

Beyond Lucidity? Healing Through Nonlucid Dreams. A Personal Report

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This is my way.
What is your way.
The way doesn't exist.
-Nietzsche

Lucidity is nowadays often presented as an indispensable goal for all who want to use their dreams for personal transformation. No one seems to point out the possibility of dangers involved at least for some of us. Like Jung said "What sets one free is a prison for another". We do not all eat the same kinds of foods nor do we read the same kind of books - why should we dream along the same lines? Nearly every one speaks about different techniques to achieve more lucid dreams, but what about those who may need to get rid of theirs?

I am an active dream-worker but am now developing farther and farther away from lucidity, because of the negative effect lucid dreams had on my health. I don't think that I am the only one: there must be others with similar experiences, perhaps even those who have health problems without knowing that the cause may lie in their lucid dream experiments. Perhaps my experiences are of value to them.

Ten Years of Intensive Dreamwork

I have always had a very vivid and colorful dream life: both clear and chaotic dreams including spontaneous lucid dreams and also very persistent nightmares and anxiety dreams. In spite of being a very sound sleeper, my dream recall has been excellent. I also had a habit of waking up with a headache and feeling much more tired in the morning than when I went to sleep. Or worse, I woke up feeling definitely ill.

Now, after ten years of regular dreamwork, my dream recall is even better and my dreams have gone through a total transformation: I no longer have lucid dreams, nor have I had nightmares or anxiety dreams for some years. Neither do I wake up tired. My morning headaches are gone and for the first time in my life I wake up feeling well. Although I have always been physically frail and am not strong now, I am healthier than I have ever been. I see this as a result of very intensive dreamwork, which has meant getting rid of lucidity or going beyond it.

Precognitive Dreams

The major motive for dream work came originally through dreams. I began to have precognitive dreams about my health problems, sometimes in a symbolic form,

sometimes in a very realistic diagnostic form. And there were also other types of precognitive dreams, so much so that I felt like J.W. Dunne (1950). "I was suffering, seemingly, from some extraordinary fault in my relation to reality, something so uniquely wrong that it compelled me to perceive, at rare intervals, large blocks of otherwise perfectly normal personal experience displaced from their proper positions in time." Although in my case this did not happen "at rare intervals", it happened so often that I felt like being transported into another time.

My dreams included visions about people I was yet to meet, with a time span of often several years. Those dreams were not always very clear, but most of the time there were enough explicit details to connect the dream and the future event, for instance:

In 1982 I had two dreams: In one which I had to phone to Turku (a town in Finland) to a young man whose number was 11115 or 51111, and another about a person called Kristiina who was a librarian in a small occult library in Töölö (an area in Helsinki). I had nothing to do with Turku or Töölö, knew no one there, but in 1988 I got acquainted with a young man in Turku whose "number" was 51111. That is he was born in November 5, which is written in Finnish 5.11. at 11 P.M. And in 1987 I moved to Töölö and later on met a Kristiina who took care of the small library of our astrological society and in Töölö!

These glimpses of future events felt like getting a window into another level - according to my dream source I was now "having dreams from the causal plane". Many of these dreams handled small insignificant details, maybe even most of them, but some of them were real life-savers and made me trust the wisdom of my dreams.

I did not see these dream predictions as something destined to happen, I saw them as meaningful probabilities; that is, something to work on, to avert or to facilitate through inner work. And if they were to be fated events, at least I could prepare myself to accept them more graciously than otherwise.

Self-suggestions for Healing Dreams

Because of my failing health I paid extra attention to anything helpful or harmful in this respect. I soon noticed that some of my dreams meant ill-health (lucid ones), other dreams had no effect on my health (most of my nonlucid dreams) and there were some dreams which made me feel better (some nonlucid dreams, often of a more reflective kind). Naturally I wanted to have more dreams of the healing kind and for that purpose I began to give myself regular prayer-like suggestions of having beneficial healing dreams coming from my own higher self, dreams that I could use for personal growth and enlightenment

I did not give myself any specific suggestions concerning lucidity, mostly because I had an ambivalent attitude towards my lucid dreams. In part I felt positively about them because I found them interesting and had read how they were "the next developmental stage". Yet they made me physically sick, even when I mentally felt fine and found them

interesting or funny. I knew that dreams could have physical effects, even dream researchers said that. Still the main reason for the impact on my health may have been psychological perhaps my unconscious mind, seeing the whole situation, wanted to force me away from lucidity, because it would not be beneficial for me in the long run. At least some of my lucid dreams could be understood this way, for instance the last one I had, on November 30, 1981:

I was at the hallway in my home surrounded by all kinds of building materials. Suddenly I realized that I was dreaming and that I could influence the surroundings. Delighted at first I made some experiments, but then I saw a pair of crutches and some mushrooms and understood that I had a decision to make: did I need those crutches and mushrooms (lucidity?) or not. I put them away and said to myself that I must thoroughly think it over before I do anything. After that I lost the lucidity and woke up with a strong impression that for me lucidity would be a shortcut not leading to permanent growth.

I did not miss my lucid dreams, both because they were replaced by dreams which I found even more interesting and because at that time I had already read about lucidity and found many things strange: like inducing lucidity by saying to yourself that everything is dreaming. I thought that if you were to say to yourself that an orange is a peach for a long time, you might believe it after a while, but the orange would still be an orange. You would have just given it another name in your mind. And “there are some indications that a lucid dreamer’s fallibility is greatest when he is considering questions most closely related to the recognition of the state he is in (Green, 1989).

Or it might be like Strephton Kaplan Williams said in *Lucidity Letter* (Williams, 1987): “The lucid dream ego may dream it is awake and saying ‘this is only a dream,’ but maybe, in point of fact, dreaming what the dream source wants the dream ego to feel and think.”

It seemed to me that knowing that you are dreaming doesn’t necessarily mean that you are more aware in a deeper sense; you are just awake in a way, or think that you are, concentrating on the state of consciousness you are in, not on the meaningful issues in your life. In fact you may be avoiding important concerns by using your waking mind to change just those very issues the dream wants you to be aware of. Thus you may totally miss the message and the possibility for enlightenment your dream was offering.

I also thought that using my waking mind (or ego) in my dreams would be like bringing the elephant into the China store and thus missing all the intuitive and subtle meanings. I wanted to use the delightful wisdom I found in my dreams to heal myself and to make me more aware of the undercurrents in my life and surroundings. Perhaps what I was hoping for was a kind of waking lucidity. For me the dream world was a reality in itself, albeit a different one, I wanted to learn from it and to be guided by it, not to change it. It had its own logic, different but not inferior to the waking level logic, quite to the contrary.

Beyond Lucidity

The first effect of my suggestions was that all my lucid dreams vanished, followed by my nightmares and then my anxiety dreams. And I have not had them since. Gradually my nonlucid dreams changed totally, in many unexpected ways. They grew more and more meaningful, tranquil, easy to understand, concise, reflective and less and less visual. The only strong visual effect that did not disappear was color, perhaps because I am a very color-conscious person in my waking life. Little by little my dreams became extremely realistic, even the surroundings became like they were in reality. My dreams began to resemble my waking life thinking: they handled mostly psychological, religious and spiritual subjects which were the same subjects I was interested in on the waking level. The most surprising change was that my dreams became verbal consisting of thoughts, ideas, puns, words, evaluations, plans, discussions, even arguments, anything happening in the mind. I saw loss of visuality as a way of concentration in which the focus was on thinking and awareness, not on visual impressions or surroundings. Like it happens in waking reality - intensive focusing on thinking makes one oblivious to the outer environment in the visual sense.

My dreaming mind seemed to work like a computer: whatever program I put in (by reading or thinking) was what I dreamt about. I was in many ways like my normal self, even my cognitive and critical faculties were almost the same, except that I was much more intuitive in my dreams. I did not feel exceptionally aware - in fact I did not think anything about my level of awareness; but judging from the waking point of view I was much more intelligent and aware in my dreams than I am when awake. Solutions dreams suggested to many of my waking life problems were sometimes very strange, but they usually worked.

Guidance Through Dreams

In my case achieving total nonlucidity has been a real achievement. It has also meant an enormous amount of changes in my life. The guidance and wisdom I found in my new kinds of nonlucid dreams made me slowly change my whole life, very cautiously at first, then trusting dreams more and more. However, it was a very subtle process. "A dream never says what one ought to do. Nature never suggests. It is like the Delphic Oracle, it never tells you what to do. It is a mystic situation, and you yourself must make head and tail out of it" (Jung, 1984). Of course to "make head and tail" out of my dreams meant continual study and critical thinking. Even my dreams encouraged me to study and read much: I could have dreams like the following one I had when concentrating on an astrological problem: I saw stars in the sky and then a talking cloud came to visit me and explained the problem partly and then said that it could not make itself more clear, because my conceptual framework is not yet extensive enough!

I felt that I had opened a door to the inner side of the universe; it was a kind of seed level where everything that was later to appear in my life, was planned and where I could have an effect on those plans and thus also on my health in a preventive sense. And more and more I began to have a feeling of a strange mixture of my waking and dream reality. Jung

said that we probably dream continually, but consciousness makes, while waking, such a noise that we do not hear it. My dream reality seems to speak loud enough to make itself heard on the waking level, at least when necessary and beneficial. For instance if I forget to take heed of some warning dream, it often pops up in my waking mind as long as necessary to make me listen. Or without incubating a dream I may very clearly know the subject I am going to dream next night (no exact details though). For me this meant a kind of waking lucidity, a possibility to contact my dreaming consciousness from the waking level, at least to some extent.

Healing Dreams

My original suggestion about healing dreams really was effective. I had lots and lots of dreams about healing: diagnostic and prognostic dreams, plus guidance on just about everything concerning health (diet, exercise, living habits, psychological and religious problems, relationships problems and whatever). It has meant an enormous improvement in my health, albeit very slowly. Except in a couple of crisis situations there have been no miraculous healings. Dreams just taught me to heal myself and to prevent future occurrences of similar problems. This all took time and some hard work. My interest in healing also gave me some dreams about other people and even about pets, for instance:

I dreamt about a sick cat and my dream voice said that the cat would be cured if some changes were made in its diet. My cats were well but when I phoned a friend she told me that her cat had fallen ill and the vet did not know what to do. She tried my dream advice and the cat got well. We never knew what the problem was.

Since I started my intensive dream work I have not seen a doctor once. I incubate a healing dream as soon as I notice any need for it. Usually the first signs of approaching ill health are dreams which resemble dreams I had when I still had lucid dreams. The mere fact of asking for a healing dream, seems to have a beneficial effect, and in some cases that is nowadays all I need. Lucid types of dreams disappear and I become healthy. The spook of Jane Roberts, Seth, was right: "these therapeutic dreams can be brought about with practice. The suggestion (being action) has its own electromagnetic effect and already begins to set certain healing processes into action."

Verbal Dreams and Witnessing Dreams

Now I have mainly two main types of important dreams, both of them nonlucid ones:

- 1) Verbal dreams or dream thinking: dreams in which I am very active mentally, although not much physically. The main focus is on awareness, or psychological or philosophical analysis of events. Visual images and symbols are used only as aids and are never the main focus.
- 2) Witnessing dreams, in which I am a passive observer: I watch a woman (myself

in another form) from afar. These are usually precognitive dreams and some of them I see as a way of meditation in the dream state. As Aurobindo (Bases of Yoga) said, “one way of stilling the mind is to look at the thoughts as not one’s own, to stand back as their witness. After a time the mind divides into two, a part which is mental witness (my dreaming self?) watching undisturbed, quiet and a part which is the object of observation (the woman in my dreams).”

Although I am now totally nonlucid, I still have to work to keep it so, but less and less all the time. Yet many of my reflective dreams seem to follow the same laws and happen under the same conditions as experiences of lucid dreamers. Most of my critical and cognitive faculties are functioning in my dreams, and most of the time my dreaming mind seems to be well aware of my waking life conditions, not to mention my former dreams, which it remembers especially well. And sometimes my dreaming mind interprets! The major difference between my nonvisual dreams and my prior lucid dreams is that my current dreams are very seldom bizarre. In addition, my dreaming mind seems to pay no attention to the fact that I am dreaming. Perhaps my dreaming mind finds that fact irrelevant. I do not remember my waking intentions, but I act on them.

Nonlucidity vs. Lucidity

Now after years of nonlucidity I again incubated a dream about nonlucidity vs. lucidity in my life:

A dream voice said that my dreams are “an acquired habit of learning through dreams” and then I saw a woman with a walking stick and the voice explained that “those to whom dreams are a door to higher knowledge do not have lucid dreams”. And I understood that to mean that for me lucidity would be a walking stick (just like crutches in my dream from 1981).

My dream voice continued: “if you now were to become lucid, you would lose your capacity to heal yourself. The healing energy you need is incompatible with lucidity at least in the usual meaning of the word”. When I asked what about the opposite, would the energy that heals me be beneficial or harmful for lucid dreamers, my dream voice said that, for some it would be beneficial, others would not register it at all. But it would not be harmful to anyone.

I now believe that the state of consciousness of lucid dreamers is totally different from nonlucid ones, not higher, not lower, just different. A parallel universe, perhaps - a safe playground where you can experiment with lucid dreams, if that is what you need and what is good for you. According to my thinking there may be other parallel universes as well, for different types of dreamers. Like Jesus said “There are many mansions in my father’s house...” I totally disagree with those who insist that lucidity is the next step after nonlucidity and a necessary step before so-called witnessing. It can be for some or even for most, but there are other types of dreamers for whom the developmental sequence is

just the opposite: from lucidity to nonlucidity and from there to witnessing or to whatever their next stages are.

Lucidity and nonlucidity cannot be put on a single continuum in any simple way. Neither can nonlucid dreams be put into one category as is often done in many research reports. According to my experience there are nonlucid dreams which resemble more lucid dreams than other types of nonlucid dreams. Interestingly I have found that many research results for instance in *Lucidity Letter*, apply equally well to many of my nonlucid dreams. All I do is to change the word lucid to nonlucid, and it fits. But still, I do think that lucidity should not be indiscriminately recommended for everyone. It is just a technique, and like any other technique it works for some but for others it may be detrimental and can even mean physical illness like it meant for me. Technique in itself is no guarantee for growth and should not be used without discrimination. There are other ways for other types of dreamers. "You arrive at truth through poetry. I arrive at poetry through truth" (Joubert).¹

References

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Appendix

(Editors Note: Following are excerpts from a letter to the Senior Editor in which the author elaborates her experiences based on a phone conversation they had about the distinctions between lucidity and witnessing, see also the article by Gackenbach in this issue of Lucidity Letter.)

Witnessing is such a difficult phenomenon to describe in words. I am not lucid, instead I "see" myself and my life from a higher view point, but in a very dualistic sense, like I were myself and my higher self (or something like that) at the same time. It is not thinking, it is not seeing either - even in Finnish I do not have words to describe my experience. But I do feel that many of my purely verbal dreams are in fact a kind of translation my mind makes about this state of consciousness - it is like pure knowledge which I in some level translate into words, automatically, not in a conscious way, often just when I am leaving this state of consciousness. Often those states do not feel like dreams, they are just states of awareness which then are transformed into words as an after-effect. I just use the word dream when they happen during sleep as I don't know what else to call them.

I also have these states of consciousness nowadays on the waking level (I did not in the beginning) and they are very similar. I feel or know that I am in contact with another level, the same level I think as in dreams (but it is not the ordinary dream level, lucid or nonlucid). Also this experience is often somehow translated into words. The experience in itself is not verbal (although not visual either), but it becomes verbal in my mind. This may be because I am a verbal type even in my waking consciousness. I cannot explain it better than that, not in English anyway. The ideas I get that way are quite different and most of the time clearly distinguishable from my normal thinking and intuition; although I feel that there are all kinds of gradations in the witnessing state of consciousness, some of them purer than others. I cannot control that state, but the kind of prayer-like suggestion I use for incubating dreams, clearly seems to pave a way for these states also.

Just about the time when I began to have these non-lucid experiences for the first time, I had a dream, which I think somehow tried to describe the phenomena:

A woman and a man (I understood this to mean either different sides of myself or perhaps different states of consciousness) developed an ability to be conscious in two worlds at the same time, but the task was somehow to attach a cord between them which would help to make the voice (it was not clear whose) more powerful and easy to hear. At the same time it meant describing the thing in two languages or in translating from one end to the other end.

My discussion with you on the phone activated my unconscious mind and the next night I had a dream:

My dream voice said that the phenomenon I call witnessing is the same kind of phenomenon that usually is meant by the word, although it manifests in a different way, because of the different type of psyche. And there really are two drastically different types of dreamers, those for whom lucidity is growth-provoking (the majority?) and those (like me) for whom it isn't". The voice even volunteered some statistics: "about 10% of dreamers would be very wise to avoid lucidity, because either it is harmful for them or in any case it is preventing them from developing spiritually in the way which is most natural for them."

I do not have many dreams left from the time I was still having lucid dreams. It was a very stressful period in my life which I'd rather forget and so I have thrown a lot of material away. I only saved the most meaningful ones. And it took a long time, before I was certain that lucid experiments somehow made my health suffer. At first I just thought that it was a coincidence or my imagination but I wrote all my dreams down and also kept a kind of diary alongside them and gradually I could not avoid seeing that it was a fact: I really did feel worse when I had had a lucid dream. And I also could wake up in the middle of night after a lucid dream and have definite physical pains. A couple of times I went to bed feeling completely well and then work up ill the next morning - after

being lucid that night.

Some of the problems I got that way were minor (like headaches), but there were more serious ones also, many of them problems which I had never had before. Some of them were frightening, they even incapacitated me totally for a short time, but were then healed later on, after I had got rid of my lucid dreams. I can't be sure of all the reasons; perhaps they were not harmful as dreams or states of consciousness as such, but somehow they closed the door to other states of consciousness; perhaps only because they were contrary to my type, as if I were trying to use tools that were not mine. Maybe the physical symptoms I had were a way my higher self or my body used to force me to change direction in my dream life (from lucidity to nonlucidity which then later on was to develop to witnessing dreams).

Somehow I feel that if your problems are really serious, then you'd better not try to use lucidity to heal yourself, because in lucid dreams you are in control and you must trust your ability to handle the situation. Otherwise if you try to tackle a problem which is totally overwhelming, you may end up feeling worse and having still less confidence in yourself. In a situation like that you must get some support from outside yourself, if not from doctors, then through dreams, but from a source which is (or at least you believe it to be) higher and more powerful than you feel yourself to be. For me that meant my higher self, although I had a very vague conception of what I meant by that. However, I was desperate and felt that I had no way to turn and thus thought that I had nothing to lose in trying.

Below are some examples of dreams that are typical but not about my most serious problem. I cannot use the most serious ones as illustrations, mainly because I feel that without knowledge of my background and life situation at that time those dreams just might sound incredible, I had difficulties in believing in my own. In the dreams below the first group consists of dream types I had when still lucid (in 1980) and they are mostly diagnostic. The other group of dreams are types of dreams I began to have after the end of lucidity (1982- 1983), In the latter group most of the dreams were preceded by a self-suggestion for healing. In these descriptions I have changed the name of the specific illness just to "illness" or "problem".

1. ... I saw (or felt myself to be) a small point going through my blood vessels and checking their condition - and found everything in order (true, I think)

...I saw an area of my body covered with grass, or had black clothes covering that area or desperately tried to clean this area from something without succeeding (many dreams of this kind). A couple of years later I had long standing problems on this area.

...I saw my mother attacking me with scissors and wounding me at a specific spot (exactly where I developed problems a couple of years later).

...A dream voice explained that I have none of the hereditary ailments common in my family, because I am psychologically a totally different type. (Proved to be very true later on).

2.... I dreamt that my chair was surrounded by a bright light and woke up feeling like my body were in fire (concentrated on those areas where I had problems). It continued a couple of days until I was well again. I really felt strange but it was a very positive feeling.

...I saw rays coming from my fingers which had all the colors of a rainbow. And a dream voice explained that I have healing power in my hands, I just need to learn to use it. And then a couple of nights later:

...A dream voice explained that the problem I had (the problem predicted in the dream above where my mother hit me with scissors) will be healed if I do the following: I was to sit every day - at a specific hour - put my hands above the spot (but not touch it) and say a prayer and then concentrate on other things. And the voice said that this is important: I must not concentrate on trying to heal myself, a prayer is enough. It is better to concentrate on other things, not on healing, otherwise I may aggravate the problem. The healing is done through God's power, not mine. So I usually read or watched television. In a couple of days my hands were like fire, but the problem did not disappear, instead it grew worse and became extremely painful. I became absolutely terrified but then had a new dream in which my dream voice said that it is not dangerous, it was much more dangerous before, now it is healing. It took time, then all the pain disappeared and gradually I was healed. In this case I had a couple of (minor) relapses but was then healed much sooner. I have not had a relapse in years.

...I cut away the grass (see the dream above) from my body and put some cream on the spot. Then the dream voice said that I will be totally healed. After this dream I woke and again felt the familiar heat. The same thing happened for several nights and often in the day time as well. And gradually - it took some time though - I was healed.

This phenomenon of heat I have learned to associate with the witnessing state of consciousness, whether in sleep or during the day. I have a feeling of being in contact with another level of consciousness, which in one case manifests as heat (and heals me) and on other occasions manifests as words (which in a way is like healing also, because the information I get this way is usually spiritually and psychologically very growth-provoking and helpful).

In fact I would say that the most important thing in the process has not been the physical healing - although I most certainly do not underestimate it. The most important thing has been the enlightenment and the understanding of the psychological causes and spiritual implications of my health problems. My dreams taught me more than I can ever express. But this is most surely something which many dreamers know from their own, albeit different, experiences.