

# LUCID DREAMING



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*Gateway to the Inner Self*

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Moment Point Press  
Needham, Massachusetts

Moment Point Press, Inc.  
PO Box 920287  
Needham, MA 02492  
www.momentpoint.com

Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self  
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Cover design: Kathryn Sky-Peck  
Cover graphic: Rob Colvin, Getty Images  
Text design and typesetting: Phillip Augusta  
Printing: McNaughton & Gunn  
Distribution: Red Wheel Weiser Conari, [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com)

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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Waggoner, Robert

Lucid dreaming: gateway to the inner self / Robert Waggoner

p. cm.

Includes bibliographic references and index.

ISBN 978-1-930491-14-4 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Lucid dreams I. Title.

BF1099.L82W34 2009

154.6'3—dc22 2008028369

First printing September 2008

ISBN 978-1-930491-14-4

Printed in the United States on acid-free, partially recycled paper

Distributed to the trade by Red Wheel Weiser

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE PERSON I NEED TO THANK THE MOST IS THE PERSON WHO CHALLENGED me the most, Ed Kellogg, Ph.D. More than any other lucid dreamer, Ed pushed me to search deeper, examine lucid awareness more thoughtfully, and question the apparent limits of lucidity. I found his expertise and insight, particularly in the areas of lucid dream healing, mutual lucid dreaming, and lucid dreams of the deceased simply unparalleled. This book, and chapters 13, 16, and 17 specifically, exist, in large measure, because of Ed's generosity of spirit and friendship.

Many others have provided precious support along the way. My thanks to Lucy Gillis, my coeditor in our quarterly labor of love, *The Lucid Dream Exchange*, and a talented lucid dreamer in her own right; Linda Lane Magallón, who ushered me into using lucid dreams experimentally through three years of monthly lucid goals and then introduced me to the International Association for the Study of Dreams, where I have met many wonderful people and extraordinary lucid dreamers, including Keelin, Beverly D'Urso, Ph.D., Clare Johnson, Ph.D., and Fariba Bogzaran, Ph.D. (to name only a few), and heard fascinating lectures by some of the pioneers of lucid dream research—Stephen LaBerge, Ph.D., Jayne Gackenbach, Ph.D., and many others. I am indebted to lucid dreamer Alan Worsley and researcher Dr. Keith Hearne for providing the first scientific proof of lucid dreaming more than thirty years ago.

The altruistic spirit of lucid dreamers who willingly offered their lucid dreams for inclusion in this book touched me deeply. Though some preferred to remain anonymous (and some I have already mentioned), I also wish to thank Jane Ahring, John Galleher, Connie Gavalis, David

L. Kahn, Ian Koslow, Moe Munroe, pasQuale Ourtane, Justin Tombe, Joscelyne Wilmouth, Sylvia Wilson, and Suzanne Wiltink.

The invitations to speak at campuses and venues such as Sonoma State University, Evergreen State College, the Inner Arts Center in Alexandria, Virginia, and Sheila Asato's Monkey Bridge Arts near Minneapolis, Minnesota, helped me articulate my discoveries and meet others who were using lucid dreams as a path to greater creativity, self understanding, and exploration; my thanks to all who made that possible and for their interest and enthusiasm.

To my editor, Sue Ray, humble thanks for her gracious acceptance of my first book and near infinite efforts and patience in preparing it for publication. Heartfelt thanks to my many, many friends who encouraged me this past year and along life's way. Last, I need to thank my wife, Wendy, for her love and faith, as I pursued this waking dream: a guidebook to consciously exploring the dream state, the Self, and the vast unconscious reality of the mind.



# PREFACE

FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS, I HAVE PRACTICED LUCID DREAMING, the ability to become consciously aware of dreaming while in the dream state. During this time, I have had approximately 1,000 lucid dreams, most logged away in dozens of dream journals and computer files.

Like many, I initially considered lucid or conscious dreaming as a fascinating playground for the mind. I could fly over treetops, push through walls, make objects appear, even walk on water (dream water, that is)—all while conscious in the dream state. As the years passed, however, certain pivotal lucid dreams opened my mind to the possibility that lucid dreaming offered a gateway to so much more.

In part one of this book, you will read about my journey into lucid dreaming, beginning with simple experiments such as asking a dream figure to explain the dream symbolism or tell me what it represents. The results contain both expected and unexpected elements. While the expected certainly seemed understandable, I found the unexpected responses troubling. If the lucid dream was a product of my mind, then how did a completely unexpected and shocking response arise from within my own mind?

Probing deeper into this mystery, I and others began to lucidly challenge the boundaries of dreaming as we sought out the unexpected, the unknown, the abstract. Increasingly, we let go of manipulating the dream and directing the dream events as we opened up to the unconscious. Surprisingly, something responded. An inner awareness behind the dream provided answers, observations, insight. Carl Jung theorized that an inner “ego” might be discovered within the “psychic system” of the unconscious; I propose that lucid dreaming has the potential to

show that his theory contains fact. Like Hilgard's "hidden observer" in deep hypnosis, lucid dreaming also shows an inner observer with whom the lucid dreamer can relate.

In part two, I explore the limits of awareness available to a lucid dreamer. I show examples, both mine and others', of numerous conceptual explorations as well as attempts to procure telepathic and precognitive information while lucid. And, with the help of research from lucid dreamer Ed Kellogg, Ph.D., I delve into the topics of physical healings while lucid, mutual lucid dreams, and interacting with deceased dream figures.

Those who have experienced lucid dreams will find here numerous techniques, tips, and challenges to consider in their own lucid explorations. For those who have never experienced a lucid dream or do not truly understand the experience, I hope to act as a dream anthropologist of sorts—explaining the lucid dream terrain, the local customs, the rituals, and something of the inhabitants, the dream figures, as lucid dreamers consciously interact with them in the psychological space of dreams. In the book's appendixes, I provide advice and guidance for those who wish to become lucid dreamers or improve their lucid dreaming skills.

Lucid dreaming provides us a means to explore, experiment, and question the nature of dreaming and, as some might say, the nature of the subconscious—the largely unknown part of our selves. For this reason alone, psychologists, therapists, consciousness researchers, and dreamers should have an intense interest in the experiences and experiments of lucid dreamers. As I see it, lucid dreaming is a unique psychological tool with which to consciously investigate dreaming and the subconscious.

In many respects, this book responds to those who claim that lucid dreaming simply involves expectation, which automatically creates mental models to be experienced. By lucidly going beyond expectation and the expected, I attempt to show that much more is going on here. Consciously aware in the dream state, we have access to deeper dimensions of information and knowing that can hardly be explained by expectation or mental modeling. This way is not for the faint of heart or those comfortable with unexamined beliefs.

The journey into lucid dreaming truly is a journey within your conscious and unconscious self. Here, not only will you meet your beliefs, your ideas, your thoughts, and expectations—often materialized in the

dream space—but also your fears, your hopes, your limitations, and intents. In responding to those challenges, those self expressions, you make your path. I hope this book helps guide you along the way and gives you insight into your self-creations and the larger dream reality. I wish you well on your journey.

*Robert Waggoner*



PART 1

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# **THE JOURNEY INWARD**



# 1

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## STEPPING THROUGH THE GATE

LIKE MANY CHILDREN, I HAD AN INTENSE DREAM LIFE. DREAMS WERE an amazing theater of the mind featuring both glorious adventures and moments of sheer terror. In one dream, a songbird, a meadowlark, I believe, landed on my chest and sang me its simple song, which I immediately understood and woke up singing. In another dream, I found myself on a fifteen-foot Pogo stick bouncing down the deserted streets, almost flying. On occasion I seemed to be an animal—a dog or coyote, for example—trotting along the dark night’s sidewalks in a four-legged gait, totally at peace, seeing the neighborhood from a canine’s drooping-headed, tongue-wagging perspective.

With dreams like these, I was a child who had to drag himself out of bed.

In those early years, I remember clearly only one spontaneous lucid dream. In it, I was wandering the local library and suddenly saw a dinosaur stomping through the stacks. Somehow it dawned on me: If all dinosaurs are extinct—this must be a dream! Now consciously aware that I was dreaming, I reasoned further: Since this was a dream—I could *wake up*! I reasoned correctly and awoke safe in my bed.

That youthful experience illuminates the essential element of lucid dreaming: the conscious awareness of being in a dream while you’re dreaming. In this unique state of awareness, you can consider and carry out deliberate actions such as talking to dream figures, flying in the dream space, walking through the walls of dream buildings, creating

any object desired, or making them disappear. More important, an experienced lucid dreamer can conduct experiments in the subconscious or seek information from the apparently conscious unconscious.

But I'm getting ahead of myself . . .

In those preteen days, before I began lucid dreaming regularly, three experiences kept alive my interest in dreaming and the psyche: occasional dreams that seemed to be precognitive, an unexpected "vision experience," and the very real sense of having access to an inner knowing. Like many, I found life's deepest mysteries in the mind.

For me, the occasional precognitive dream often appeared as small events, like dreaming of someone making an odd statement in a dream, only to hear a real person make the same odd statement a few hours later, or to have a voice in the dream announce an observation that later would be proven correct. Once, the voice explained that the dream symbols meant the dream events would take three years to transpire. I kept track of that date and something incredible did indeed happen in the waking world, directly related to the dream from three years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

Precognitive dreams challenged my budding scientific worldview and disrupted my traditional religious and spiritual views. Strange coincidences, self-fulfilling prophecies, or unknown information? How was one to tell?

One day in my preteen, church-going mind, I had a mini-epiphany. It occurred to me that if God was the same "yesterday, today, and forever," as they said in the Old Testament, then God must exist outside of time, apart from time, in a place where time had no meaning. And, if that were true, then perhaps dreams were the gateway to a place without time, where time existed in one glorious Now. Yet my young science-educated mind balked at this notion. A dreamt event followed by a waking event could be nothing more than sheer coincidence and didn't necessarily entail any foreknowing. Or perhaps it was like a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which I unknowingly helped bring about the event that I dreamt. And even when a dream voice made an observation that later turned out to be true, perhaps my creative unconscious had simply noticed things and, by calculating the likely outcome of those things, made a clever announcement.

As this spiritual questioning was going on, another fascinating incident occurred. One Sunday evening when I was eleven or twelve, I lay on my bed reading a book and stopped for a moment to think. As I



absentmindedly looked up at the ceiling, my head suddenly turned north and I began to see a vision of a Native American setting overlaying the physical scene. I struggled to free myself from this unexpected experience while another part of me took in the vision. Finally it stopped.

At that young age, what do you do with something like this? In my case, I went to the library. I flipped through a number of books about the Old Testament containing commentary on visions but found little of value for me there. I also checked out a few books on Native American culture and discovered the vision quest, a traditional practice by which youth gain insight into their lives. Normally a vision quest occurs in a ritual fashion. The young person is obligated to leave the tribe and travel alone for a period of days of fasting, praying, and waiting for the visionary experience. Yet why would something like that happen to me? Only years later did I discover that our family had Native American ancestry.<sup>2</sup>

Somewhere in this time period, I also recognized the presence of an “inner advisor,” for lack of a better term. At certain times, when I considered things deeply, an inner knowing appeared in my mind. It was such a natural thing, I assumed everyone experienced this. It was like having the services of a wise old man inside. For example, after a very simple incident that most anyone would ignore, the inner knowing would make an observation about life or suggest the prosaic incident as a living parable. The comments seemed intelligent, even remarkable. I began to sense that all around me life had meaning, if I only cared to look. Since I lived in the middle of Kansas, far from the centers of world power, the pace of life was slower and perhaps simpler, yet below the surface, at another level, I knew we had everything, all the lessons of life.

Like any teenager, I’d pester this inner advisor—What am I? Who am I? To these questions I was given two answers and then never visited the issue again (although the answers rolled around my mind for decades). In one instance, to my “Who am I?” the inner advisor responded, “Everything and nothing.” Okay, I thought, any person in a sense has the potential capabilities of all, but in having them also has nothing, for time or the fates will sweep it all away. In those words, too, I sensed a hidden connection between the rich lavishness of Being and the complete freedom of Nothing. But still not entirely content with being a place marker between two extremes, I continued to pester myself and, by extension, the inner advisor with the question of identity until, one day, an answer came that laid all further questions to rest. “You

are what you let yourself become,” said the inner advisor. That answer satisfied me completely: *The living of life was an allowing of self.*

Altogether, the precognitive dreams, the vision experience, and my search for spiritual meaning kept me probing for satisfying and complete answers. Obviously, my intense inner life, sparked by thought-provoking dreams, created a persistent desire to accept, abandon, or perhaps bridge one of the two worldviews: the scientific and the spiritual. Which is why in 1975, at age sixteen, I picked up one of my oldest brother’s books, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* by Carlos Castaneda, and embarked on my first lesson in lucid dreaming.

As some readers may know, Carlos Castaneda was an anthropology graduate student at UCLA in the 1960s who sought to learn from native shamans about psychotropic plants in the southwestern United States and Mexico. According to his story, he met a Yaqui Indian sorcerer, don Juan, who agreed to teach him about hallucinogenic plants. In the process, don Juan provided Castaneda with a unique view of the world. Even more important, perhaps, don Juan supplied techniques to experience this new worldview.

The philosophy of don Juan might be summed up in these words, spoken to Castaneda: “[Y]our idea of the world . . . is everything; and when that changes, the world itself changes.”<sup>3</sup> Don Juan constantly pushed Castaneda to consider new and world-changing ideas and to become more mentally flexible.

Castaneda has recounted in numerous books his decade-long association with don Juan. While many have openly questioned Castaneda’s veracity in storytelling,<sup>4</sup> his many books nevertheless contain a number of provocative ideas and, like many young people, I was intrigued. I read *Journey to Ixtlan* and decided to try just one of the ideas, never imagining how transformative an idea could be.

Don Juan suggests to Castaneda a simple technique to “set up *dreaming*” or become conscious in the dream state. “Tonight in your dreams you must look at your hands,” don Juan instructs Castaneda. After some discussion about the meaning of dreaming and the choice of hands as an object to dream about, don Juan continues. “You don’t have to look at your hands,” he says. “Like I’ve said, pick anything at all. But pick one thing in advance and find it in your dreams. I said your hands because they will always be there.”<sup>5</sup>

Don Juan further advised Castaneda that whenever an object or scene that he was looking at began to shift or waver in the dream, he

should consciously look back at his hands to stabilize the dream and renew the power of *dreaming*.

Simple enough, I thought. So, before going to sleep each night, I sat cross-legged in bed and began looking at the palms of my hands. Mentally, I quietly told myself, “Tonight, I will see my hands in my dream and realize I’m dreaming.” I repeated the suggestion over and over, until I became too tired and decided to go to sleep.

Waking up in the middle of the night, I reviewed my last dream. Had I seen my hands? No. But still hopeful, I fell back asleep remembering my goal. Within a few nights of trying this technique, it happened. I had my first actively sought lucid dream:

I’m walking in the busy hallways of my high school at the junction of B and C halls. As I prepare to push the door open, my hands spontaneously fly up in front of my face! They literally pop up in front of me! I stare in wonder at them. Suddenly, I consciously realize, “My hands! This is a dream! I’m dreaming this!”

I look around me, amazed that I am *aware* within a dream. All around me is a dream. Incredible! Everything looks so vivid and real.

I walk through the doors a few feet toward the administration building while a great feeling of euphoria and energy wells up inside. As I stop and look at the brick wall, the dream seems a bit wobbly. I lucidly remember don Juan’s advice and decide to look back down at my hands to stabilize the dream when something incredible happens. As I look at my hands, I become totally absorbed in them. “I” now see each fingerprint, each line, as a giant flesh-toned canyon that I float within and through. The world has become my palm print, and I’m moving about its vast canyons and gullies and whorls as a floating speck of awareness. I no longer see my hand; I see cream-colored, canyon-like walls of varying undulations surrounding and towering above me, which some part of me knows as my fingerprints or palm prints! As for me, “I” seem to be a dot of aware perception floating through all of this—joyous, aware, and full of awe.

I’m wondering how this could be, when suddenly my vision pops back to normal proportions and I see again that I am standing, hands outstretched, in front of the administration building. Still consciously aware, I think about what to do next. I walk a few feet but feel an incredible urge to fly—I want to fly! I become airborne heading straight up for the intense blue sky. As my feeling of overwhelming joy reaches maximum pitch, the lucid dream ends.

I awake in bed, totally astounded, my heart pounding and head reeling. Never had I felt such intense feelings of elation, energy, and utter freedom. I had done it! I had seen my hands literally fly up to face level in my dreams as if propelled by some magical force and I realized, “This is a dream!” At the age of sixteen, I had become conscious in the dream state. And suddenly, like Dorothy in Oz, I was not in Kansas any more.

Well, actually, I was in Kansas for another year, until I left for college.

## THE PARADOX OF THE SENSES

My first lucid dream felt like a monumental achievement. I had actually become aware in a dream. Moreover, in the don Juan tradition, this first lucid dream seemed filled with auspicious symbols—becoming a speck of awareness floating through my palm prints, maintaining the dream, working on awareness outside of the “administration building” (symbol for my own inner authority, perhaps). I was excited.

Still, it seemed so paradoxical—becoming conscious in the unconscious. What a concept! Like some teenage magician of the dreaming realm, I had done what scientists at the time proclaimed could not be done.

Little did I know, during that same time in April of 1975, thousands of miles away at the University of Hull in England, a lucid dreamer named Alan Worsley was making the first-ever scientifically recorded signals from the lucid state to researcher Keith Hearne. By making prearranged eye movements (left to right eight times), Worsley signaled his lucid awareness from the dream state. Pads on his eyes recorded the deliberate eye movements on a polygraph’s printout. At that moment, Hearne recalls, “It was like getting signals from another world. Philosophically, scientifically, it was simply mind blowing.”<sup>6</sup> Hearne and Worsley were the first to conceive of the idea and demonstrate that deliberate eye movements could signal the conscious awareness of the dreamer from within the dream state.<sup>7</sup>

A few years later, in 1978, Stanford sleep lab researcher Stephen LaBerge, using himself as the lucid dreaming subject, devised a separate, similar experiment of signaling awareness from the dream state through eye movement. Publishing his work in more broadly read scientific journals, LaBerge became strongly identified with this exciting discovery and a leader in its continued research.

Back in Kansas, each night before I went to sleep I would look at my hands and remind myself that I wished to see my hands in my

dreams. Of course anyone who tries this will soon discover that staring at your hands for more than ten seconds is quite boring. When you already feel sleepy, it takes real effort to concentrate. Your eyes cross, your hands get fuzzy, your attention wavers, within a minute or two you may even become so bored and tired as to go blank momentarily. After a few minutes, I would give up and prepare for sleep. At the time, I chastised myself for my lack of concentration and wavering focus, but later I came to feel that these natural responses were actually the best approach, since the waking ego seemed too tired to care about the game my conscious mind wanted to play. In fact, don Juan suggested that the waking ego often felt threatened by the more profound nature of our inner realm. Perhaps a sleepy ego would be less likely to interfere.

My next few lucid dreams were lessons in exquisite brevity. I would be in a dream, see my hands in the course of the dream (e.g., as I opened a door with my hand or as if by some inner prompting my hands would suddenly appear directly in front of me) and immediately realize I was in a dream. I'd experience a rush of exhilaration, joy, and energy. As I took in the dream surroundings, my feelings of joy rose to such levels that the lucid dream would begin to feel unstable and then come to an end. I would awaken, full of joy but mystified by the sudden collapse of the lucid dream.

This brought me to one of my first lessons of lucid dreaming:

*To maintain the lucid dream state, you must modulate your emotions.*

Too much emotional energy causes the lucid dream to collapse. Years later, I learned that virtually all lucid dreamers realize this same lesson and as a result learn to temper their emotions.

After reading don Juan's exhortation to Castaneda that he should try to stabilize the dream environment and, bit by bit, make it as sharply focused as the waking environment, this became my new goal. Don Juan advised that the dreamer should concentrate on only three or four objects in the dream, saying, "When they begin to change shape you must move your sight away from them and pick something else, and then look at your hands again. It takes a long time to perfect this technique."<sup>8</sup>

In the next dream, I was walking at night and suddenly saw my hands appear directly in front of me. I immediately realized I was dreaming. Lucid, I took a few steps and noticed the colors were extremely vibrant; everything seemed so "real." I felt euphoric and knew that the dream

would end unless I could regulate my feelings, so I looked back at my hands to stabilize the dream and decrease my emotional upsurge.

After a few moments, I looked around at the grassy knoll on which I was standing. I seemed to be inside a fenced enclosure that included a building, similar to a military or secured installation. I took a few steps and looked at my hands again to stabilize the dream. There were some small evergreens ten feet away, obviously recently planted. I knelt and touched the grass. It felt soft and grass-like. I marveled at how lifelike and realistic everything looked and how I could think about what I was seeing and choose what to do next. I touched myself and, *Wow*, even I felt real! But I knew my awareness existed within a dream and I was touching a representation of my physical body, which only *felt* like a real body.

Trying to make sense of what I was seeing, I had the intuitive feeling that the building housed computers and was somewhere in the southwestern United States. But where? As I took a few steps toward the building to look for a name, the imagery started to become unfocused. I looked back at my hands but it was too late—the lucid dream collapsed and I awoke.

It began to sink in that knowing it was a dream did not make it seem unreal. The grass felt like real grass. My skin felt like real skin. If I truly focused on something, like the ground, I could actually see the individual blades of grass and grains of sand. When awake, we consider seeing and touching as largely physical activities, but in lucid dreaming, I began to see that seeing and touching were also mental activities and equally real-seeming when consciously aware in the dream state. Which brought me to my next lesson:

*Our senses provide little distinction between physical reality and the real-seeming illusion of the lucid dream. Only the mind distinguishes between the two realities.*

In later lucid dreams, I tried the other senses—taste, smell, and hearing—and discovered that they, too, seemed real experiences, or at least largely real. Even self-induced pain—pinching myself in the lucid state, for example—actually hurt. But if I pinched myself while telling myself it would not hurt, it didn't hurt. Here I uncovered an odd aspect of the lucid dream realm: My experience would normally follow what I lucidly expected to feel.

Fellow lucid dreamers I've met over the years seem to agree with me that the senses proclaimed each experience as real as waking experi-

ence. Yet, experienced lucid dreamers note that if they predetermine or expect *what* to feel or *how* to feel, they can alter the sensory experience in line with their expectations. In other words, “As you believe, so shall it be” is a powerful truth when lucid.

In the lucid dream state, the senses show themselves as the confirmers of expectation—not infallible guides to sensory response—and experience is largely infused with mental expectation about the experience. Just as in studies on hypnosis and pain reduction, the senses somehow bend to the intent of hypnotic suggestion. In both lucid dreaming and hypnosis, the senses don’t appear as biological absolutes but more as the servants of the mind.

By age eighteen, I had visited a hypnotist to learn about self-hypnosis. I understood the basic concept that suggestions made to us while intensely focused in a mild trance state influenced the subconscious and affected our perceived experience. Now I could see that being consciously aware in the subconscious (i.e., lucid dreaming) possessed similarities to deeper self-hypnosis.

Our suggestions in a state of hypnosis or self-hypnosis act on the senses. For example, we can make a posthypnotic suggestion that certain foods will taste opposite to their normal taste and experience the suggested taste upon waking. Or we can suggest that we will feel minimal pain during, say, a tooth extraction, and then experience remarkably little pain. Similarly, when lucid in a dream, the senses naturally follow expectation (expectation being a type of natural mental suggestion). In fact, one of the advantages to lucid dreaming involves seeing the immediate results of your suggestion or expectation. If I lucidly dream of a fire, for example, and expect to feel no heat upon walking in it, I’ll feel no heat. If I change my expectation to feel the fire’s heat, my new expectation will be realized, and I’ll feel definite heat.

My lucid dreaming experiences made me wonder how extensively the mind influences perception and sensation while waking. Conscious in the dream state, the influence seems pervasive. During waking, I simply assumed I experienced things “as they actually exist.” Yet I knew from my exposure to hypnosis that waking sensory experience could actually be considerably modified.

All dreamers can see how unreliable the senses behave in telling us the difference between waking and dreaming. In almost every dream, the senses don’t inform us of the difference between waking and dreaming; rather, they seem to confirm that whatever reality seems to be happening is indeed happening. Dreaming seems real, our senses tell

us. Waking seems real, our senses tell us. To sense the reality of our situation requires a new perspective. The lesson:

*Only by increasing our conscious awareness in the dream state can we ever realize the nature of the reality we experience.*

So, the senses pose a problem. They tell us we exist, but they don't indicate the state of our existence: Are we awake, dreaming, or lucid dreaming? Since the senses don't remind us we're lucid and in a dream, holding onto conscious awareness in the dream state requires considerable training in greater mindfulness.

For example, in many of my early lucid dreams, my hands would appear and I'd realize I was dreaming. Then as I lucidly interacted with the dream, some interesting dream figure would become so compelling and real-seeming that my attention to "the dream as dream" decreased significantly. I'd begin to forget that this was "all a dream." Just as in waking, your conscious attention can begin to drift when lucid dreaming. After a few unfocused moments, you're swept into the dreaming, following its movements, suddenly unaware and no longer lucid. Not only did I need to be consciously aware of being in a dream, I needed to be consciously aware of being aware!

Once again, a new lesson emerged:

*Lucid dreamers must learn to focus simultaneously on both their conscious awareness and the apparent dreaming activities. Lucid dreamers who become overly focused on the dreaming activities get swept back into non-lucid dreaming. So too, lucid dreamers who become inattentive to the fact of their conscious awareness risk becoming lost to the dreaming. To maintain lucidity, we must develop a proper balance of mindful, aware interacting to engage the dream consciously.*

In an environment that appears real, our awareness has to adopt a neutral stance: be *in* the environment but not *of* the environment. Engage the dream, but never forget it's a dream. In my experience, keeping your foot on the tightrope of awareness is an ever-present challenge. In about a third of my early lucid dreams, I would become lucid but eventually, through inattention or engrossment, I'd fall off the tightrope. Each time I fell off, though, it acted as another lesson in the importance of maintaining mindful awareness.

The awareness needed for meditation, at least some forms of it, seems analogous to what lucid dreamers seek to develop. Meditators,



especially beginners, have to learn a sense of balance when they turn inward; otherwise, they can fall asleep while meditating or become caught up and engaged with entrancing thoughts. Likewise, beginning lucid dreamers often hold focused awareness for only a short period of time. It takes practice and patience and poise to hold awareness consciously while being confronted with new thoughts or images—the products of the mind.

As you log time in the lucid dream realm, you develop poise, confidence, skills, and flexibility. Your awareness begins to relate differently to thoughts and images. You don't get swept into dream or thought events as easily; rather, you pick and choose what to accept with a greater sense of engaged detachment.

At deeper levels of lucid dreaming, you might discover how to remain aware even when the dream visually ends, and then wait for a new dream to form in the mental space around you, as I did, for example, in the following lucid dream (October 2002):

I seem to be walking through a small town. I enter a simple restaurant and walk through it into a mechanic's garage. I see a door and decide to slip through it, even though it seems to have a string attached to an alarm. As I get out into the street, I look around and realize, "This is a dream."

Lucidly aware now, I start flying up the street, looking at the people sitting in candle-lit cafes and walking down the street. The detail is incredibly vivid. I sing a funny rhyming song as I look at things. I keep flying farther and end up outside of town with a strong inclination to fly to the right. But then in a moment of conscious choice, I exercise my right to change the direction of the dream and decide, no, I'm going into the darkness, and I turn left.

As I move forward in the darkness, the visual imagery disappears. For a very long while, I feel that I'm moving without any visual imagery—there's only a foggy dark-gray void. I keep moving in this visually empty space and begin to wonder if I am going to wake up. But suddenly a scene appears, bit by bit. First a bush, then a tree, then another tree. Soon the dream fleshes out nicely, and I stand, lucid, on a gently sloped hill, like something you'd see in Britain, with small leafy trees and lots of green grass. I notice that right next to me is a small bush with berries on it. I examine it closely.

Suddenly, I have the awkward realization that my body in bed is having a hard time breathing (even though I continue to see the lucid dream imagery of the green hills). While my conscious awareness is admiring a grassy spot in a lucid dream, I try to feel the breathing

obstruction. With this bifocal awareness, I gently put some mental energy into making my physical head move up and away from the bed sheets or pillow while concentrating on remaining in the lucid dream. This seems to work. But finally, I decide to wake into physical reality and determine what is hampering my breathing.

With experience, you'll realize that sometimes you can be consciously dreaming and also aware of your physical body in bed. To stay in the lucid dream, you have to maintain your primary focus there, but, on occasion, you can check in on the physical body's awareness. In this example, when I woke, the bed sheet really was in my mouth!

As we become more experienced with lucid dreaming, we discover how to maintain awareness even when the dream imagery has all disappeared. In learning how to lucid dream, we learn much more than how to manipulate dream objects and symbols; we learn the importance and proper use of conscious awareness.

# 2

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## DOES THE SAILOR CONTROL THE SEA?

BEFORE DREAM RESEARCHERS PROVED LUCID DREAMING AS A DEMONSTRABLE experience and published the results, I spent six years practicing it by myself and often defending the experience of it in conversations with others who routinely told me, “It’s impossible to become conscious in the unconscious of sleep.” During those years, I was greatly influenced by my father, whose insistence on intellectual integrity helped me accept the validity of my paradoxical experience while also accepting that my interpretation of the experience could be far off the mark. As a result, I continued deeper into lucid dreaming while regarding my interpretation of the experience as a working hypothesis or a “provisional explanation.”

In retrospect, this period of my life taught me to view much of science as providing this same kind of “provisional explanation,” not the final word. I saw that scientists and the prevailing cultural wisdom can occasionally ignore or explain away what later science or more enlightened times accept. In the case of lucid dreaming, Western science doubted its existence for at least a century, if not longer.

Thankfully, some of my high school friends were open to trying this idea of conscious dreaming and “finding one’s hands” in their dreams. It became a challenge of sorts. Within a week or so, one friend reported that while in a dream his hands suddenly appeared in front of his face. As he looked at them, he thought, “Oh, my hands. This is a dream,” and decided to wake up.

“Why didn’t you do something,” I asked him, “like go flying or something?”

“It was just a dream,” he said. “It wasn’t real. So I woke up.”

This cultural bias toward the waking state as “real” and any other state as “unreal”—and therefore unworthy of attention or study—exists as a mental block for many. Yet if we presume that little can be learned from any state other than waking, we largely ignore any state other than waking and thus perpetuate the bias.

“This important phenomenon [lucid dreaming] has been dismissed as a psychic chimera by many authors and derided as a scientific will-of-the-wisp by others,” explains J. Allan Hobson, a Harvard sleep and dream researcher. “[The philosopher Thomas Metzinger] knows, as I do, that lucid dreaming is a potentially useful state of consciousness.”<sup>1</sup> Lucid dreaming offers insight into the scientific study of consciousness, since neuroscientists could potentially investigate the relation of brain activity to subjective experience while lucidly aware and compare it to waking and dreaming states.

An occasional lucid dreamer himself, Hobson suggests that “an MRI study of lucid and non-lucid dreaming is a highly desirable next step in the scientific study of consciousness. The technical obstacles to the realization of such an experiment are formidable but the main obstacle is political and philosophical.” Hobson observes, “Many scientists rule out any study of subjective experience especially one as dubious and evanescent as lucid dreaming.”<sup>2</sup>

Overcoming the barriers of science, theory, and culture may be the constant burden of any proven paradoxical experience such as lucid dreaming. Twenty-five years after my first lucid dream, I found myself once again defending lucid dreaming—not so much from scientific researchers who ultimately accepted the official scientific data on the subject, but from concerned psychotherapists and dreamworkers.

At a recent International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD) conference, psychotherapists began singling me out. It seems another psychologist had mentioned hearing me speak at a conference in Copenhagen during which I wove together lucid dream experiences with comments by Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud to suggest that lucid dreaming may be a means to explore and acquaint ourselves with the larger Self, or collective aspects of the psyche. After hearing my talk, this particular psychologist reconsidered her negative-leaning predisposition to lucid dreaming and realized the potential value in lucid dreaming as a means of psychological exploration and integration.

So now I began to meet the assorted—and yet-to-be convinced—colleagues of this newly swayed psychologist. Most began by telling me that their academic training had taught them to consider dreaming as a message from the deepest part of our selves. To “control the dream,” as they assured me that lucid dreamers do, would destroy or pollute the pure message from this deep part of our selves. Though they were too polite to voice it, the suggestion hung heavy in the air—only a narcissistic fool would encourage lucid dreaming.

After a few hallway encounters in which I groped for the words to make my point, an analogy came to me that seemed to bring greater awareness into the conversation. My analogy is this:

No sailor controls the sea. Only a foolish sailor would say such a thing. Similarly, no lucid dreamer controls the dream. Like a sailor on the sea, we lucid dreamers direct our perceptual awareness within the larger state of dreaming.

Oh, the power of an analogy. Suddenly, I saw in the eyes of my querying psychotherapists the realization that my lucid dreaming experiences were simply attempts to understand the depths of dreaming and, by extension, the Self. Suddenly, we were on the same team—dreamers trying to fathom the beauty and magnificence of dreaming. Now, lucid dreaming had potential for increased awareness, instead of narcissistic flight!<sup>3</sup> In fact, as I interacted with these Jungian-trained psychotherapists, I remembered a recent lucid dream with definite Jungian overtones (April 2005):

My wife and I and my brother (who occasionally changes) seem to be stuck in an old post-Depression farm household that is struggling to keep food on the table. The farmwife comes home with three children, and they put some beans and other items on the stove to cook.

After a while, they serve us at the kitchen table, placing a small portion of beans on our plates. But there seems to be a problem of some sort. Standing behind me, I notice a tall slender black woman who seems to be with us. It seems the farmwife doesn’t care for her. We wait.

As I sit there, I look at my brother and then at the black woman; it suddenly occurs to me that this is a dream. Aware now, I stand up and want to know what this means. Lucid, I pick up the black woman and place her in front of me, asking, “Who are you? Who are you?” She looks at me and surprises me with her unexpected response. “I am a discarded aspect of your self,” she says, and immediately I sense the

truth of her statement and feel the need to reintegrate her into my being. She seems to evaporate into me, as a brief wisp of light energy.

Many Jungians might suggest this lucid dream illustrates integration with a shadow element, represented by the black woman standing behind me. In Jung's theory, shadow elements consist of repressed, ignored, denied, or misunderstood thoughts, feelings, or impulses that continue to reside in the realm of the subconscious. In some instances, the shadow element appears in a "shadow's position" to the dreamer, normally behind the dreamer.

Jung maintained that these shadow elements may adopt the guise of dream figures to interact with the dreamer as they seek integration or acceptance by the conscious self to create a more fully integrated Self. In this example, the apparent reintegration happens almost immediately, when I lucidly question and understand the dream figure's presence in the dream and accept her openly.

Once I became lucidly aware in this dream, I recognized that something needed resolution. (By this time in my lucid dreaming experience I was aware of the importance of approaching the area of sensed emotion or conflict in the dream, instead of ignoring it.) As I instinctively placed the figure of the black woman in front of me, I *consciously* intended to understand her place in the dream and what she represented. In the process, I received both a conscious answer and an infusion of energy into my awareness. Facing her, I felt the dream figure's energy evaporate into me, as a wispy, colored, light vapor washing toward me. The "discarded aspect" had apparently been welcomed home.

As it happened, in the week after this dream I felt new energy regarding a project that I had discarded years ago as unachievable. The project? You're holding it in your hands. It feels odd to say that reintegrating a discarded aspect into yourself brings a certain energy and imaginative spirit, but after this lucid dream I could suddenly feel the new ideas and positive emotions about writing a book. The wall of doubt surrounding my old goal had suddenly crumbled. Yet to begin work on this project, I had to make other changes that I saw symbolically illustrated and exaggerated in this dream. I had to overcome the culturally ingrained, deep belief about "working to keep food on the table," an issue seemingly represented by this obviously struggling, post-Depression farm family.

At the time of the dream, to concentrate on a book seemed incompatible with a full-time job. Yet, in the year following the dream, the

desire grew. I overcame my inner concern about finances, reduced my traditional job responsibilities, and began to focus on this book.

So, no. No sailor controls the sea. Only a foolish sailor would say such a thing. Similarly, no lucid dreamer controls the dream. But like a sailor on the sea moving toward an island or point on the sea's horizon, we lucid dreamers direct the focus of our intent within dreaming to seen and unseen points. In so doing, we come to know the limited realm of our awareness compared to the magnificent depth and creativity of what I refer to as "the dreaming." As a portion of our conscious awareness rides upon the surface realm of the subconscious, we sense the support and the magnificent majesty of the unconscious below.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF AN ANALOGY

Sadly, the power of the sailor and the sea analogy goes only so far. Additional concerns about lucid dreaming arose from various viewpoints. While many people understand that the conscious directing of one's focus while in the lucid dream state does not equate to "control" of the dream, they still feel reticent about the idea of lucid dreaming. Underneath it all, three issues begin to surface: 1) a fear of the subconscious and its processes, 2) concern for the dream as sacred message, and 3) using lucidity to escape and to avoid personal growth.

So, let's tackle these three ideas—or as I would call them, misconceptions—about lucid dreaming.

### *Fear of the Subconscious*

In investigating fear of the subconscious, I came to understand that some people, including highly trained psychologists, have what amounts to a basic fear of the subconscious. They simply do not believe that the waking self should interact with unconscious or subconscious elements. The psychiatrist R. D. Laing commented that society has a "psychophobia, a fear of the deeper contents of our own minds."<sup>4</sup> Often, behind this fear of lucid dreaming, lies a hidden concern about "messing up subconscious processes." Which subconscious processes? Well, no one can ever say exactly because we don't understand the subconscious fully enough, leaving me to suggest that, perhaps, with lucid dreaming, we finally have a tool with which to explore it.

A healthy respect for what we call the unconscious or subconscious has considerable value. However, a fear of what essentially constitutes a portion of our being does not seem healthy or respectful; rather, it seems needlessly divisive and limiting. To counter our intense cultural conditioning, we must possess a sense of curious engagement to venture into the unconscious. Even though it's a part of us, it exists as *terra incognita* or, perhaps more appropriately, *psyche incognita*—we simply have drawn a sketchy map of the psyche and marked a large segment in frightful red letters, “Mind Unknown.” We will never develop a truer conceptualization of the subconscious and unconscious if we only dance around it or consider it from the safe distance of the waking world. Why not let go of fear and interact with the dream (or realm of the subconscious) consciously?

Lucid dreamers have little support from a culture whose psychological theories and cultural views often suggest that the subconscious contains the repository of dark thoughts, repressed feelings, buried anxieties, and ancient antisocial instincts. They often must deal with just these beliefs as they approach lucid dreaming. As a result, they invariably experience unusual things as they attempt to “affirm” their place in the unconscious. As we will see, some lucid dreamers deal with their own doubts and fears (made manifest) as well as the interesting, surprising, and sometimes disturbing phenomena encountered in lucid dreaming. To be in the psychological space of the unconscious requires considerable affirmation of self in spite of numerous cultural conflicts.

### *Dream as Sacred Message*

The viewpoint that dreaming exists as a sacred message from inner portions of our being is pervasive. Any attempt to disturb the dream, to involve the (assumed tainted) ego with it, or bring conscious awareness into it should, according to this viewpoint, be deemed fundamentally profane and a violation of the sacred.

I, too, view dreaming as a profound and creative act that is essentially sacred. But does the sacred prefer I always approach it as a dreamer unawares? Does the sacred have no interest in interacting with me as an aware dreamer, an aware being? Or does the sacred prefer less awareness in its dealings? Rather it seems that the sacred would take joy in dealing with greater awareness, greater consciousness. Wouldn't the sacred appreciate the chance to inform, educate, and instruct at a more aware level?



Further, if we look at our dreams as sacred messages, how many of these sacred messages do we truly understand? For many people, remembering one dream a night seems quite an achievement, even as another four to six dreams slip by unremembered. Then, of the dreams recalled, how many can say they truly understand the sacred message in them? Does our interest in calling the dream sacred simply reflect our inability to understand it? By discouraging conscious interaction with the dream, we limit our ability to improve our understanding of it.

In the lucid dream in which I questioned the woman who announced herself as a discarded aspect of myself, would I have understood this dream if I had not been lucidly aware and able to question her? Would I have experienced new insights and new energy because of it? Only by consciously attending to an important element of the dream did I receive this new level of insight and energy.

### *Using Lucidity to Escape and to Avoid Personal Growth*

Finally, some observers raise a concern about dreamers using lucid awareness to escape or avoid a dream's message and, thus, the opportunity for personal growth the dream might otherwise provide. In some cases, this is true, since in a lucid dream we have the ability to choose and some dreamers do, indeed, choose to escape into an adventure. For example, a lucid dreamer may decide to ignore an angry dream figure and fly away instead, thereby avoiding the issue represented by the figure. More experienced lucid dreamers, however, would stop and engage the dream figure to find out more about the situation, as I did in this lucid dream (October 2004):

I am walking down a street at night in my childhood neighborhood. I look toward some houses on the right. Suddenly, a big black dog comes running toward me; in a funny way, I expect this. The dog appears menacing and dangerous, but somehow this strikes me as very odd, and I even seem to recognize the mean black dog. I think, "This is nothing. This is a dream." I begin to talk to the dog and firmly know there is nothing to fear. Purposefully, I project love onto it by saying compassionate words. Now, another dog appears. It's a dachshund, like we had when I was a child. Lucid, I begin to fly around the two dogs, who now both seem friendly and happy. Then I decide to take the dachshund flying. I swoop down very low and grab it. Feeling it in my hands, I begin to fly higher but wake up.

Lucid dreamers repeatedly find that when they project love, compassion, and care onto unfriendly dream figures, like the menacing black dog here, the love and concern transforms the image or introduces a new, positive dynamic—or in this case, a dachshund! By taking a direct approach in this dream, I was able to transform fear (represented by the black dog) into something benign, even lovable (represented by the dachshund, a fond memory from my childhood), and quite possibly resolved an emotional issue at the subconscious level.

I argue that though lucid dreams may occasionally lead to escaping issues, most lucid dreamers benefit from recalling more dreams than the average dreamer and, potentially, gain more conscious awareness of inner concerns. At any rate, even for experienced lucid dreamers, the number of non-lucid dreams—“untainted” by the dreamer’s interaction—far outnumbers lucid dreams. Most lucid dreamers would say that in less than ten percent of their dreams do they become lucid. In my experience, I recall about three dreams per night, or about ninety dreams each month. In an average month, I may have only three lucid dreams. Proportionally, more than ninety-six percent of my remembered dreams occur in the non-lucid form, and four percent or less in the lucid form. While at one time I recorded thirty lucid dreams in a month (in college) at my prime quantitatively, two to five lucid dreams per month seem the norm nowadays.

Like all dreamers, if we purposely ignore a dream message, it likely returns in another dream or some other form. All dreamers come to know that in the final analysis, lucid or not, there is no escape from the Self.

## LUCID DREAMERS WHO STILL BELIEVE IN CONTROL

Lucid dreamers, particularly beginners, can occasionally behave like “Conquistadors of Consciousness,” as thoughtful lucid dreamer and writer Ryan Hurd put it,<sup>5</sup> and proclaim dominion over a dreaming that they fail to understand or appreciate. I recall reading of a lucid dreamer who flew into a crowded room of dream figures and gleefully announced, “I am your god!” Oh brother, I thought.

Occasionally, lucid dreamers will come up to me after a talk and proclaim, “But I do control the dream! I fly. I make things appear. I

tell dream figures to disappear and they do. I really control the lucid dream!”

My response generally goes something like this: “If you control the dream, who made the grass green and the sky blue? Who created the new scene when you came around the corner or flew through a wall into a new room? Did you control all that new scenery and detail into being?” I also point out that if lucid dreamers control the lucid dream, they wouldn’t spend so much time trying to learn how to manipulate things. If they control the lucid dream, their lucid dreams wouldn’t suddenly collapse and end. Control suggests a fundamental dominance or authority over. By contrast, lucid dreamers show varying degrees of ability to manipulate themselves within the dreaming.

At this point, the lucid dreamer acknowledges that their “control” seems limited to directing their focus. They don’t “control” the color of the various items, the new vista when they fly over a hill, the items in the rooms they just entered, or necessarily the length of the lucid dream itself. Rather, they direct their focus within the larger dreaming around them. When unaware of these points, a lucid dreamer stumbles into the philosophical perspective of the lucid solipsist—one who believes that his or her waking self in the dream is the only reality.

Don Juan cautioned Castaneda that the presumption of control could become a major stumbling block along the path. Since the ego finds security in the feeling of control, it habitually occupies those areas deemed under its control. Any journey into one’s depth requires the flexibility and courage to accept a more profound reality and move outside of the area of the ego’s control.

When lucid dreamers focus upon what they don’t control, they then realize all the things happening without their conscious involvement and understand that they direct their focus but do not control the dream. No sailor controls the sea. No lucid dreamer controls the dream. Like sailors on the sea or lucid dreamers in the dream, we can only direct our focus within that environment, which begs the question: If the lucid dreamer does not create the scene or the objects in the room, what or who does? As we progress deeper into lucid dreaming, this question will become even more pressing.

In the meantime, let’s accept our ability to direct our focus within the conscious dream and investigate the mysteries of awareness.



# 18

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## THE UNIFIED SELF IN A CONNECTED UNIVERSE

BY ATTENDING TO OUR DREAMS, WE NATURALLY ATTEND TO OUR INNER life. Whether lucid or not, the nightly recognition of dreaming connects us to our inner psychological reality and subtly reminds us of the creativity, information, and life energy that lies deep within. Mindful of our dreams, we naturally assist in opening channels of communication between our waking self and our inner awareness.

As we develop our nightly listening skills, we begin to hear more clearly the daytime whispers of intuitions and impulses. Those quiet moments, when new thoughts and insights arise, remind us of our ever-present inner connection with a greater awareness. In letting go of our concerns, we more easily access a sense of natural grace and knowing.

Years ago, my wife and I joined a seven-day float trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. Within a day or two of being constantly in nature and totally out of touch with the world of work, meetings, phone calls, and national news, we felt ourselves readjust mentally and emotionally. Surrounded by nature, we became inwardly more natural, more alive, and more aware in each moment.

On the trip, I noticed that I had particularly interesting dreams and became lucid on two successive nights as I lay asleep outside on a tarp under the brilliant stars and moon. It felt good to be free of routine concerns and return to nature's simple rhythms.

On the fourth day in the Grand Canyon, the August sun blazed deep into the cliffs as our raft pulled to the rocky shore near Havasu Canyon—home of the famous, beautiful spring-fed waterfall and luscious, milky-blue creek waters. As we disembarked to explore, our guides told us to follow the trail across the rocks and up above the steep embankment alongside the creek for about a mile, and then the trail would drop down to the silky blue canyon water.

Watching our group scramble along the rock and wisp of a trail, I looked back to see my wife helping a woman, the oldest person in the group, negotiate the easiest route. There was no sense of hurry now. I hung back and helped my wife and the woman at various rocky points. Up ahead, the rest of the boat made quick progress along the trail.

Eventually, and with some effort, we helped the woman down the steep embankment of loose gravel and dirt to a quiet place in the creek where she could soak. “Aaahhh,” I murmured as we started to cross the swift, cool waters of the creek; this silky water has some mineral in it, which made for its smooth feel and soft white stone formations underwater. Finding a spot, we eased ourselves into the delicious coolness. I relaxed and closed my eyes. This was heaven in the August sun; I literally soaked it all in.

A few minutes later, I took a quick glance around. Most everyone had gone farther upstream, to the waterfall, perhaps. My wife and a couple of others relaxed twenty feet away in a quiet pool. I closed my eyes again. Feeling at peace and playful, I mentally said, “So Canyon, what do you have to say to me?” Immediately, I mentally heard a voice clearly state, “Get out while you still can.”

Now *that* was completely unexpected! I sat up and looked to see if I was hurting something, sitting on a plant or breaking a rock. Everything seemed fine. Still, I couldn’t deny that I had clearly heard something suggest otherwise.

I closed my eyes again, feeling assured that I was not hurting the canyon. More relaxed now, I decided to ask one more time, “So Canyon, what do you have to say to me?” This time it sounded even more urgent, “Get out while you still can!” Hearing those words a second time, I knew something was really wrong. I still didn’t know what, but the canyon knew.

Pulling myself out of the water, I called to my wife, “We have to go.” Lazily, she asked why. “I don’t know,” I said, “but something’s wrong.”

Moments later, I looked to the sky and there, beyond the west canyon wall, I could see the dark front edge of a massive thunderhead coming into view. “Look over there,” I pointed, “it’s a thunderstorm headed this way. There’s going to be a flash flood.”

My wife’s first concern was the elderly woman. “We’ve got to get her out of here,” she said. We roused the others from their quiet relaxation in the stream and told them of the approaching storm. Together, we helped the elderly woman up the steep embankment and onto the trail above the creek bank. By then, the crew from the boat appeared, running up the trail, yelling, “Get out! Get back to the boat! A storm’s coming. Hurry!”

Everyone made it back to the boat just as the heavens opened up with a thunderous downpour. As we pushed off into the river looking for a ledge to moor beneath and escape the torrent of rain, I thanked the canyon for letting us get out “while we still could,” knowing that in moments a flash flood would be racing through Havasu Canyon.

## THE FORCE OF AWARENESS

Jung recognized that each person’s inner awareness can influence the conscious thought process. “So,” he wrote, “by means of dreams (plus all sorts of intuitions, impulses and other spontaneous events), instinctive forces influence the activity of consciousness.”<sup>1</sup> Not only dreams of the night, Jung noted, but also the intuitions, impulses, and other spontaneous events of each day appear to arise from this same deep, inner source. He qualifies his point, however. To hear from the unconscious clearly, he maintained, you must deal with any repressed or distorted aspects in your own consciousness. Otherwise, you will simply distort the inner communications with your personal overlay of repressed and distorted material. By consistently working with dreams, these personal fears and issues often become evident, moving us closer to acceptance and resolution as they loosen their distorting influence.

Much of the clarity of inner communication relates to the clarity within our own minds and our simple ability to listen. Since the information comes *through* our mental processes, we need to consider the contents of our minds. While Jung highlights repressed information as a major distorting aspect, I also feel that personally held limiting or erroneous beliefs and expectations serve to distort or inhibit information.

As I lay in the cool waters of Havasu Creek and playfully asked the canyon a question, I did so because I had taken seriously the idea announced to me in a lucid dream—that everything is sacred, conscious, and alive. I had come to believe that we all exist within an aware universe. Each item and each space is conscious and alive.

Though many believe that each individual possesses a conscious and an unconscious, with possibly a subconscious buffering between the two, it seems we also possess an intra-conscious function that goes beyond or transcends our private conscious awareness. Our intra-conscious connects us to the larger field of awareness beyond our waking selves. But if we don't believe in that possibility, or see no purpose in focusing inwardly for information, we will rarely experience this intra-conscious awareness.

In the language and terms of psychology, we are taught a presumption of isolated awareness in which our conscious, unconscious, and subconscious exist within our self alone. By virtue of that belief and teaching, the instances of telepathy, clairvoyance, intuition, and synchronicity seem inherently suspect, since these suggest a connectedness of awareness or intra-consciousness. Though Jung's view of the collective unconscious suggests common features within the individual's psyche, it falls short of suggesting an active connected awareness at an unconscious level—something I believe lucid dreaming provides evidence of.

In my first twenty years of lucid dreaming, as I came to seek an ultimate or base reality beyond symbols and appearance, beyond dreaming and lucid dreaming, something deep within allowed the awareness that enlivens me to experience the “clear light” of pure awareness (as described in chapter 7). After exiting that experience, I knew that each dot of awareness, each speck of aware light, existed equally with all others and equally connected to all others. The awareness of the collective could be accessed in the awareness of the tiniest speck.

From that moment, I sensed that behind all appearances an unparalleled, profound connection exists at a deep, deep level. Beneath each experience lies a connectedness. Behind each life, each object, each action, an awareness exists joined to all other life, objects, and actions. The inner working of all this awareness spills out into a reality formed and experienced and connects all in a massive symphony of individual creativity and fulfillment.

In certain moments, if you allow it, you can sense that the world around you is deeply interconnected: the sound of this bird is connected



to a neighbor opening his door, the wind rustling the leaves announces the car appearing around the corner, your brief sudden thought of a friend lies in synchronicity with an action hundreds of miles away. The thought, the wind, the car, the bird, all connect at some deeper level where awareness resides, intersects, creates, and fulfills. Behind all appearances lies the movement of awareness.

The great Oglala Lakota Sioux medicine man and visionary, Black Elk, said:

The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan-Tanka, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us. This is the real peace, and the others are but reflections of this. The second peace is that which is made between two individuals, and the third is that which is made between two nations. But above all you should understand that there can never be peace between nations until there is first known that true peace, which, as I have often said, is within the souls of men.<sup>2</sup>

## PLAYING WITH THE CONNECTED UNIVERSE

Throughout this book, the examples of lucid dreamers who consciously sought out telepathic and clairvoyant information, assisted in the healing of others, and interacted within mutual lucid dreams, have pointed out the existence of an inner connectedness. As we enter into a deeper exploration of the so-called unconscious through techniques such as lucid dreaming, we will need to redefine many of our concepts about the nature of conscious awareness, developing new terms to express our discoveries. Granting each person a connected or intra-conscious awareness may be one of these developments.

Regardless of the term—unconscious, subconscious, or intra-conscious—the ability to explore inner aspects of awareness requires each individual to develop greater flexibility and reduce distorting personal influences. In lucid dreaming, we see how our experience largely follows our beliefs, expectation, and focus and how these factors create and influence the perception that we then perceive. As we venture inward, we must work through the constraints of the self as we seek to fathom the larger Self and the framework in which this larger Self naturally exists.

Our larger connectedness often appears most clearly when we learn to let go, refocus inward, and allow the sensing of inner experience. In our normal nightly dreams, we do this reactively; in lucid dreaming, however, we are provided an open gateway to experience deliberately and thoughtfully the waking self's connection to inner awareness. Through experimenting with lucid dreaming, we have an opportunity to see for ourselves the larger relationship that surrounds us—the inner Self in a connected universe.

Invariably, connections allow for possible influence in both directions. As I grew more certain that the so-called unconscious was actually very much conscious, alive, and listening, I began to play with this idea. One night, as a test, I announced to the inner Self that I no longer wished to experience dream imagery and symbols; I wanted only to remember the message of the dream. Curious about what might happen, I prepared for sleep and placed a pen on my dream journal. When I woke in the middle of the night, I found myself completely incapable of recalling a dream plot or images or symbols—I had only clear messages reverberating in my mind. They were like pithy statements from some esoteric text. I once received the message, “The One connects to the All,” for example. And sometimes, the messages were much more mundane, reflecting concerns about a family member or friend. Once, the message involved a friend's concern for her daughter, for instance. As for dream imagery, nothing appeared; the maya-making projectionist had been asked to go away.

After about two weeks of waking with messages of the dream but no recall of dream imagery, I deeply missed the drama of dreaming. I felt nostalgic for the curious plots and interesting dream figures, the sudden juxtaposition of forgotten friends with new locales, the spectacular visual nature of never-before-seen creations. I missed the panorama of activated ideas and emotions vividly projected onto the theater of my mind. So, tired of pithy messages that now seemed as dry as dust, I asked my inner Self to resume the beautiful, engaging, and mysterious dream stories; immediately, the dreams resumed, reminding me, again, that the unconscious is always listening and responsive. Whether realized or not, we have a connected relationship with the conscious unconscious that goes both ways. When we believe this, individually and collectively, when we learn to speak and to listen to our inner awareness and its broader connectedness, we will begin to reap the benefits of our relationship with the conscious unconscious.

Perhaps, in emulating the conscious unconscious, our goal should be that as we engage the world, a portion of our self will remain listening. Whether chopping wood or carrying water, whether signing business documents or comforting a child, some part of us is allowed to listen to the inner awareness, to stay connected to the active unknown. One purpose of dreams may be to perform this important function at least once each day and thus keep us from becoming totally out of touch with our inner aware Self.

While falling asleep one night, I reminded myself that I needed to write an article for the next *Lucid Dream Exchange*. As sometimes happens when we fall asleep thinking of lucid dreams, I had the following lucid dream (February 2006):

I talk to a friend at IASD and ask him about being busy and various projects. He responds about the amount of work and correspondence.

As I walk away through a cafeteria-type setting, a tall man dressed in regal clothing (as if from another century or perhaps a religious order) comes from my left and asks me a question, “What book do you have in your hand?”

I realize that I’m carrying a book and pull it up to look at the title. Seeing it clearly, I tell him, “It’s *Dreams: God’s Forgotten Language* by John Sanford.” With that, I know I own the book but have never read it. That’s odd. Suddenly I become aware that I am dreaming.

I fly off, feeling ecstatic, and shout (something like), “I send out one hundred pieces of love to others!”

Upon waking, I went to my bookshelf and pulled out my unread copy of *Dreams: God’s Forgotten Language*. (I later learned that the author had passed away a few months before this lucid dream.) John Sanford, an Episcopal priest and Jungian analyst, suggests listening to dreams and the psyche or larger Self to help us through life’s trials. Using examples of dream work in his pastoral counseling, Sanford shows the creative power of dreaming as it points out resolutions to conflicts, suggests areas of individual growth and freedom, and provides information beyond normal space and time. Repeatedly, he shows the inspired and directive aspect of dreaming and wonders (as dreamers often do) at the power and intent of dreaming’s source.

Of particular interest to dreamers is Sanford’s reflection on dreaming’s ability to show us our totality as humans—not only the brightest but also the darkest aspects of our being. He exposes our personal and cultural inclination to focus exclusively on the bright and good and

positive while refusing to acknowledge darker and troubling portions of our own experience. Dreams, Sanford suggests, encourage us to acknowledge all aspects of our being and come into greater awareness of the seeming dark and light. By doing so, we improve our ability to hear clearly and not distort inner information.

In his final chapter, “The God Within,” Sanford concludes:

We are not only conscious; we are also unconscious. Unconscious psychic reality is as real and substantial as is our conscious life. It expresses its reality in a hundred ways, one of which is the dream. The center of our conscious life is the ego, the center of our total psyche is the self, which seeks to express through our consciousness the totality of our nature. The experience of the totality of our nature is not *just* a psychological experience, but also a religious one in the sense that it connects us with a meaning and purpose beyond our egos. Our dreams serve our psychic totality, and seek to bring the ego into relationship with the psychic center in order that our totality may be consciously known and lived.<sup>3</sup>

At its best, lucid dreaming offers the potential to use our conscious awareness within the dream state to explore and more actively “bring the ego into relationship with the psychic center.” When lucid dreamers understand that something exists behind the dream, they can begin to engage the awareness that “connects us with a meaning and purpose beyond our egos,” as Sanford suggests. Unfortunately, he points out, we often unthinkingly adopt cultural beliefs and expectations that can condition us to avoid engaging dreams and our inner realm. “Collective thinking consists of all those attitudes and prejudices we acquire from our parents, compatriots, teachers, and our present overly intellectual and material culture,” Sanford writes. “It throttles our individuality and prevents us from hearing the creative voice within. . . . Nowhere is collective thinking more conspicuous than in the way it causes us to ignore, or distort, the meaning of our dreams.”<sup>4</sup> To value and truly understand dreaming’s significance, then, we have to uproot internalized, limiting cultural beliefs about dreaming.

When the regal-looking dream figure asked, “What book do you have in your hand?” he called to my attention not only an unread book on my bookshelf but another example of the vibrantly aware realm of the unconscious. In that moment, my dreaming self achieved lucid awareness, but even more important, my waking ego self experienced another instance of an apparently thoughtful, engaged, and constructive inner awareness.

If we could adopt Sanford's belief that all dreams "bring the ego into relationship with the psychic center," we could see that we possess a purposeful and unified Self. In a unified Self, there may be challenges and concerns to address, but underlying it all exists a constructive intent. Within a unified Self, we may symbolically meet our deepest fears, but we do so knowing that it leads to our greater fulfillment as we strive to grow beyond those self-adopted limitations.

When the waking ego learns of the constructive intent of inner portions of itself, it sees clearly that it lives as one portion of a unified Self. With that awareness, the waking ego can begin to let down its defenses, recognize its inner support, and accept its connection to a broader state of being. Recognizing the unified Self, the waking ego can hear more clearly the naturally constructive intuitions, impulses, and dreams as suggestions for personal growth, healing, and wholeness.

## AN OUTLINE OF THE CONNECTED UNIVERSE

As I have endeavored to illustrate throughout this book, the waking ego, the waking self, seems only a small portion of the totality of conscious and unconscious awareness. How can something with such a small and limited perspective understand the greater psychological reality in which it has its being? So too, how can the waking ego or waking self be the creator of the vast reality of our inner life? Even Freud concluded, "The Unconscious is the greater sphere that includes the smaller sphere of the Conscious. . . . The Unconscious is the true reality of the psyche, its inner nature just as unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and just as imperfectly revealed by the data of consciousness as the external world is by the information received from our sensory organs."<sup>5</sup> How, then, can our waking self ever expect to understand this more expansive "true reality" in which our psyche resides? I believe lucid dreaming provides one path to understanding because it has the capacity to show 1) the existence of an inner awareness, 2) the truer nature of the dream environment, 3) a hidden reservoir of unconscious information, and 4) the underlying source of awareness.

### *1. The Existence of an Inner Awareness*

Through conscious dream explorations, we can experiment with the so-called conscious and unconscious frameworks; finally begin to perceive the inner awareness there; and understand its intent, purposefulness,

and relation to the waking self. I believe science will confirm that once the lucid dreamer escapes the subconscious atmosphere of overt personal desires and fears and directs his or her attention to the nonvisible awareness behind the dream, the waking self will be shown to interconnect with an inner awareness. These interactions will show a responsive, helpful, constructive, even protective awareness and overturn many traditional assumptions about the nature of the unconscious.

This inner awareness or inner Self likely represents, as Jung supposed, the “ego” of an inner “psychic system.” The experiences of lucid dreamers so far indicate that the inner Self’s purpose or direction appears to be instructive, supportive, or educational. It does not seem intent on dominating or usurping the lucid dreamer’s awareness; rather, it appears to support its further development.

The recognition of a second psychic system or inner realm with an accompanying director or inner Self is, as Jung stated, “of revolutionary significance.” It naturally calls for a reconsideration of the nature of the waking self, its meaning and purpose, and for a further investigation of the inner Self and its relationship with the waking self. Like the Copernican revolution, the existence of an inner Self inherently reorders the place of the waking self in relation to the larger psyche and its doings.

Realizing that we possess a conscious unconscious seems the first step in developing a relationship with the largest portion of our psyche. Throughout this book, various lucid dream examples suggest the means for talented lucid dreamers to discover this for themselves.

Like all natural systems, when viewed from a larger perspective, the system of the Self seems best described as unified and naturally harmonious. I held this belief through innumerable unique lucid experiences, and like a mathematician who can sense infinity without ever having experienced the totality of it, I sensed and came to believe in a unified Self within a connected universe, far beyond my knowing. The trust and belief in a unified Self allowed me to let go and, in letting go, become more than I had been.

## 2. *The Truer Nature of the Dream Environment*

From the repeated experiences of lucid dreamers, the dream environment responds to and operates under common principles across dreamers. It does not seem *innately* primitive, chaotic, or irrational; instead, it normally reflects in part the qualities, concerns, and attributes of the

dreamer (which, of course, may be primitive, instinctual, repressed, and so on). As a principled realm, dreaming naturally exists as an orderly mental space with many common features. Since we largely don't comprehend the principles and have mischaracterized the environment of dreaming as innately chaotic, we routinely fail to see the orderliness and principled nature of the dream realm. Experienced lucid dreamers, by contrast, learn of its principled and orderly nature as they consciously interact with the dream environment.

The dream environment appears to exist as a mental framework in which lucid dreamers consciously engage various types of their own mental and emotional representations along with other portions of the Self. The dream realm and dreaming, therefore, facilitates these interactions and partially serves as an exchange of information between layers of the Self and the awareness of the waking self. Dreaming also exists as a meeting ground between waking awareness, other portions of the Self, and additional unconscious information from other sources.

Though information and concerns may be exchanged and reacted to in the dream state (accompanied by various emotional and ideational reactions by the dreamer), the information, emotions, and reactions are not characteristics of the dream environment any more than an argument in your car is a characteristic of your car. A more thoughtful consideration of the dream space would show it as a largely neutral environment, constructively disposed to assisting the waking self and larger Self. By considering it thusly, we move away from attributing the events of the dream to a native aspect of the dream realm or a native aspect of the unconscious—and finally begin to observe the dream environment as it exists, apart from the action that occurs there.

Conscious in the dream state, most any lucid dreamer can see the reality creating principles of belief, expectation, focus, intent, and will. Additionally, most lucid dreamers can see the X—or the unknown Inner—involved in various aspects of the lucid dream's creation. Both lucid dreaming and dreaming exist as cocreated products involving more than the waking self's emotions or mentations.

### *3. A Hidden Reservoir of Unconscious Information*

Lucid dreamers discover that a natural part of the aware unconscious appears to connect to a layer of accessible information outside of the realm or creation of the waking conscious. In many reported lucid dream experiences, this accessible information goes beyond mundane

observations about the dream or dreamer to profound information, experiences, concepts, and ideas. Moreover, it appears that this layer of information supports the historic belief that forward-looking, clairvoyant, and telepathic information is occasionally accessed in the dream state. Already, lucid dreamers have reported success at receiving this type of nonlocal information, which indicates a new means to investigate scientifically the apparent nonlocal abilities of consciousness to obtain unknown but verifiable information.

Because lucid dreamers have discovered that requests for accessible information have been denied, either due to the errant nature of the request or the abilities of the lucid dreamer to handle the receipt of conceptual information, some limitations exist (beyond the lucid dreamer's level of expertise and clarity). Undoubtedly, lucid dreamers' ability to access unconscious information deserves further investigation. Though not without challenges in procuring and accurately reporting, the presence of an unconscious layer of information has the potential for a major reconsideration of the appearance of certain types of knowledge and the nature of the mind.

#### *4. The Underlying Source of Awareness*

Beyond the symbols, beyond the figures, beyond all appearances, beyond the dream, lies a realm of pure awareness. Through this base reality, one senses the structural unity of awareness. Though reflected outward in billions of manifest forms and activities and individual awarenesses, underneath, all are enlivened by the same light, the light of awareness.

While apparently apart from others and apparently separate from objects, nature, and space, this awareness connects us at a deeper level. In lucid dreaming, we can consciously access this knowing and begin to demonstrate the existence of this profoundly connected realm. Its truest expression occurs when we go beyond lucid dreaming, inwardly through our own mind beyond the materializations and symbolic representations and beyond the conceptualizations of self, letting go and returning to experience our animating essence, pure awareness.

## **THE ENORMOUS BEAUTY**

Much of what I have presented in this book may seem almost unimaginable, but the paradox of lucid dreaming—being conscious in the



unconscious—provides each person a tool to explore and experiment for themselves. Your own experience can offer you the proof you seek. As you make your way—if you allow yourself—you will likely find that your own intent, your own deep wonder, naturally creates your path and helps draw the necessary experience to you. In lucid dreams like this one, you find the portions of the self joining together to assist, and you realize the inner support available to you on your journey (December 1999):

On a neighborhood street, I seem to be playing and talking with some adults and kids. The kids really like me and possibly call me Uncle. It's a very friendly group—maybe twenty people total.

Someone keeps doing something repeatedly, like playing a song, over and over. Finally, I realize the oddness of this and become lucidly aware. Then I notice—everyone was waiting for me to become lucid! In particular, there are three dream figures—one is a tall blonde guy and the other two are shorter with dark hair—and as they recognize that I am lucid, they appear very pleased that I have made the mental shift. We all hug and then perform a spontaneous chant, like a team.

I feel very happy to see them. Part of me thinks, “This is a mutual lucid dream—the four of us are all lucid.” There are a lot of jokes and verbal exchanges. They even joke with me about getting me to this lucid state. Then suddenly I recall a similar dream in which I did not become lucid—my god, these dream figures had tried this before! We talk some more and I look around, noticing the details and people.

To our left stand three Asian women dressed in traditional garments. They have box hats, veils, and outfits composed of gauzy, silky fabrics—one woman primarily dressed in ivory, one in light orange, and one in light blue. The one in ivory has an instrument and begins to play a beautiful piece. I jump up and say, “This is incredible!” Looking around, I find my dream journal and start to sketch her profile. I look down at my drawing and then up at her, again and again, working on this sketch. It's filling in nicely except for the mouth. I tell everyone, “This is simply wonderful—the whole thing!”

I remind myself every now and then that this is a lucid dream and start to think that it is becoming fairly long. We applaud these Asian women when they finish, and people get up. . . . A man has a guitar and starts singing songs. They sound like familiar tunes but the lyrics are new and funny. I try to write them down in the dream journal. . . . He performs another song. Everyone laughs.

At this point, I truly become overwhelmed by the beauty and love in this lucid dream. I stand up and everyone looks my way. I say, “When I awake in physical reality as Robert Waggoner born on

January 28 in Kansas, sometimes the cold and snow of physical reality can get me down. But when I am here in this reality”—my voice starts to get emotional—“I am overwhelmed by the Enormous Beauty of this World.”

Suddenly, I feel all of their love reflected back to me and start to get even more emotional. As the wave of emotion builds, something “clicks” and I realize that I’m half out of the lucid dream. I consider struggling to get my complete awareness back in while I still have the visuals but I feel like I should end it and write it down, so I decide to wake.

This book is the result of the “enormous beauty” of the unconscious, the mental space of dreams, and the hidden, yet ever supportive, psyche. This lucid dreaming path, with its fantastic creativity, deep lessons, profound compassion, and awareness, has touched me greatly and encouraged me to give it voice.

I hope to activate your personal curiosity, your own exploration of lucid dreaming, so that you can discover your own answers, beauty, and wonder. By becoming more consciously aware in the dream state, we begin to recognize our wholeness and the broader dimensions of Self. Aware in the dream state, we as a people and a culture have access to a more informed psychological viewpoint reflective of this wholeness. Lucid dreaming allows us another means to achieve the ancient imperative, “Know Thyself.”

May this book touch you and inform you as you strive knowingly or unknowingly toward your greater wholeness. I wish you well on your journey.

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