

IN YOUR DREAMS: KEYS TO ANOTHER WORLD

by Frank D. Young Ph.D., R.Psych.

Dreams are the threshold portals of our creative unconscious mind. Some might even say they are the windows of our soul in its travels beyond a world of physical and mental limitations. In dreams we review our past, reflect our present life, and create our models of the future. Dreams form the ultimate experiences of virtual reality as we explore the frontier of inner space. No wonder that so many people are curious about dreams!

Caution and skepticism

However, to many people dreams are strange and bizarre experiences that are better left untouched and unremembered. If the unconscious ain't broke, don't try to fix it. Don't disturb a natural process. Don't think of being conscious in dreams. Many people say to themselves, "I just want to use my sleep time as relief from thinking, I don't want to think about my dreams." Furthermore, some persons think that it might unbalance their minds if they inquire into their dream world and risk disturbing unconscious processes. Beyond that possibility, I believe that the main reason why people avoid studying their dreams is that the dream world is innately illogical and seemingly uncontrollable. No wonder that so many people are avoiding thinking about their dream world!

A precious world.

The dream world is the playground of children, a precious and magical state in which the wonderful and the unthinkable play out their realities before our eyes. Yet, without the support of a mentor or group of people to cherish this reality, it soon withers as a personal resource.

When I was a child, I had a vivid imagination. My dreams were fantastic adventures in another magical world. I wanted to share the mystery and magic, but when I talked with other people, children and adults, they mostly seemed disinterested. Some even thought I was weird for being so excited about flying without wings and having or creating other unusual experiences in the realm of dreams. Eventually, I became more shy about talking about dreams, and my enthusiasm

for recalling them and studying them became less over the years. However, in graduate school as a psychologist, my interest and fascination returned, increasingly so as dream analysis became more prominent in psychotherapy with my clients. Now it is an almost integral part of the journey of self-exploration and fulfillment of my clients, colleagues, and friends on their inner journey.

Yours to discover.

For those who reach beyond their reluctance and skepticism, there are rich rewards for those willing to travel into these misty realms with eyes wide open and observing the emergent realities. Our dream world is highly plastic and constantly evolving. It is a mixture of who we were, who we are, and who we have potential to be. Whereas most of our friends and associates get snapshots of our evolving life narratives, our dreams provide an ongoing internal frame of reference. This is who we are in the flow of living, a developing theme of who impacts our lives, our ideas, our values, and our sense of identity, meaning, and mystery in this world. In other words, it is a key to unlock our sense of self, and our connectedness with a greater Self, our spiritual connection with other living things, with generations forgotten and anticipated in our collective unconscious as we evolve through life.

Stress relief, and enjoyment of life and its meaning.

Of course, there are a number of practical reasons why you might want to become involved with your dream world. As you fall asleep at night, it would be nice to know that you are attending an exciting cinema, where you have a special arrangement with the projectionist, the director, and even the characters that are portraying the mystery that is being presented that night. If you find out that it is merely a boring rerun of a film you have seen before, you can switch reels, plots, and identities so that you can be intrigued with the new story and its outcome. You awaken in the morning with a sense of fulfillment, relaxed refreshment, a sense of meaning and purpose as you begin a new day. People who manage their dreams as another theatre of fun and fulfillment, ultimately have more effective and enjoyable lives.

Dream recall and other first steps to a vital dream life.

I assume that virtually all of you know that all of us, whether we remember or not, dream several times per night. If our sleep were truly dreamless, we would soon develop both neurological and psychological difficulties coping with our complex external and internal world and its issues. However, perhaps the majority of us have lost the ability to remember some, if not most, of our dreams. There are many of us who have lost touch with the first skill, that of dream recall, but

this skill can be redeveloped or practically rediscovered with a small investment of effort. It comes back quickly and relatively smoothly, somewhat like the skill of riding a bike.

The first step in relearning the habit of dream recall is to **start and maintain a dream journal**. If you have no dream recall whatsoever, you might start by drinking several glasses of water before you go to sleep, or setting your alarm at 4 or 5 a.m. then hitting the snooze button and waiting for a dream to develop. Chances are, you will encounter a dream state in one of these interruptions of sleep. The key element is to write or record with an audiotape recorder as many dream fragments as you can as you awaken. Even if sleep disruption strategies are not practical for you, recording dream fragments in a dream journal is extremely helpful in improving your dream life. Write dream themes or fragments as soon as you can, at night or in the morning, then expand upon meaning or detail as the day progresses. You would be amazed at how many times each day there are reminders of additional detail you can add to the original framework of dreams outlined that morning. This is where the richness of your dream tapestry is elaborated. You might even underline events in your dreams that are unusual or unreal. These can later serve in later dreams as dreamsigns, signals to you that you are in a dream, and therefore you can change the dream to your liking or exploration (lucid dreaming).

The processes and skills of lucid dreaming and dream analysis are beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, the most important step in this journey is the **cultivation of curiosity about your dream world and its meaning**. What are the hidden messages, the ultimate wisdom of your intuition as it processes your past, present, and future? What is the counsel that you can take and use from this source of wisdom and peace? What are the messages of your intuition? What are the dimensions of your potential, your creativity, and your human and spiritual fulfillment, and how can your dreams reflect this?

Cultivate this curiosity, and you will begin to feel the keys to the kingdom in your hands. I will be writing more about these keys, where to find them, and how to use them, in future articles in this series. In the meantime, for those of you who are anxious to learn more and get started now, look in the dream section of your local bookstore. Ask to see books like Malcolm Godwin's "**The Lucid Dreamer**" or LaBerge and Rheingold's "**Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming**." Also, ask for my **CD "Lucid Dreaming Made Easy."** These are all excellent programs for exploring and designing your dreams.

Dare to dream. Explore your dream world. It will be well worth the effort.