

Q & A about Dreams

WHAT ARE DREAMS AND WHY DO WE HAVE THEM?

Dreams are perceptual events taking place during sleep; aside from their spiritual aspects, they seem to be important for cognitive processing functions such as memory consolidation and emotional learning. Everyone dreams every night, as do many animals.

I HARDLY REMEMBER DREAMS AT ALL. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT THAT?

Taking a greater overall interest in your spirituality would be the most basic thing - some people censor themselves by not really taking dreams seriously. Start some practice, like meditation. And take an interest in dreams—read a book about them. If possible, either join a dream group or start your own—they will respond if you're interested! Also, fix anything in your life that may be impacting your sleep. Things like sleep apnea, poorly treated diabetes, stressful nighttime shiftwork, etc. can have a major impact on dream recall. Get a journal, put it on your bedstand at night and declare out loud, "I will remember my dreams." Finally, little by little, start doing things in your life which are outside your "comfort zone." Dreams want us to adapt to our realities, which may mean exposing ourselves to things that we find difficult.

HOW DO DREAMS GET THE INFORMATION THEY OFFER US?

We all have psychic faculties which interpenetrate the higher dimensions: fifth, sixth, etc.; and we all have conceptual/emotional fields or auras which extend throughout our individual universes. When various things cause that field to be perturbed, our higher self picks up on it and automatically formulates symbolic messages that suggest ways to reestablish harmony in the field. A more empirical explanation would be that subconsciously, we remember everything we've ever been exposed to since birth. Using that very detailed knowledge, dreams can extrapolate many future scenarios with an almost psychic level of accuracy.

ARE THERE WAYS TO RECALL AND RECORD DREAMS IN MORE DETAIL?

Sometimes it helps to get into the body positions you were in after you go to bed, and when you wake up. If I have a dream in the middle of the night, I'll rehearse it in my mind five or six times so that I'll remember it later. Voice recorders can be very useful if you don't like writing things down in the wee hours, and you can get pens with lights on them in order to scrawl out a few bullet points without getting up.

SOME DREAMS ARE SO CRAZY; THEY COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH MY LIFE!

Invariably they do. The symbolic and metaphorical "language" that dreams utilize is universal, although not in any obvious way. Human languages and cultures can be very different, but deeper spiritual realities do unite us all, beneath all that diversity. Those more basic perceptions of reality are automatically used by our dream faculties to formulate their images and storylines.

Traditional empiricists understand dreams to be mere by-products of neurochemical activity, or, at best, connected with material learned since birth.

WHY DO I HAVE NIGHTMARES?

Generally nightmares are defined as dreams unpleasant enough to wake you up. They can be both warning, and encouraging and energizing. Dreamworkers with a more spiritual orientation to their subject—which is most of us, who do it—usually believe that dreams are unpleasant, or recurring, primarily in order to get our attention concerning something that we've been trying to ignore. Many people, however, are thought to have unpleasant dreams, primarily as a result of engaging life challenges -implying that continued caution will be needed to succeed. Good dreamwork almost always either resolves or lessens the frequency of nightmares.

HOW CAN DREAMS HELP US RESOLVE PROFOUND PERSONAL ISSUES?

Yes. It's thought that dreams represent the underlying emotional dynamics behind real-life situations as a kind of "picture" of reality. The imagery (symbols) are actually "solidified feelings," you could say –ours and others' issues dressed up as objects, enacting storylines that reveal through implication the hidden agendas or circumstances behind either external events in our lives, and/or the way we are thinking about something in our lives. As such, if we contemplate dream images long enough in the right way, we will begin to experience the feelings involved in resolving the issue. The intellectual-meaning aspect of the dream is usually easier to get at, and quite often results in experiencing feelings as well.

WHAT ABOUT RELIGION? WHEN I SHARED A DREAM WITH MY PASTOR, IT DIDN'T GO OVER TOO WELL.

Religious clergy of any stripe are concerned primarily with more superficial things that govern the behavior of groups. You can't expect them to help too much with an individual spiritual journey that involves a lot of dreams, even if those dreams involve symbols, etc. from their religion. Some clergy, of course, can help you since they do have profound understanding. Conservative groups in any faith, on the other hand, tend to regard dreams as suspect, if not demonic—possibly indicative of the person's sin or delusions.

WHAT MAKES YOU A GOOD DREAMWORKER?

My degrees in counseling and religion, my age (68) and life experience, and my heavy-duty spiritual interests (see ABOUT ME) all help a little bit. But it's mainly because, over the years, I was the type of seeker who got an exceptional amount of help from dreams. Some people's internal makeup and destiny predispose them to get lots of dreams which obviously have value. There was no choice: to figure out what was going on with me (a lot of things weren't working), I had to study my dreams and consult many helpers, which I've done for 40 years and counting.

HOW DO I KNOW IF DREAMS ARE IMPORTANT FOR ME?

If you remember them, they're important in the sense that you could be doing better; thinking and behaving more effectively concerning all the things in your life. If you ignore your dreams, your life may turn out okay, but you won't be as happy and fulfilled as quickly as you would be if you do study them.