

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Upon reading the letter to the editor from Vincent MacTiernan (*Lucidity Letter*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pg. 160) I was struck by the similarity between his experience and that of Oliver Fox as reported in his book, *Astral Projection, A Record of Out-of-the-body Experiences*. The book bears no copyright date but has a comment by the author dated 1 March, 1938. In pages 34 through 42 Mr. Fox relates his experiences at being unable to break the trance or dream and awaken. He also explains how to return to normal waking state from such a dream easily and without the "dream hangover" as experienced by both Mr. Fox and Mr. MacTiernan.

Mr. Fox coined the term "Dream of Knowledge" for the phenomenon we now call lucid dream. I believe that the difference between lucid dream and astral projection is a matter of degree of focus, perhaps only a matter of semantics.

Astral projection, out-of-the-body experience, near death experience and lucid dreaming are terms coined by the experiencers in attempting to name an experience of the consciousness being outside of or at a different location than the body.

I think another term is coma. I think that a person in a coma is dislocated in time/space and either can't remember how to return to "our here and now" or doesn't want to return or doesn't know that he is in another "here and now" (for example, the dreamer in a non-lucid dream) or has crossed to another of the multiple universes and is living "there" unaware of "here."

In the first instance, Oliver Fox explains in detail how to get out of a coma. He thought of it as a trance. I wonder if he could have gotten himself out of his trance if he had thought that he were in a coma?

Not wanting to return would seem most likely in cases of OBE due to violence to the body. The "person" may be viewing the trauma to the physical body while focused at some point outside of it and not wanting to take on the responsibility of finishing a lifetime in a "mutilated" body but being afraid to "sever the cord" and die. Besides, "it is all so beautiful and peaceful here" and the needs of the body are being cared for by a team of highly trained professionals, so who wants to come back to the body.?!

Whatever his reasons may be for not being here now, I believe that those who are adept at out-of-the-body experience (astral travel, lucid dreaming, remote viewing, soul travel, etc.) can make contact with a person in a coma. Once the comatose person is contacted and communication is established, then he can either be taught to re-establish dwelling in the body (re: Oliver Fox) or, if it is fear or ignorance that is keeping them away, then psychological counseling as with any professional/client relationship is in order.

It would be nice if the "lucid dreamer" were also a psychologist. Any volunteers?

Cliff Churchman

Mountain View, CA

Dear Editor:

Recently as a part of a larger research project dealing with hypnosis and dreams we (Robert Falconer under the supervision of Carol Erickson) did some preliminary work on post-hypnotically suggesting lucid dreams.

In the ninth session of a series of ten hypnosis sessions we dealt explicitly with lucidity. We tried suggesting La Berge's M.I.L.D. technique; suggesting that the subject look at their hands during a dream *a la* Castenada; suggesting that the subject could recognize their recurrent dream images as a lucidity trigger; suggesting that the impossibility of certain dream situations could cue lucidity; and we suggested (in imitation of Tibetan dream yoga) that a spark of consciousness could be maintained as the subject fell asleep. In our extremely limited experience many of these approaches showed promise but none were real standouts.

Our most interesting finding about lucidity was a totally unexpected one. Three of the ten subjects had experienced lucid dreams before the study began. All three of these people reported dramatic increases in the frequency and degree of lucidity they experienced in their night time dreams while they were undergoing the first five sessions. These sessions were devoted to Dr. Milton H. Erickson's dream rehearsal technique.

Erickson developed his dream rehearsal technique NOT as a method of therapy or as dream work per se, but as a way of deepening hypnotic trance. The technique consists of (1) selecting one of the subject's dreams, (2) reading the dream to the hypnotized subject and suggesting that they can re-dream the dream "perhaps with a different cast of characters and perhaps in a different setting but the same dream", (3) this is done recursively (i.e. when a dream is presented it is turn suggested that that re-dream can be re-dreamed) until a series of re-dreams is produced. The results were surprising. All of the subjects produced what they subjectively felt were re-dreams. Despite the fact that we were not trying to do therapy, the re-dream series seemed inexorably to spiral in on the subject's core issues. This technique may have a generalized utility for increasing the quantity and quality of lucidity in subjects who have already experienced lucid dreams. Dr. Erickson described this technique in his 1952 article "Deep Hypnosis and Its Induction" which is available in Jay Haley's 1967 anthology *Advanced Techniques of Hypnosis and Therapy*. A somewhat longer report of our research will probably be published in 1988 in the A.S.D. newsletter.

Robert Falconer
Santa Cruz, CA

Dear Editor:

I had a serious insomnia problem which I believed contributed to my lucid dream/OBE's. I got a brochure listing sleep disorder clinics in various hospitals around the country. One of those hospitals was located in the Atlanta area, so after putting it off for a few years I finally decided to enter their clinic to see if they could help me with this problem.

An essential part of their treatment is that a patient spend two nights in their laboratory hooked up to a machine by an array of wires which monitor various of his brain and body functions. This part of their treatment intrigued me as I was hoping that I might have a lucid dream while hooked up to their machine; or better yet, a W.I.L.D. (Wake Initiated Lucid Dream) with its accompanying paralysis and vibrations, which would surely be picked up by the monitoring machine. Even more intriguing to me was that they also have a videotape camera concealed in the ceiling which photographs the patient throughout the night. I have always been curious about what I looked like in my bed when I thought I was out of my body, so here was a possible opportunity to satisfy my curiosity.

The first night in the laboratory was uneventful as it took me hours to get to sleep, and I only had a vague remembrance of a few non-lucid dreams. But on the second night we hit paydirt. Somewhere between 4:00 A.M. and 4:15 A.M., while I was having an extremely vivid non-lucid dream, lucidity came over me like a bolt of lightning; at that moment I was surrounded by a group of dream-creatures who were congratulating me on having defeated a bully in a fight and thereby winning his girlfriend and a couple of chickens. Even the bully and his girlfriend were in the group congratulating me. When lucidity came over me, I did something which I had trained myself never to do at the onset of lucidity when I am surrounded by dream-creatures, but I was so excited by the thought that finally one of my experiences was being recorded on an electronic machine that I completely forgot myself and shouted out as loud as I could that we were all in a dream of my own creation, that they were not real but only fabrications of my subconscious mind, that the real world was in the hospital laboratory where my body was hooked up to an electronic machine which was recording many of my body and mental functions. As soon as they heard me, the whole atmosphere changed 180 degrees, from one of cordiality and good-fellowship to one of sneering disdain and menace, and I knew I was in trouble. Frantically, as I have done so often in the past in similar circumstances, I made a desperate attempt to break out of the dream world by concentrating on my body lying in the sleep laboratory. Immediately I could sense myself back on the hospital bed, but I couldn't break completely free from the dream world as I could still see the dream-creatures jeering at me and trying to grab me. For what seemed to be an eternity I was suspended in this twilight zone - half in the dream world and half out of it. Thinking that I may never break free, I started yelling for the staff psychiatrist to come and get me out of this dream world; I also made a futile attempt to knock on the back of my bed with my fist so as to alert the technician on duty in the next room, but my efforts were fruitless as I just couldn't seem to break free from this half-paralyzed state. Finally, just before I was about to succumb to total panic, I broke free and the dream world completely dissolved. I immediately called to the

technician to come into the room and make a note of the time on the machine print out. It was 4:15 A.M.

As to what was the cause of the reaction of the dream-creatures to my announcement of lucidity, that is the way they always react - or nearly always - whenever I tell them that they are in a dream; they get upset, angry and sometimes quite violent, and I have the devil of a time trying to disentangle myself from them. That is why that over the years I have tried to train myself to stifle my outbursts at the onset of lucidity, but it is easier said than done because the excitement I feel in the present experience is as high as it was for my first experience over fifteen years ago. When the adrenalin starts pumping it is hard to keep a cool head, especially since there are no road maps to tell you how you should act in this strange world. I sometimes feel like a modern-day Columbus exploring a world which few people know exist.

Another problem is how fragile and short my experiences are. It is difficult to measure time in them but I suspect that very few of my experiences lasted more than four or five minutes, which means that the pressure of time is upon you, so just being passive and observant won't get you much information except some visual images which you may have difficulty describing.

What I try to get from these dream-creatures is verbal responses to my questions, and to get them I have to be a bit aggressive. Even when I am fortunate to get a response from them, more times than not it will be so illogical or incoherent that I can barely understand it, let alone try to remember it when I come to write it up in my journal. Just asking simple questions like "Where am I?" "Who are you?" "What year is it?" will bring forth the most astonishing responses from them. On many occasions they will be reluctant to give any response at all and you almost have to drag it out of them. It is like pulling teeth.

When I went over the results with the staff psychiatrist, I was particularly interested in what the machine had picked up when lucidity came over me and prompted my ensuing struggle with the dream-creatures. According to the psychiatrist, he could discern nothing out of the ordinary at that time except for more intense REM activity, which somewhat disappointed me as I was hoping to find some neurons in the brain firing off which shouldn't have been firing off. But when we looked at the videotape for that period, it was pretty evident that I was in some sort of struggle as my face was contorted and I was desperately trying to hit the back of the bed with my hand.

Father X