During the course of the day, by now that frightened feeling I had was gone, I felt a new outlook on my life. I felt more good to be alive than I ever did before.

Vincent MacTiernan
New York, New York

Dear Editor:

I was particularly pleased that you chose to include Katrina Machado's most eloquent rebuttal to Strephon Williams' article. His repeated pleas for "evidence" from LaBerge, when of course he can offer none himself except for his client's subjective reports, and his call for "professional" guidance in genuine dream work - guidance of course from persons who could in no way have participated in the actual drama and nuances of any particular dream experiences they propose to "interpret" for all us "non-professionals".

For someone who represents himself as a professional therapist involved in an organization calling itself the Jungian-Senoi Institute, his position is most curious. Jung quite emphatically stressed that the second half of any successful analysis must be undertaken and concluded by the patient. Any intermediaries, he felt, could only stand between the individual and his/her achievement of total fusion of the conscious psyche and the unconscious, which would result in a full realization of the Self. He is most clear that there is no place for self-delusion in this process; this theme is repeated over and over in his writings. Today, "Active imagination" in Jungian psychology is considered by some to be frank lucid dreaming (e.g. Mindell, A., *Dream Body*, 1981). If Jung himself was only partially aware (as it often seems to me) from his prehensive intuition, that lucid dreaming could be achieved without the rigors of Tibetan training it seems abundantly clear from his first principles and from the corpus of his work, that he would have embraced it as probably the most important tool in the armamentarium of psychoanalysis.

David R. May, Ph. D.

Dear Editor:

I do not believe it is psychologically sound -if one wishes to develop dream lucidity- to ask oneself, "Am I dreaming or am I awake?" This question implies that when one is dreaming one cannot be awake. This implication acts as a subtle mental suggestion.

Instead, I ask myself, "Am I awake physically, or awake in dreaming?"

To be lucid is to be awake to the nature of one's present experience. In a basic sense, to be lucid is to be sane: Oriented as to what is actually happening, and not deluded by appearance.

I don't think we should underestimate semantics. Words and the definitions we

give them not only reveal our beliefs. They also structure our experience and our interpretations of experience. And then, because we often take them for granted, so does the subconscious. They are like hypnotic suggestions.

This may seem nit-picky, but I believe it is vital.

Linda R. Reneau (Ravenwolf)
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