

Psychedelics and Lucid Dreaming: Doorways in the Mind

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Psychedelics and lucid dreaming are doorways in the mind. Each can lead us to larger realities - often answering a deep need to explore the fundamental question: "What is reality?" Each shows us that reality is bigger, more complex, more varied and stranger than normal consciousness can fathom.

With psychedelics and ordinary dreams we often jump into uncharted realms. How can we become adept at exploring these realms, and how can we travel further?

We know we can train our dream-minds. One clue to this is that man has learned to navigate other altered states. In particular, there are maps of many means of meditative progress and many phenomena of meditative and psychedelic realities. And high altered states are increasingly seen to be consistent with each other (psychedelics, dreams, meditation, spiritual emergence, out-of-body and near-death experiences). So exposure to any of these helps us learn the others. In short, all are complementary techniques for delving deeply into our minds, and all are similar enough to confirm that these Other Worlds are larger realities rather than mere hallucination.

Of these modes, dreams and their complements (daydreams and waking fantasies) are the mind's most universal means of creating and experiencing important higher states of consciousness daily (or nightly). In fact, for our mental health we each need to allow our mind to seek its symbolic home by these means, especially by dreaming.

What is the continuum of dreams? Ordinary dreams are known to all. In lucid dreaming you become aware that you are dreaming, and the dream world becomes numinous. If you choose to, you can alter your dream as it unfolds. In high dreams you dream that you take a psychedelic and have trip-like experiences. In high lucid dreams, of course, you combine the "pluses" of lucid dreams and high dreams: You know that you are dreaming, you intentionally dream that you take a psychedelic, and you have a drug free psychedelic trip. Some high and high lucid dreams even continue for a time after waking up. In that state you cannot tell your reality from psychedelia, though you have not actually taken any psychedelic. (These reports complement those from Neuro-Linguistic training that psychedelic states can be induced by micro-modelling.)

Lucid dreaming has been popularized over the past decade, and interest is now burgeoning. Best-known is the work of Dr. Stephen LaBerge, popularized in his book *Lucid Dreaming*. Dr. Jayne Gackenbach publishes the *Lucidity Letter*, and lucid dreaming pioneers hold regular conferences which draw people nationwide.

What dramatic realizations and transformations can occur on all these paths? Aldous Huxley expressed them extremely well as the Pure Light, the intensification of perception (especially color), and a deepening of meaning. The Pure Light has gradations from the absolute, intense light of God down through the spiritual realms reported by mystics and

Scriptures. The intensification of color and other senses is well-known to psychedelics users, and is far beyond ordinary experience. The deepening of meaning into ineffability is the subjective but totally unshakable experience that each object or image has absolute significance in and of itself, directly, and not merely symbolically.

Another hallmark of heightened consciousness is the suspension of disbelief. The most bizarre circumstances are accepted without question. While in everyday consciousness we judge things true or hallucinatory by whether they conform to physical laws, in heightened consciousness our minds often generate or receive chains of images that show us deeper connections and laws. Suppose a tree forms itself into a bellowing bullfrog, and the frog becomes a dragon. From higher consciousness we see this as a revelation of the inner nature of the tree, or of "treeness", and its relation to the essence of frog and dragon, rather than as a violation of the law that trees stay trees and do not become frogs or dragons.

But these radically enhanced qualities of perception are not important for rapture or fascination alone. Their primary value is in the permanent qualitative changes they can and do make in people's lives. Through such altered states people have healed themselves of physical and emotional trauma ranging from birth trauma to cancer to violent rape. They have boosted their creative awareness, both in art (gaining inspiration and direction for their creative ability) and science (bringing forth new theorems and inventions).

In dreams we have complete physical safety. With psychedelics there is safety in most contexts, but since the body is awake and mobile, perceptual shifts can cause danger. Thus in high lucid dreams, with an enhanced perceptual field and only our dream body active, we can safely explore otherwise dangerous or even fatal realms of behavior. This can be accomplished either by taking control of the dream and directing its flow, or by allowing it to unfold and teach us as we remain in a passive student role. Both options are valid and valuable in different contexts, dependent on the dream-tripper's psychological state and the nature of the material that manifests.

Another very useful thing to do in lucid and high lucid dreams is to rehearse our behavior and choices in difficult circumstances, and allow our mind to generate possible results. In this way we can pretest our waking choices, much as athletes improve their performance by mental practice.

Because the dream and psychedelic states allow us to see underlying patterns that generate and govern our negative behaviors, all lucid dreams also can be used to recognize and release our fears and negativity and to modify our psychological foundations so that we can choose new and more positive behaviors. In fact a good deal of the denial and hysteria that surround psychedelics and "bad dreams" is rooted in the fear of, and the unconscious recognition of the power of, the psychological and psychic aspects of dreaming. But growth usually comes when we face our fears, and we should welcome any path that offers the opportunity for such work and play.

In addition, it has been suggested by spiritual masters that dreams are an excellent place to work out karmic patterns. There we can deal with our deep negative issues without turning them into violence, disease and tragedy in the physical world. For

example, such dreams should allow us to work through grief without turning it into cancer. Such ideas have recently received support from experiments that show brainwave activity to be the same for waking and dreaming a given task. This seems to indicate that, to the human consciousness, the two types of experiences are equivalent. While such theories remain somewhat speculative, we are far better off learning to use them as though they are proven, than waiting all our lives for more proof and perhaps bypassing the chance to grow and transform.

Another advantage of lucid dreaming is that it is one hundred percent healthy, legal and free. Stan Grof has remarked, after having to turn from psychedelics to holotropic breathing to help people reach high states of consciousness, that at least they can't outlaw breathing. Well, dreaming can't be outlawed either.

You can train yourself to recall dreams, do "dreamwork", and then learn higher forms of dreaming. How do you train yourself? By regular practices which I will describe. And if you have had psychedelic experience, that is a great advantage because it has given you very powerful "track time" in the alternate realities you can reach.

The general technique is to train yourself progressively to recall dreams, to do dreamwork, and then to reach successive states of lucidity.

There are dozens of fine books for self-training in dream recall and dreamwork. Any sizeable "New Age" bookstore is likely to have many of them, and all the current ones are listed in *Books in Print* for ordering through most bookstores. My suggestion is that you leaf through several and pick whichever feels right to you. And I suggest that rather than "studying" the book or making learning a chore, you read a chapter, or part of a chapter, each evening just before sleeping. Then invite your mind to give you the type of dream you have just read about. You will find that your unconscious mind is eager to communicate with you, and as you invite dreams and begin your dreamlog it will begin giving you many more dreams, and richer dreams. The process of learning lucidity will then be a continuation of this process.

The same pertains to dreamwork. Don't begin with "heavy" interpretations, like Freudian texts, that may bog you down or may emphasize mental illness or pathology. Instead, start with one of the lighter approaches, like Senoi or Jungian-Senoi dreamwork, which emphasize "speaking the dream" by telling it in the first person present tense ("I am") as though you are, successively, each of several major symbols that appeared in the dream. "I am" is a powerful affirmation, in dreamwork, psychology and spirituality.

Keep a dream log, to record at least the most important dreams of each week. Certainly write down all pre-lucid, lucid and high-lucid experiences to further validate these in your mind.

This initial training process will take most people several weeks to several months, depending on their psychological makeup and motivation. Within several months most neophytes will have at least a first lucid dream, and most lucid dreamers will substantially increase their lucidity.

To regularly reach transcendent levels via dreams, psychedelics or other tools, however, also requires long-term psychological and spiritual clearing. If we are not clear we give priority to clearing the issues that dog us, whereas if we are clear we find lucidity

far easier and more prevalent. But this operates as a two-way street; lucidity can help us dissolve issues. Dreamwork is therapeutic - at no cost.

Many people reach transcendent states at least once in their lives, but to make the level of ultimate unity one's "home" rather than a one-time gift of divine grace requires sustained intention, clearing and practice. This can be gained via meditation, dreamwork and psychedelics or more easily by a combination of these and other modalities.

Here is a summary of how to learn to have high lucid dreams. It follows the helpful and informative step-by-step instructions in Stephen LaBerge's *Lucid Dreaming*, which he calls the MILD technique. Briefly the MILD technique consists of two phases: Reality testing and dream programming.

Begin as described above, with dream recall, a dream log, and dreamwork, practicing with ordinary dreams as well as any pre-lucid or lucid dreams you may have. This sets your mind to focus more energy and awareness toward lucidity.

Simultaneously begin reality testing, by developing the habit of checking several times a day to determine if you are really awake or are dreaming. The idea is that what you steep yourself in during the day is eventually transferred to your dreams at night. If you habituate yourself to asking "How do I know I'm not dreaming?" then sooner or later you will ask this in a dream, and the answer will pop you into lucidity. In fact, the ease with which you adopt this reality testing will generally correlate to the ease with which you will learn to dream lucidly.

In addition to asking this question, you must DO something to check it out. Never answer, "I just know". Among the most commonly used tests are: Jumping up and trying to float. Changing the color of something in the environment. Reading something twice (digital clocks are excellent) and seeing if the text changes radically. Seeing if there is anything odd in the environment, such as floating objects or body changes.

The second part of the MILD technique is to program yourself as you fall asleep by using an affirmation like "As I begin to dream I will realize I am dreaming" or "If I can see anything at all, I am dreaming." Repeat this as you fall asleep, and again as you re-enter sleep each time you awaken during the night.

Most people have at least one lucid dream within a few months of doing this practice religiously, and many begin lucid dreaming within two to four weeks. People who have had lucid dreams before training often can have two to four lucid dreams some nights after training. The strongest dreamers can train themselves to dream lucidly on command. There is some correlation between normal dream recall and lucid dreams, in both number and vividness.

Vitamin B6 will greatly increase the frequency and intensity of dreams. It will not necessarily influence the positive or negative content of dreams, however, so you may have both more positive dreams and more nightmares. Nightmares can be especially valuable, though - remember, it's better to have the experience in dreams than in waking life. So do dreamwork with them.

What do you do when you reach the Other Worlds? In my own experience,

anything you like. I've found it most valuable to do whatever I would do in a waking psychedelic trip to increase my awareness, achieve new insights, reach spiritual realms, heal myself, and increase my psychological integration. Certainly unlimited free travel is instantly available. On the spiritual path, I seek an ally or guide or teacher and may become their initiate. Several people have reported that killing your dream body leads to transcendence and is free from risk. Looking at one's hands is a favorite "Don Juan" exercise that builds spiritual discipline. Accessing the archetypes and becoming them can be a powerful insight and healing tool.

A particularly "psychedelic" way of programming your choice is to decide which dream drug to take in a lucid state. If you take dream MDMA you will have a heart-level bonding experience, which can be used to clear negative patterns with parents, lovers or friends, or to enhance awareness of the perfection of your self, and every other person. If you take dream LSD you can more easily tune into the unconscious realms and the spiritual channels, etc. You might even try creating your own brand of psychedelic, with attributes of your fancy. If you are really daring, take a totally unknown drug, and let it take you where it will. Everything you learn will mirror your mind! You will reach totally new and uncharted lands, which are yet somehow familiar!

Speculative and science fiction stories also offer good ideas for compounding your dream drug. Just so, in *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley introduced Soma, a drug of his invention named after the early Aryan psychedelic soma. This was 23 years before he experienced a real psychedelic. Late in his life, in *Island*, he introduced Moksha as a utopian drug. Time warpers would be drugs that dilate or contract time, or allow time travel to past and future lives. Or take a stripper drug that peels away layer after layer of whatever you see or feel to reveal its deeper essence - so dream a mirror and fall into your core! Or design a transference drug that allows you to be fully in another's mind, or an alien consciousness. Of course there are all manner of telepathy-enhancing drugs you could conjure, as well as dream tripmates to play with. The list is as endless as your fantasy world, and as deep as your calling.

Here are a few of the high lucid experiences reported by *Psychedelic Monographs and Essays* readers, with commentary on their applicability to the spiritual path and the mapping of inner consciousness. They are transcribed in the first person, as each was dreamed.

High Lucid Dream #1: Healthiness

I am at a health fair where eight different types of psychedelics are being advertised and sold openly at a booth. I decide to try MDMA. Then I dream that I remember that I tried this substance last year in a similar dream but had forgotten I had it until now. As I get high, I like MDMA's gentle effects, and definitely notice them as I walk around at the health fair for a few hours. I have a very strange, very mellow feeling, different from any other psychedelic.

The dreamer had never really had a prior MDMA dream, and had not yet used MDMA in waking life. Shortly after this dream he did try it and found the experience to

be very similar. In addition, the psychedelic appears in the context of a health fair, a place where self improvement is the central purpose. With a little further conscious input the dreamer could then choose to explore healthiness and perhaps self-healing, especially with love. Or he could heal a relationship, by interacting with someone in the dream. These are the strongest attributes of MDMA.

High Lucid Dream #2: Transpersonal and Precognitive

I awaken in a dreamscape of small buildings, perhaps out in the countryside. It is a schoolroom and also becomes a boat. I ask for a taste of the "Water of Life", and am led to a barrel-like metal cooler. I sit next to a woman as the boat begins to pull out. In the distance is the Golden Gate Bridge, and I tell the woman, "I am from earth" and ask "What is the name of your world?" She replies "Womb world." Or "The Womb Mother".

The "Water of Life" is a very powerful psychedelic drug described in *Dune*, a science fiction novel by Frank Herbert. It has strong mystical powers and permanently transforms the taker into a spiritual leader of the society, if she survives. It is only permitted to women. This dream clearly deals with integration of the feminine on the archetypal level. Both the psychedelic and the boat deal with the water element, archetypal representation of the feminine. And of course the alien woman from the Womb World is an even stronger female archetype. The bridge, being golden and numinous speaks of both transformation and spirituality.

In addition to the normal symbolic dreamwork level, there was a strong precognitive aspect to this dream, as the dreamer was planning to attend a workshop by Stan and Christina Grof on holotropic breathing, which often precipitates participants into birthing and perinatal experiences. In fact Christina is a powerful woman whose first two transpersonal experiences were during the birthing of her children. Perhaps the dreamer was tuning into the imminent potential of a "birthing" into a higher spiritual world. When he attended the actual workshop, he also noticed that the cooler which appeared in the dream was directly outside the building where the workshop was held.

High Dream #3: Spiritual Perception

I partake of the Holy Bread in my old room at my parents' house. Moving through a black and white world, I go down the stairs and step out the front door. Color flashes in. I stand at the steps of the porch and feel the air and hear thunder. Lightning flashes and I am high. Mrs. Miller's house vanishes. I can see the river. The colors are all askew. Sheets of neon green rain fall under the iridescent navy blue trees, wildly writhing in the storm-tossed air.

On the ruby red road the rain collects in pearly puddles and splashes dancing pink drops. I run in the warm rain, laughing as lightning bursts brilliant purple. I jump into the middle of the road, where four women, my grandmother, aunt, and two cousins are sitting at a table. I stop to say hello. At first they look normal, but their eyes have a strange inner light. They grab me. They are possessed. Their faces suddenly transform into horrifying apparitions. Their faces shrink and their hair, mouth, nostrils and ears disappear, their skin in the color of light rose marble replete with veins. Their eyes are giant purple raisins.

I become lucid, and know I'm dreaming. I try to twist free and run, but they won't let me go. I say "I can do all things through the power of Christ." I do a backwards somersault and awaken.

In this dream, the dreamer takes the psychedelic before becoming lucid, but it is a nightmare. When he becomes lucid, and still high, he calls on the spiritual power of Christ to free him from the terror, and it works. The dreamer reports that in waking life, his cousins are "born again Christians" while he is Buddhist. A precursor to the religious content can be found in his initial statement that the dream drug taken was Holy Bread, a sacrament and a Christian one at that. Even so, he was surprised to find himself using the Christ symbol to reach freedom (and indeed doing a back-flip - a shift in position). Upon waking he related the dream to an integration of the question of good and evil as portrayed across seemingly incompatible religions.

He also affirms that this was the singularly most powerful psychedelic experience he has had in terms of the color negative shift, although no psychedelic was used in waking life. This indicates that such states can be naturally occurring brain/mind states if we can learn new modalities for accessing them.

Although psychedelics have been widely used for millennia in spiritual contexts, as have lucid dreams, it is only recently that the two areas have come to public attention and public availability on a wide scale. Research into the overlap of these two powerful transformational modalities is in its infancy, and an endlessly fascinating exploration lies ahead.

As more people train themselves to dream lucidly, the foundation for high lucid dreamwork becomes stronger. We hope to build a positive morphogenetic field around the ability to do lucid dreaming, so that more people can easily access this ecstatic state and all the higher states of consciousness it can lead to.