

Vision : A Guide to Lucid Dreaming

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I

Introduction

"Once we are Conscious, suddenly we can see where we are -- we are able to see our seeing, hear our hearing, touch our touching, and feel our feeling. With consciousness we can be where we are. Consciousness is the doorway through which we enter the dreamscape."

- Charles McPhee

We spend one third of our lives sleeping. And we all dream. We all dream every single night. Our bodies shut down, and free of physical distractions, our minds take a journey into the dreamworld. You may think of a sleeping person as being docile, but far from it, a sleeper's brain waves during dream sleep are nearly as active as those during waking life. Our eyes dart about beneath the lids, looking around at the landscapes of our mind's own creation through which we wander. Every night we enter a vast environment of the mind, filled with possibilities. Unfortunately, not all of us can even remember this experience, and few of us are aware of what we are experiencing while we are there. What if, during this supposed "unconscious" state, we were aware of the fact that we were dreaming? What if we could explore our own minds at will during this state, taking advantage of our own, personal, 'virtual reality'? Lucid dreaming is a way for us to be aware of the extraordinary experience we are having during a dream. Dr. Stephen LaBerge, Ph.D. defines lucidity:

"While the dream is happening you are fully aware of the fact that you are dreaming, that the world around you is a creation of your mind, and that you are independent from it."

Below is an excerpt of an actual dream that I had in which I became lucid. If you haven't already had a lucid dream, this will hopefully give you a sense of what it is like. You may also want to look back at this later when you are working with exercises that deal with specific moments in the procurement of lucidity.

. . . I am at school. I'm walking around, but suddenly become confused when I can't remember how I got there. I don't remember waking up, getting in a car, or anything else until a few moments before. I recognize that this is very strange. I go up to my friend in the hallway and tell her that I can't remember how I got to school. She tried to rationalize the anomaly for me by saying that it happens to her all the time. However, I then decide that if I can't remember how I got to

school, then I must not have come to school. Therefore, despite my surroundings, I must not be in school. I must still be asleep. I realize that I am dreaming. Then I am in a classroom. I realize that the people around me are not real, but I try to prove to them that I am dreaming anyway. I show them my watch, tell them to note the time, cover it up, and then show it to them again. The time has drastically changed in a few moments. Then I take a book off a nearby shelf, and read a passage from it. When finished, I reread the same passage, but the words have changed. These discrepancies, I tell them, could never exist in real life. Therefore, I must be dreaming. Satisfied that I have proven my case, I decide to go off in search of adventure. I get a running start and fly out the window . . .

People have been having lucid dreams throughout history, but they have only recently been proven and come to scientific attention. But why? Why do this? What importance does lucid dreaming have? If you have experienced it, you know that it is an exciting and monumental event. If you have not, you should perhaps listen to the words of those who have...

"a moment ago I thought I knew what was going on. I thought I knew what my world was and now I realize that everything I thought about it was wrong."
- Dr. Stephen LaBerge, Ph.D.

...and then experience it for yourself. And the tools you need to do so are right in your hands and in your own mind at this very moment. All you need to do is want to use them.

Training

"We are asleep with compasses in our hands."
- W.S. Merwin

Prerequisites

Before you begin any of the actual exercises there are a few conditions that you should meet: you need to begin a dream journal, to learn about your sleep cycles, and to have the right attitude about the task you are undertaking.

Dream Journal

The first and most important thing you can do to improve your dream recall is to keep a dream journal. You should write down everything you remember from your dreams each night. This can sometimes be a time-consuming process, but don't put it off until later in the day. Keep your journal right next to your bed so you can access it as soon as you awaken from a dream. If you are in a hurry in the mornings, you should take notes concerning your dreams, paying special attention to details such as feelings and colors, and then go back and write out the entire dream at a later time (do this at night when you come home, or take your journal to school or work). It is crucial, however, to get something concerning your dream down on paper as soon as you wake up. You may think that you will remember

your dream, but by midday it could become just a foggy recollection. It is a time commitment to write down your dreams, but if you don't do it, you will have nothing to work with for the later exercises. Make dream recording a part of your daily routine, and dreaming will come into your hands a thousand times more easily. You never need to show your journal to anyone else if you don't want to. It is a private thing, like a diary.

Your journal can take any form you wish; it need not be fancy. You could buy a special dream journal at a bookstore, but a 99 cent composition notebook will serve the purpose just as well. You should write down the date and, if possible, the time of each dream you record for later reference. Some people like to title their dreams and include them in a table of contents. You may want to leave a sizable margin on the side of your description to add notes that occur to you later. If you are artistically inclined, or learn visually, it may be beneficial to you to include sketches of dream places, characters, or objects. Tape recorders are an effective alternative method of dream recording. You can record your voice describing your dream when you wake up in the morning, and transcribe it to paper, or you may choose to keep a library of all your dreams on tape. Whatever it is, your journal should be something you like and feel comfortable using. The setup of your journal is a completely personal choice. There is no right or wrong way to do it; the important thing is to record as many dreams as possible.

Recording our dreams helps us to pay attention to the dreams we are able to recall, and establishes a daily routine that molds the idea of dreaming into our lives. When we perform actions that cause us to think of dreams during the day, it helps us to "remember to remember" our dreams at night. You should keep a dream journal for at least a week or two before trying the induction exercises described later.

Know Your Sleep

In working with your dreams, you are working with your sleeping self, and so it is important to know just a little bit about what your mind and body are doing during sleep. This will help you to focus your efforts during some of the later exercises and give you a general knowledge of what you are dealing with, physically, as you work on manipulating your sleep and dreams.

During the night, we go through repeated 90 minute sleep cycles consisting of four different stages and, of course, dream sleep.

During stage one, the first and lightest stage, we are in the process of falling asleep. This is a brief transition state to other stages. We experience hypnagogic imagery as we move into deeper sleep.

Stage two is the onset of what we would consider actual sleep. It lasts about 10-20 minutes.

Stages three and four are a "deep sleep" lasting about 40-50 minutes. This activity is not found in those suffering from insomnia or depression.

Following stage four, we progress back to stage two and then enter dream sleep.

Dream sleep is the time in which most of our vivid dreams occur. This is also called "REM", or Rapid Eye Movement, sleep. During this time, our eyes are darting around beneath the lids and looking about at the world we are seeing in the dream. The length of dream sleep increases with each cycle throughout the night, which partially accounts for the fact that we often have our most memorable and vivid dreams when we have had a longer time to sleep.

Attitude

Without the right attitude towards any learning experience, you will get nothing out of it. If you pay thousands of dollars to sit in a university class, but don't pay attention, don't respect the teacher, don't like the class, and don't do the homework, you will never learn anything. This is especially true for dreaming. The attitude that you have means everything to the success of your lucid dreaming, because it is all in your mind.

First and foremost, it is important that you have at least a mild curiosity in learning to have lucid dreams. You must want to do this, or else you will never have the motivation to commit any effort to the task. Lucid dreaming requires some commitment of time and concentration. You must want to learn enough that you are willing to put effort into the learning process.

Whatever you believe will happen, probably will. If you believe that nothing you are reading in this book will work, it won't. If you believe that you won't be able to have a lucid dream, then it will, in fact, be very difficult for you. You must believe that you can succeed. This may sound silly, and perhaps it would be if we were talking about running a marathon, but since what you are trying to achieve concerns only your own mind, your willpower and belief in yourself will have a massive effect upon your success. Don't be too skeptical. Believe that lucid dreaming is easy, and that anyone can do it.

You must be willing to devote time to your dream life. This does not mean giving up all your free time, but simply making a small effort. You must be willing to take a few minutes out of the day to concentrate on certain tasks, to record your dreams, and to practice exercises. I suggest that you take a moment right now and decide that you want to do this, you believe you can, and you are willing to commit to it.

Preparation Exercises

These next pages will help you to strengthen and develop five basic skills that are a foundation for learning how to have lucid dreams, and for being successful in later techniques: discipline, awareness, willpower, concentration, intention, and memory. It is key for you to spend some time and effort on these exercises, or else the later techniques may not help you much at all. You should use them for at least a week or so before moving on, and continue to practice them as you learn more techniques. There is, of course, no set time period for how long an exercise may take to help a person, so don't be discouraged if your efforts don't pay off right away, or if certain exercises don't help you at all.

Discipline

In order to be successful in training yourself towards lucidity, you must become comfortable with discipline and routine. The most important element of discipline for a dreamer lies in recording your dreams. You need to develop a routine of recording your dreams every day. You must discipline yourself into thinking about your dreams when you awaken, and write them down, no matter what. The moment you begin to allow yourself to skip days and to be lazy, you begin to lose valuable material and experience. Recording your dreams on a regular basis will also teach you the discipline that you will need to be successful in many other techniques. Begin this daily routine tomorrow morning, if possible. Once you get into the swing of it, recording dreams becomes no problem at all. The hard part is getting started, so just do it.

Discipline also figures into almost every other technique you will learn. You must have the self-discipline to carry out sometimes tedious activities, and to commit time from your day to these activities. Discipline is one of the blocks that your success will be built on, and although you may not like it at times, it is necessary.

Awareness

Since the goal of lucid dreaming is to become aware while dreaming, developing your skill of awareness about yourself and your dreams while waking is key to your development of awareness in your dreams.

Developing awareness of your dreamsigns is a simple activity that centers around the main ways that you will become lucid in your dreams. A dreamsign is "a peculiar event or object in a dream that can be used as an indicator that you are dreaming" (Lynne Levitan, *A Thousand and One Nights of Lucid Dreaming*). Or, in essence, a signal to you in a dream. For example, if a pink elephant walked in the door right now, you might conclude that you are dreaming. This pink elephant would be considered a dreamsign.

While we are dreaming, however, we don't often recognize our dreamsigns as being unusual. For example, if you were in a dream right now and you saw a pink elephant, you might not think anything of it and keep on reading this. If we read our dreams and find the dreamsigns that we have had previously, however, we will become aware of our typical signs and therefore more easily recognize them in our next dreams. There are four main categories of dreamsigns as developed by Dr. Stephen LaBerge:

Action - You, another dream character, or thing does something unusual or impossible in waking life.

Context - The place or situation in the dream is strange.

Form - You, another character, or thing changes shape, or is oddly formed /transforms. This may include the presence of unusual clothing or hair.

Awareness - A peculiar thought, a strong emotion, an unusual sensation, or altered perceptions.

After you have recorded a dream, go back and reread it. Locate unusual things or occurrences within it that could have given you a clue that you were dreaming. Then try to place these signs in one of the four dreamsign categories. A helpful way to distinguish these is to highlight, underline, or circle each type of dreamsign in a different color. For example, you might decide to highlight all action dreamsigns in pink, all context signs in yellow, form signs in green, and awareness signs in blue. This will help you to easily see these signs, and their categories, when you look at the dream later.

Once you have marked all the signs in several dreams, you should begin to record your dreamsigns in a table. One is provided for you on the next page, but you can easily just draw your own in your dream journal, or in another notebook. Recording these in a table not only helps develop your awareness of dreamsigns in and of itself, but will also allow you to determine what type of dreamsign most often causes you to gain lucidity. Learning about your dreamsigns will help you with visualization of your dreams in later techniques.

To determine your most effective dreamsigns:

Add up the total number of dreamsigns in each category. Add up the number of times this category was recognized.

Recognized / Total = % effectiveness

Willpower

Willpower is the fuel that will make your efforts pay off. Without will to succeed, no technique, no advice, and no knowledge will ever improve your dreaming. You must focus your intent and learn to use the power of your mind. The subject with which we are concerned, dreaming, is within your mind. It is of your mind and it is controlled by your mind. Therefore, your own thoughts and will have complete control over your dreams.

The power of suggestion is a dreamer's ultimate tool, and is a part of most all lucid dreaming induction techniques. Other cultures have varied techniques for inducing certain types of dreams that have no scientific basis for working. Yet among these people who believe in them, these techniques do work. It is willpower, the power of self-suggestion, that causes these sometimes bizarre techniques to work for those who believe in them.

As you go to bed, try to relax completely. Then simply tell yourself that you will have a lucid dream and you will remember it. Repeat continuously in your head (any similar phrase with the essentially same meaning will also work):

"I will have a lucid dream and I will remember it."

Keep thinking this and do not let your mind wander to any other subject. You must have the willpower not to let your mind falter. Repeat this statement in your mind until you fall asleep, concentrating not just on the words, but on their meaning. Above all, believe your words. Believe that you will have a lucid dream and you will remember it. Believe is always a powerful word in the vocabulary of a dreamer.

Concentration

Concentration is also a key element in being able to effectively use concepts such as autosuggestion. Keeping your mind set on one idea. Not letting your intentions falter. These are skills that will help you greatly.

An easy way to practice concentration is to focus on an object. A candle flame works well, but anything else that you are comfortable with may also do. As well as improving concentration, this exercise will also help you with visualization of objects, which is useful in dream control. Light a candle, and sit comfortably in front of it. Stare at it and concentrate on the flame. Allow no other thought than the candle to enter your mind. When you feel your eyes straining, close them and sit quietly for a few moments, imagining the flame before you.

You may want to begin doing this for a period of five minutes or so, adding length each time you practice. Try to work your way up to 15-20 minutes. Although it is a great effort of concentration, this should be a relaxing exercise. Make sure you are comfortable, and do not allow yourself to become too strained.

Carrying Out Intention

It is not enough to simply intend to do something. In order to accomplish a task, you have to develop your intention to do something, and then remember to carry out your intention at an indefinite point in the future. If you want to have a lucid dream, you must remember this intent and carry it out while you are dreaming.

Practice carrying out these random acts:

- Write 100 times "I am dreaming"
- Walk around the perimeter of a room 10 times
- Untie and retie your shoes 5 times.

Do this over a span of three days. Start doing just one action on the first day. On the next day, do this same action plus one other. On the third day, carry out all three actions. If you forget to do one or more on any of the three days, start the process over again.

This exercise may seem to be pointless, but it will help you to 'remember to remember' that you are dreaming.

Memory

Remembering your dreams.

Remembering to carry out your intentions.

Remembering that you are dreaming.

These are important things to be able to do in lucid dreaming, and while not easy, a well-practiced memory adds significantly to a person's ability to do them.

Prospective Memory Training is a valuable exercise developed by Dr. Stephen LaBerge. It is designed to be carried out over the span of one week. Each day, you will have a list of specific "targets", which are everyday occurrences (listed on the next page). At the beginning of the day, memorize your day's targets. Try not to look at your other targets until you reach the day that they are assigned. Your goal is to recognize the target when it occurs and perform a state test. You perform this test simply by asking yourself "Am I dreaming?" Look around for dreamsigns, think about it, and answer the question logically. If you remember to ask yourself this question when the target event occurs, you have made a "hit". If you forget to ask yourself this question when the target event occurs, it is a "miss". Keep track of how many targets you hit during the day, and how many you missed. Continue this exercise until you have improved your ability to hit these targets.

Daily Targets

SUNDAY:

- The next time I see a pet or animal.
- The next time I look at my face in the mirror.
- The next time I turn on a light.

MONDAY:

- The next time I write anything down.
- The next time I feel pain.
- The next time I hear my name spoken.

TUESDAY:

- The next time I see a traffic light.
- The next time I laugh.
- The next time I hear music.

WEDNESDAY:

- The next time I eat a vegetable.
- The next time I see a red car.
- The next time I turn on a television.

THURSDAY:

- The next time I hear a phone ring.
- The next time I check the time.
- The next time I read something other than this list.

FRIDAY:

- The next time I see the stars.
- The next time I use a toilet after noon.
- The next time I open a closed door.

SATURDAY:

- The next time I watch a commercial.
- The next time I run.
- The next time I unlock something.

Nightly Induction

"Most of us today think of our dreams as odd episodes, as foreign as some ceremonial dance in Tibet. This results in the cutting off of an extremely great and significant portion of the self. We are then no longer able to use much of the wisdom and power of the unconscious."

- Rollo May

These techniques are not long-term commitments, as some of the previously described activities were. The following techniques are instead designed to be used just before you go to sleep, and the results of these techniques will immediately follow their use. You can use these at night before you go to bed, or before a nap. In fact, naps often one of our most lucidity lucrative sleeping times. At night, however, the longer you have to sleep, the better. As you learned before, our dream periods repeat and increase in length throughout the night, and so the longer you sleep, the more 'chances' you have at lucidity.

Before trying these techniques, you must prepare your mind and body. The exercises you have already worked on have prepared you in the long term, but now you should relax yourself to prepare for the task immediately ahead of you.

Relaxation

Relaxing before using these techniques clears your mind of distractions and allows you to focus on the task at hand.

Simple meditation is a good way to relax yourself before using an induction technique. This specific technique was introduced to me in a course at the "Institute for Attitudinal Studies", and I have found it to be quite effective:

Find a position in which you can comfortably remain.

Observe your thought process. Simply let your thoughts arise and do not become involved in the content of your thoughts.

Notice that you can know you have thoughts, but you are not your thoughts.

They are simply a part of the whole. They represent your feelings, memories, anticipations, or speculations, and they call for your attention. As each thought passes, either you attend to it or you do not. While you cannot stop the thoughts themselves, you can prevent yourself from being snared by each one.

As each thought arises, picture it on a white cloud in the sky and watch the cloud pass overhead and out of sight as another thought comes into view on its cloud. Do not try to hold on to the clouds or retain the thought in your mind. Be aware that the thoughts are just objects of our observation, to be noticed and let go. Keep noticing the thoughts and then let them go again and again.

And, of course, once you are really comfortable and at home in pure awareness, then you can let go of the thought of watching your thoughts as well. Meditate for 5 to 10 minutes, or for a period that is comfortable for you.

Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreaming

Developed by Dr. Stephen LaBerge, Ph.D., this is the technique which I, personally, have found most beneficial to my lucidity. It makes use of autosuggestion and visualization in a combination that can have amazing results even after the very first time that you use it.

1. Relax completely and get yourself into a comfortable position in bed.
2. As practiced in the autosuggestion technique, repeat to yourself as you fall asleep:

"I will wake up after every dream period and I will remember my dream"

Believe that you will wake up after every dream you have. The very first time I used this technique, I did wake up immediately after each dream period.

3. When you wake up during the night, immediately rouse yourself and write down everything you can remember about your dream. Even if you can barely remember anything, write down how the dream made you feel, or how you felt when you woke up.
4. Lie down again, and as you drift back to sleep, imagine that you are back in the dream that you just had. This time, however, imagine that you saw a dreamsign in your dream and recognized it. Try to think of a dreamsign that fits with the dream and falls under your most successful dreamsign category. As you fall asleep, keep visualizing yourself in your dream, recognizing your dreamsign, and realizing that you are in a dream.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 every time that you awaken during the night, even if your dream was already lucid.

Lucidity from Sleep Paralysis

You may or may not experience the phenomenon of sleep paralysis. During dream sleep, our body shuts off our ability for movement, and we are temporarily paralyzed (in order that our bodies will not act out our dreams). Sometimes, we wake up, arising into the sleepy haze of stage one sleep, but our bodies are still paralyzed. A person experiencing sleep paralysis may feel that they are having "difficulty" in waking up. They are unable to move, and have trouble even in keeping their eyes open, and focusing on the surroundings of their sleeping quarters.

This paralysis is a frustrating state for most people who experience it, but it can be taken advantage of in two ways:

Since sleep paralysis is a state very close to dream sleep, a person can slip into a dream in moments when paralyzed, simply by closing their eyes and relaxing. We

are conscious in paralysis, and so can set our intention to know that we are dreaming and easily keep this intention through the short transition into our dream.

A possibly even better way to exploit sleep paralysis is the "two bodies" technique. During paralysis, our senses are somewhat distorted in a halfway state between dreaming and waking. We are seeing our actual surroundings, but may feel and hear things from the dreamworld. It is therefore easy to make a transition into a lucid dream without even seeming to close our eyes.

This is perhaps the most dramatic technique you will read about in this workbook, because it is apparently similar to the concept of 'astral projection'. In this technique, however, we only dream that we are leaving our bodies.

Once in a state of sleep paralysis, avoid feeling trapped or frightened. Relax, but do not close your eyes. Imagine that you have two bodies: a physical body and a dream body. Your dream body is light, free, and ghostlike, while your physical body is cumbersome, heavy, and awkward. Your dream body is currently trapped inside your physical body, but only because you have not realized that you can free it. Don't try to move your physical body; instead, concentrate on 'floating' your dream self out of the cumbersome physical body. Believe that you can do it and that it is very easy. If you succeed in this effort, you will slip into a dream that you have left your paralyzed body on your bed, and be fully aware that you are dreaming. Be careful not to be fooled: it may seem very realistic in your dream, but you have not actually left your body. Remember to remember that it is 'just a dream'.

Within Your Dreams

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

- Albert Einstein

OK, you're in a lucid dream. Now what?

Well, do anything you want. Explore. Learn. You can question and converse with your dream characters, knowing that they are a creation of your own subconscious. You can do things you've always wanted to do. Jump off Mount Everest. Have sex with Marilyn Monroe. Find out about yourself, from yourself. No book can tell you what do.

Before you get to this point of complete freedom, however, you may need help with maintaining a state of lucidity once you have been able to achieve it. Many people are able to achieve moments where they say in a dream "Hey, I'm dreaming!", but are unable to keep this realization for more than a short time, eventually falling back into the assumption that their surroundings are 'real'. Others habitually wake up right after the moment that they achieve lucidity. Several techniques have been developed and used by thousands, specifically for

the purpose of maintaining moments of lucidity. Read these ideas, and keep them in mind as you go to sleep. For these to be of any help, you must remember to try them at that crucial moment when you say, "This is a dream!"

Crossing the Bridge

You might have moments in your recorded dreams where you can see that you almost became lucid. Perhaps you recognized a dreamsign but were unable to make the leap from this recognition to lucidity. The statement, "I am dreaming." is a monumental and unusual thing to say when you believe that you are existing in reality. It is therefore often difficult to convince ourselves that we are, in fact, in a dream.

However, hard evidence is easy to find. When you are in doubt as to whether or not you are dreaming, look at your watch. Notice and remember the time. Look away and then look back at your watch again. If you are dreaming, the time will have changed significantly, or have been unrealistic in the first place. There are no constants in the dreamworld as there are in waking life, so if your watch has advanced 10 hours in a moment's glance, you will have undeniable evidence that you are dreaming.

Another reliable test is to read a passage from a book. Choose one paragraph from any book you can pick up, look away from it, and then read it again. If you are dreaming, the content of this passage will have changed completely. Again, this test takes advantage of the inconstant nature of a dream and is undeniable proof of a dreamer's state.

Focusing on Detail and Sensation

Sometimes you may feel that your dream is beginning to fade away. Your surroundings may seem fuzzy, or your sensations unclear. You may even get the feeling that you are about to wake up. In this case, focusing on detail around you can help you to bring your dream back into focus. Look at something that would have intricacies in real life, such as a piece of wood. Get a close view of the grains and interlocking detailed parts of this object. Once you then look back at your surroundings, they too will appear more clearly. Besides vision, you can also focus on the details of other senses. Notice the sounds around you (birds, motors, wind, the hum of a television set in the next room) or the feelings you are experiencing (the pressure on your feet from walking, the feel of water on your skin, the taste or smell of something). Seeing these details of small parts of your dream will help bring the entire picture back into focus.

Closing Your Eyes

If you feel that your dream is going nowhere, that you are losing it, or if you want to transfer dreams for any other reason, try closing your eyes. Often, if we close our eyes or go to sleep within a dream, it brings about a change of scene and plot.

Releasing Anxiety

Sometimes, tension and anxiety are brought about when we realize that we are dreaming. We struggle to keep the state of lucidity. If your dream starts to fade, relax instead of panicking. Do not struggle to hold on to a fading dream, but instead try to release your anxiety and "go with the flow". In this situation, tension is counterproductive, because it may simply jolt you awake.

Spinning

'Spinning' is a technique that has been shown to be effective by the Lucidity Institute [Lynne Levitan, A Thousand and One Nights of Lucid Dreaming]. When you are in a dream, and that dream, or your lucidity, begins to fade, try spinning around. Feeling this unusual and realistic sensation of 'spinning' our dream bodies helps us to bring clarity back to the dream.

After Your Dreams

"If we listen patiently to our dreams and the messages they contain . . . they will eventually lead us to health . . . how much better to take advice from the other half of yourself than from another person."

- Dr. Ann Faraday

Remembering

Letting yourself remember your dreams can be a function of the moment as well as of practice and training. When you wake up, lie in bed without moving for a few moments, trying to remember your dream. Sometimes, being in the position we were in during our dream can help to trigger a memory that we might not otherwise reach. Even if you have moved after awakening, try to lie back down and find the position that you awoke in. Close your eyes. Try to remember what you were feeling and thinking at the moment that you woke up. What were you thinking about? What mood did you immediately awaken into? This information may also trigger a memory of your dream. Remember: the sooner you concentrate on remembering the details of your dreams, the more you will be able to find. To help yourself remember details of a dream, you might want to visualize the remembered dream in your head. Closing your eyes and replaying the scenario in your mind may help you to see details and remember feelings that would otherwise be lost.

No matter how much you recall, however, your dream will be of little use if you do not record it. As you learned earlier, you should record your dreams as soon as possible, including every fragmented memory.

Interpretation

In some books, you will find lists of dream symbols which supposedly tell you the exact meaning of your dreams. The truth is, however, that no one can interpret your dreams but you. No one else can tell you what your dream means. Each part of your dream means what it means to you, and nothing else. There are no set rules for interpretation. There are no books or dictionaries that will show you the meaning of a dream. You must unlock the meaning of your own dreams.

There are many ways to help yourself do this. "Word association" can help you to find out what recurring dream symbols mean to you. You may want to devote a few pages in the back of your journal to interpretation.

Read through your old dreams and find things or situations that repeat themselves. For example, you might often dream about climbing stairs. Write down this word (or phrase) in your journal and look at it. Think about what it makes you think of and feel. Then write down everything that comes to your mind when thinking of this thing or situation. Some words that you write down just might surprise you. Reading over these lists can lead to a discovery of what these symbols mean to you.

If you are artistically inclined, you might want to draw a picture about this symbol. Don't just draw a recurring object, though. Be sure to include your feelings and things that, in your opinion, relate to this symbol. You could also cut out a picture of your symbol from a magazine or book. Pasting this into your journal might also help you in thinking about what it means to you.

Discussion is another activity that can help you in deciphering your dreams. While no one can dictate the meaning of your dreams to you, talking about them with friends or family can be helpful. Someone may suggest something to you that you hadn't thought of before. Having others share their dream experiences with you may also open your eyes to new possibilities. Maybe someone you know also has dreams about climbing stairs. What does it mean to them? We all learn from each other.

There are no rules or laws to your dreams. Explore. Have fun.