

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR NIGHTTIME Dreams Dreams Dreams

BY ADAIR WILSON HEITMANN

**W**e all dream the equivalent of four years of our lifetime.

Many of us dream 1 1/2 hours each night, having four to five dreams per night. This is four years worth of free psychotherapy that most of us ignore!

Some people are afraid of their dreams, because the only ones they remember are their nightmares. I would be afraid too if I didn't know that all dreams come in service of my health and wholeness. "Good" and "bad" dreams come to tell the dreamer something new. No dream comes just to tell the dreamer what she/he already knows.

Nightmares are simply wake-up calls. The symbols and metaphors in them have become exaggerated to get the dreamer's attention. Nightmares will recur until the dreamer understands what the dream is saying and integrates that wisdom into their waking life. Recurring upsetting dreams will stop once the dreamer gets it. An upsetting dream is simply one that has come to "upset" the apple

cart, to help us make a new arrangement of something in our waking lives.

The act of dreaming is therapeutic. Even if you never write down your dreams or work on them in your waking life, dreaming helps you consider new possibilities, and helps you release the tensions from your day. Recording your dreams helps you remember more dreams. The act of keeping a dream journal is in itself healing and revealing.

If you want to remember your dreams and work on them, this is what you do: a: choose to remember a dream b: record it c: process it.

Here are hints for dream recall. 1. Consciously choose to remember your dreams. 2. Decide how you are going to record your dreams before you go to sleep. Options can include a pad of paper and writing implement or a tape recorder. Prepare and place everything you need right next to your sleeping place, so that they are readily available upon waking. 3. Before going to sleep focus your attention on remembering and understanding your dreams. 4. Upon awaking write down

your dream (even if you only remember a sentence, this is enough!). Write it in the first person present tense. This is very important in helping you understand your dream. It is what dreamworkers call "reentering the dream" from the safety of your waking life. By writing and saying your dream in the present tense you actually start to remember more details and you enter the intuitive place in which dreams reside.

If you wake up in the middle of the night with a dream memory, jot down a few key words, so you will remember the entire dream when you awaken for your day. Dreams are meant to be unraveled, not edited! Leave your dream as you write it. What you may think is misspelled or grammatically incorrect is intuition helping you get to the core meaning of your dream.

An example of this is in a dream I had several years ago. *I am walking into my art studio. The drawing table is not where it usually is. It is write in the middle of the room.*

I thought I wrote the word "write" as a mistake. My rational mind thought I should have written "right", meaning the drawing table was smack in the middle of the room. But I did not edit the dream as I wrote it upon waking. It was only when I read the dream out loud after writing it, that the dream's meaning hit me between the eyes like a lightning bolt.

The environment of the dream was in my art studio which symbol-

ized to me a place for creative expression. The fact that the drawing table had moved told me that I had already moved to a new place inside myself. The dream was a dress rehearsal to see how it felt. It felt magical and write!

I also enjoyed the pace of walking into my studio, which is different from running a business. Writing was something in front of me that I was moving into gradually.

Methods of dream interpretation include keeping a dream journal, Jungian analysis, Gestalt therapy, Senoi dreamwork, dream journeying, Montague Ullman's group process, Arnold Mindell's dreamingbody work, free association, viewing symbols and metaphors and relating to the feelings in a dream. What excites me the most and what has kept me passionate about dreams, dreaming and dreamwork for the past 25 years is the way that working on them simply and effortlessly improves your intuition and your creativity. Several of my clients have reported finding their muses through their dreams.

Intuition is truth. It is a direct link between our first and second conscious minds. It is our place of innate, boundless wisdom.

If you are seeking direction or clarity in your life, look no farther than your nighttime dreams! You can incubate a dream to gain a clearer picture of what you want. Each one of us has our own "dream dictionary" inside, based on our own backgrounds and cultures as well as archetypal images.

There are many processes and methods for interpreting your dreams. A way to start on your own is to first understand that every person, place and thing in your dream represents an aspect of you.

Compose and center yourself before working on a dream. Take a few deep cleansing breaths. Read or say your dream out loud two times. Allow any insights or associations to simply float to the surface of your awareness. Free associate, no matter how illogical you think it is.

You can also think about your dream in relation to the symbols in it. Become a witness to your dream and assess it from the perspective of the symbolism of colors, time of day, season, male or female characters, houses, landscapes, hot or cold, parts of the body, etc. Choose one component and come to understand the deeper meaning of this.

You can also work directly with a professional skilled in working on dreams or you can join a dream group. Dream groups build community, improve intuition, increase authenticity and create magic in your life.

In dreamwork as in meditation, there are many techniques. What is important is not so much the technique of it as it is the practice of it.



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