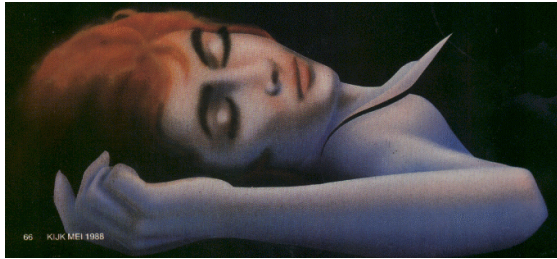


DREAMING WHATEVER YOU LIKE



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Dreams are no fake. They tell us a lot about what is keeping us busy. Now it seems that we can also influence the dream's content. Everybody is supposed to be able learning it. It really pays off: In a lucid dream no desire is unfulfilled; being awake while sleeping, controlling the dream, being able to do whatever you like. Literally living in a dreamworld. That is possible during a "lucid dream". An example:

"I am standing in front of a building and read some posters, while a man who is standing next to me, mumbles 'Again three human beings are born'. On that very moment I realize that I am dreaming and that thought excites me very much. I know that I can do everything what I like and that there is no reason of being afraid. I walk toward the Central Place, stop a cyclist, kiss him and let him go... Then I want to test which capabilities I possess. Without any efforts I jump high into the air; giant leaps I make. When people are arriving I make some movement with my hand and it appears as if my world suddenly is frozen! It is a marvelous experience."

For a long time sleepresearchers have been very skeptical concerning the topic of lucid dreams, although since ages there have been reports on the phenomenon. The writings of Aristotle mark that the lucid dream was with the Athens in the fourth century B.C. was already a known. Tibetan yogis' describe how they can dream by certain dreamtechniques every possible experience. The Russian psychologist Ouspensky talks about "halfdreamsituations". Around the century the writer and psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden investigated seriously the lucid dreamstate. He was also the first one who used the expression "lucid dreaming". In the fifties researchers started talking about "paradoxical sleep".

However, as stated earlier, most researchers did not believe in the existence of the lucid dream. They thought that it was a fantasy of people with too much imagination and they supported the "microwaveperiod"-theory. According to this theory a lucid dream is evoked by the fact that the dreamer was during sleep for a moment really awoken. This attitude is no longer valid since the experiments of the American Dr. Stephen LaBerge. This researcher, an experienced lucid dreamer himself, took the following into consideration: if lucid dreamers know that they are asleep, they can also remember to sign to the waking world. He asked himself: which sign can I give which can be measured or perceived by other scientists? Because of the fact that during the deep sleep only eye-movements are possible, LaBerge chose them.

Former researches proved that the direction in which people are looking during dreaming is corresponding with the actual situation. LaBerge thought that, on moving his (dream)eyes according to a recognizable and fixed pattern, he could sign the outside-world. It worked. During experiments at the Stanford dreamlab they made an EEG and EOG. The EEG registered in which sleeping-phase LaBerge was and if he were dreaming.



The EOG registered his eye-movements, and while being in deep sleep, he moved, if a lucid dream started, his eyes five times up and down. It was recorded by the EOG, and a measurement of physical changes took place. Apart from LaBerge it happened at many other test subjects and the results were amazing. They discovered that dreams are not the results of idle brains, but that they were utmost active during a lucid dream. If the test subjects were asked to sing during a lucid dream (normally an activity of the right hemisphere) it resulted in the same change in brain activity as if they were really singing. However, on imagining the same there was no change in brain activity.

The same process happened if they were counting, a left-hemisphere activity. It's obvious that lucid dreaming is a lot more dealing with reality than fantasizing. That is good because otherwise we couldn't during our day-consciousness discriminate between the internal and external events.

LaBerge experimented during lucid dreaming also with respiration. The dreamer's respiration seemed to correspond with the real respiration-pattern. According to the researcher the same process would happen if we were walking, talking, or whatever, with the remark that during sleep almost every muscle is "paralysed". This mechanism prevents sleepwalking.

Test subjects who dreamt consciously about sex gave also evidence of the correlation between the dreamworld and reality. They described their experiences as utmost vivid and satisfying. The studies at the dreamlab showed the same physical changes as if they were making love in the real world; respiration increased, as well as the blood-stream to the sexorgans. Only the heartbeat differed with that of the waking condition.

Everyone can develop the possibility of dreaming lucidly. If you remember that we enter that dreamworld about half a million times during our life, you can imagine the benefits. Goethe already stated:

"It happens sometimes that I fall asleep crying, but in my dreams, the most lovely images cheer me up and I wake up afresh and with a gay heart."

Regarding the direct link between body and soul, it is not unthinkable that lucid dreams can evoke physically - as well as psychological healing-processes. During lucid dreaming different stages of lucidity can be developed (conditions in which you can more or less control your dreams).

LaBerge developed a lucid dream induction-technique that he called the Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreams (MILD).



This method consists of the following steps:

1. If you awake in the morning, re-imagine your dream.
2. Tell yourself, while lying in your bed and preparing falling asleep again: "The next time I dream I shall realize I'm dreaming."
3. Suggest yourself that you are in your dream but that you capture lucidity.
4. Repeat phase two and three until you feel your intention is firm and that you are on the edge of falling asleep again.

If all works out well, you'll notice that you become lucid in your dream (although it happens during a dream that is not similar as you have repeated).

Maybe it becomes easier when there arrive dreammachines, that can evoke lucid dreams by means of "biofeedback". The Englishman Keith Hearne developed such a device. It was the intention that it would provide the dreamer during dreaming minor electrical shocks, as a

reminder to dream lucidly. Although the idea seemed right - it is known that stimulation of the sense of touch is incorporated in the dream more than it would be the case with light or sound - it did not work out very well. But according to LaBerge it is only a question of time before someone develops a functioning lucid dream induction device. Who knows is such a dreammachine within some time as normal as a television, and becomes the lucid dreamstate every night a sort of vacation; some "Fantasy Island", in which you can debate with Einstein, performing with Prince, playing with the up with your favourite footballteam or making love with the most desirable partners. Whatever you are looking for, it can be there, just beyond the frontiers of your sleep....

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