

DREAM CATCHING FOR A RICH SOURCE OF INFORMATION

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Why is it important to remember and record our dreams? Dreams are a rich, multilevel source of information. They mirror what we need to learn and reflect what we do each day. They are like a sixth sense, giving us access to issues regarding our health, frustrations, shortcomings, relationships, talents and even our life's purpose. They are a way to perceive mistakes being made and occasionally, to see the future. Any significant event in our lives that could happen up to six months from now may be foretold in our dreams, giving us the opportunity to alter the outcome for the better.

Almost everyone dreams at least ninety minutes each night, but many people don't remember their dreams nor do they realize the importance of what they are missing. Early Egyptians, Hebrews, Hindus, Buddhists and Greeks all worked with dreams, as did Native Americans and indigenous peoples all over the world. Sigmund Freud was the first to reintroduce the importance of dreams to the western world, calling the conscious mind the tip of an iceberg. His brilliant student Carl Jung went much further, discovering the collective unconscious and the deep universal symbols known as archetypes which are connected to all of us. "...The dream...manifests the fringe of consciousness, like the faint glimmer of the stars during the total eclipse of the sun... No amount of skepticism and criticism has yet enabled me to regard dreams as negligible occurrences. Often enough they appear senseless, but it is obviously we who lack the sense and ingenuity to read the enigmatic message."(Jung, Collected Works, Vol. 16 & 18, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, from Robin Robertson's *Beginner's Guide to Jungian Psychology*)

How to Catch Your Dreams.

Plan Ahead. Before you go to sleep, state that you want to remember your dreams and that you want them to be uncomplicated so you can easily understand them. If you have an important question, clearly state it to yourself or write it down on a piece of paper and put it on or near your body. The answers will come when needed. (Often information more important for you to know will come before that which you asked for.) Keep a tape recorder or a dream journal, pen and penlight ready. A quiet environment is important, so plan accordingly. Anything that startles you can shatter a dream. This includes pets, loud alarm clocks and radios. Going to bed before becoming totally exhausted and not eating up to three hours before bedtime is also helpful – and healthy.

Recalling Your Dreams.

As you start to awaken from a dream, stay in position – this helps you to recall the dream. Then move slowly, keep your head low if possible, and start to outline the important points of your dream in your journal, writing in any names or phrases first. Fill in the details as soon as possible. This includes how you felt in the dream and upon awakening, colors, light, surroundings, pets, other people, attire, activity, etc. The act of writing will usually bring back information. If you cannot remember any details about the dream, just write what you do know. For example, " Woke up feeling cheerful". Include the date on all your dream journal entries. I also recommend numbering the pages

and if you have the time, make an index to simplify locating recurring themes and other information.

Interpreting Your Dreams.

Kevin Todeshi, ARE* lecturer and author of *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, gives the following guidelines in his seminars. THEME FIRST, SYMBOLISM SECOND. What is happening to whom? Rewrite what occurred in one or two short sentences and give the dream a title. This will help put the dream in perspective. If it seems too complicated, go back to it later. Or ask what the dream meant and go back to sleep. A simple phrase of explanation may even come to you, as it does to me. (Multiple dreams in one night often have the same theme.)

Explore the emotional content in conjunction with the theme: Was it positive, frustrating, frightening or inspiring? Consider whether the dream is literal or metaphorical. A speeding car with bad brakes could be either literal, alerting you to a problem with your car, or symbolic as a metaphor for your body, telling you to relax and slow down. Or both.

Try to analyze the dream against current happenings in your life and begin working with symbols. What were the concerns, feelings or issues you were dealing with that day? Most dreams are symbolic and it is important to keep in mind that every character or symbol in the dream could represent an aspect of oneself. A common symbol is the house, which may indicate oneself or one's present condition. Having a good book on symbolism is essential, but none are complete. You may have your own recurring symbols and will want to create your own dictionary. An important point from dream shaman Robert Moss, workshop leader and author of *Conscious Dreaming*, is to keep an open mind on what your dreams are telling you.

In another ARE seminar on dreams, James Kyle suggested that whether we are in a group or not, to keep our interpretations positive because they don't have to be correct to be helpful. He also advised that while dreaming, the conscious will is totally inactive; therefore, dreams are a more pure source of insight than that which we receive from meditation. And "not paying attention to dreams is like not paying attention to God, or the subconscious higher Self!" (This doesn't necessarily mean that what you are dreaming is literally true; it means that this is what you feel or believe at the time.) Ignoring important messages in previous dreams is the most common cause of nightmares. (Indigestion is another source of nightmares, so be prudent with nighttime eating.) "Visions and dreams are given for the benefit of the individual, would they but interpret them correctly." (Edgar Cayce, Reading #214-150) We are the best interpreters of our own dreams, but it is even more instructive to share your dream work with a group. Dream circles can suggest helpful interpretations.

With all of that in mind, I wish you bountiful dream catching. Sweet dreams!

*The ARE is the Association of Research and Enlightenment, founded by the father of holistic health, Edgar Cayce (d.1945). (1-800-333-4499)

Other notable books on dreams and symbolism: Denise Lynn, *The Secret Language of Signs*; James Kyle, *Dreams, the Mother*; Robert L. VanDeCastle, *Our Dreaming Mind*. Many other good books, tapes and videos are available