

## Concerns with the Field of Lucid Dreaming Essays/Letters Letter From Linda Magallon

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It saddens me to realize that both Jayne Gackenbach and Scott Sparrow are operating out a fear mode. The warnings from tradition can be a heavy burden to bear and too often they become self-fulfilling prophesies, especially if one concentrates on the negative and ignores the positive that surrounds us. How different it would be if, instead of flying into a panic in the face of overwhelming experiences of the psyche and throwing out deadly terms like "psychotic break" and "schizophrenia", dreamworkers would instead act as a resource and support system for transpersonal experiences? They'd be cheering on dreamers with "Wow, what a wonderful opportunity and great gift you have!" "What neat adventures you can look forward to!" takes the onus off the current experience.

The gift to which I am referring is not the experience, but the tool of consciousness exploration which, like a match, can be used for "good" or not. But I'm hardly going to refuse to teach my children to light a match because they might get their fingers burnt the first couple of times or even because one of them "might" grow up to be an arsonist! Birthday candles and logs on the fireplace are far more important reasons upon which to concentrate my energies.

When my own fear or selfish mode overwhelms me, I have a built-in grounding experience--it's children, and not just my own. Their lucid dream experiences don't require meditation or any hard work at all. They even have incubated terrifying dreams--on purpose, for the sheer fun and excitement of it.

Instead of fearing the "abnormal"--and I use the term loosely--why not have dreamworkers study what is naturally healthy and alive, and then create an arena that supports it? Then any conscious or subconscious experimentation in transpersonal development will have a model--not for healing, per se which assumes the negative will or must happen, but for prevention of the situation to begin with, by concentrating on and demonstrating the positive. I would include not only experiences of positive lucidity, but experiences of transformation which had a positive result. And they are there, if you would only look for them! Isn't it far better to have those to pull out and show clients, instead of a sheaf of so-called "failures"?

What has been assumed to be a failure, or at least a warning, such as the correspondence published in *Lucidity Letter* needs to be reevaluated, anyway. I don't consider any of them cause for alarm. Too many questions haven't be asked, the most pertinent of which is "What were the extended circumstances?" Why are we so quick to make LUCIDITY the culprit, and not the overall beliefs and assumptions and expectations of the lucid dreamer? Did the dreamer have a past history of erratic behavior? Was he in therapy? What better chance for the dreamer to try out brave new experiences: there's a built-in expert who could "rescue him" if he dove into the deep end

of the swimming pool!

Lucidity is a tool, and like any tool, its use or abuse is the responsibility of the user. Dreamworkers can point out the most productive use. They can also talk about realistic expectations. But it's far different to list cautions matter of factly, than to print neon sign "warning labels" on lucid dreaming.

But all this is jumping the gun. The possible problems have not, I repeat, have NOT been clearly demonstrated. A statistical sample where  $n=1$  is not a verification of any data. Gathering negative experiences, and only negative experiences isn't scientific. It isn't even just! Asking questions that ignore other influences in the process is just plain putting blinders on.

I share these thoughts out of a continuing, deep concern for the present and future of the dreamwork community.

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*(Editors Note: Linda Magallon is a co-editor of Dream Network Bulletin and a former member of the Board of Directors of the Association for the Study of Dreams.)*