



Induction of Lucid Dreaming by Luminous Stimulation

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Lucid dreaming, is a learnable, but difficult, skill (LaBerge, 1980). Consequently, we have sought methods for helping dreamers to realize that they are dreaming by means of external cues applied during REM sleep, which if incorporated into dreams, can remind dreamers that they are dreaming. We have tested a variety of stimuli, including tape recordings of the phrase "This is a dream", (LaBerge, Owens, Nagel & Dement, 1981), musical tones (Kueny, 1985), conditioned tactile stimuli (Rich, 1985), olfactory stimuli (LaBerge, Brylowski, & Levitan, 1985) and light.

Here we report on laboratory experiments using light as a stimulus for inducing lucid dreams. The light stimuli were flashing extra bright red light emitting diodes mounted in a pair of goggles, applied for varying lengths of time either by a technician or a computer while the subject was in REM sleep. Twenty-eight subjects (reporting a median of one lucid dream per month) were polysomnographically recorded for one to four nights, and stimulated with flashing light during REM sleep. Seventeen subjects (61%), had one or more signal-verified lucid dreams, although for five subjects lucidity lasted only a few seconds before awakening. Six of the thirteen (46%) subjects reporting less than one lucid dream per month had at least one lucid dream compared to eleven of the fifteen (73%) reporting one or more lucid dreams per month. Of the four subjects who reported never having had lucid dreams, two had their first lucid dreams stimulated by light.

Content analysis suggests that lucid dreams triggered by light stimuli can be equally intense and transcendent as those which occur spontaneously. One subject reported five lucid dreams in one night in the laboratory with the stimulus, and claimed that his awareness was elevated for the entire next day. Also, light-induced lucid dreams of over thirty minutes in length have been recorded. Further research is in progress to develop an optimally effective method of lucid dream induction.

References

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