

Waking Up Without Waking Up

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The ending of lucidity may or may not mark the end of the dream. In general you would find that lucidity ends in one of the following ways;

1. The dreamer remains lucid until the end of the dream.
2. The dreamer loses lucidity during the dream.
3. The dreamer has a false awakening.

In the first category, the dreamer accurately senses moving from the dream world into waking reality. These dreams have the potential to have lengthy lucid periods, depending on when lucidity is realized within the dream.

In the second category, the dreamer forgets that it is a dream somewhere along the line. The non-lucid part of the dream can go on for as long as several minutes after lucidity is lost. The lucid portion of the dream may not be remembered until the dreamer wakes, if they remember it at all.

In the third category, the dreamer incorrectly believes they are moving from the dream world to waking reality. In these cases the dreamer frequently will remember the lucid part of the dream while still asleep, often in very good detail, believing that they have now awakened from it. They may even tell other dream characters about the lucid dream that they just "woke up" from.

The biggest problem I see in categorizing dreams of false awakening is the term itself. The word false implies that there is something fake, incorrect, or unintentional. I have come to believe that these kinds of dreams/awakenings are quite real, natural, and by design. All parts of the dream have a role to play, and the feeling of waking up - whether or not we actually do - is serving that role and has something to teach us.

Upon the "awakening," you may find yourself having a conversation with other dream characters about the dream, or you may find yourself "waking up" someplace other than in your bedroom. Is that an accident, or does the creator of the dream want you to consider the dream from the perspective in which you then find yourself? How would the teenage version of you, whose body you "awaken" into, view the lucid dream that you just had? If you "wake up" on Mt. Everest, would this perspective create a different view of the lucid dream than if you woke up in your bed in the suburbs of Chicago?

Let's examine the following lucid dream with false awakening.

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Swinging through the trees on my bike

... I am now on foot walking on a narrow dirt path up a hill. As I walk, on a sidewalk maybe, I question if this is a dream. I then realize that it is a dream and I become quite lucid. I am now on a bike and I see a street coming up in front of me and slightly to my left. The road has a slight decline. I decide that I'll ride to the road, but not go down as the road declines. I'll remain in the air instead. I'm a bit nervous as I do this, but also confident. I ride over the hill and as the road declines I remain in the air and fly on my bike. I see a tree in golden light, as though the sun is setting, though the leaves themselves also look golden. I have some trouble going too high, but I have no trouble keeping myself at this level. I begin to swing back and forth, though there is nothing suspending me. As I swing back and forth, I go in and out of trees. Some have golden leaves and others have green leaves. I then have a false awakening. As I believe I wake up, I am in my teenage bed. I want to write this dream down. I get up and go to my desk, which is the desk I had as a teenager in the room I had at the time. I bring a pad and paper back to bed and begin to write down the dream, including the part about swinging through the trees. I then hear a local radio sportscaster talking about the dream as though it had been made into a film. I see it as he's talking about it. He describes how they had ropes between the trees to swing the bike between them. A camera was on the bike to

capture this scene. I see people building a large wheel made of mesh on the outside, large enough for people to stand in. They are putting stuff over the mesh, like some sort of plaster or concrete. From inside this suspended wheel, they did additional filming.

If I had awakened (by the generally accepted definition) after the flying bike scene, I would have found myself lying down in my bed as an adult with my wife next to me. Instead, I found myself in my teenage room listening to a sportscaster do the play-by-play of my lucid dream. All the while I am able to see the "making of the dream" by characters behind the scene. This "false awakening" created perspectives of viewing the lucid dream in ways that would not otherwise have likely occurred naturally. For one, I am viewing the dream from the perspective of my mind as it was as a teenager. This could give me a hint that the true meaning of this dream has roots that go back many years. Or, perhaps a more youthful aspect of me needs help waking up. If you want to delve into even more mystical possibilities, perhaps the teenage version of me is still alive and actively living his life and this dream was his to begin with.

A similar anomaly to false awakenings is mistimed awakenings, for lack of a better term. I am referring here to a dream in which you awaken at a seemingly bad time, such as just before you find out how the story ends. This, too, I believe is also often done by design. During this past month I had a dream in which a wise older woman came up to me and wanted me to tell her how she could use her dreams to get answers to her questions. I knew that there were two ways, dream incubation and lucid dreams. I wanted to explain dream incubation before I moved on to lucid dreams. Just as I was finishing discussing dream incubation and was about to begin talking about lucid dreams, my alarm went off.

It may seem as though the alarm was nothing more than bad luck. However, just a few days prior I had a dream in which I stepped into an elevator and saw the number 630. I didn't want to push that button, so instead I pushed the 6, then 3, and then 0 buttons. Just as I hit zero my alarm went off - precisely at 6:30. I was amazed at just how accurate my internal clock was. Having had that dream so recently, I felt as though my internal clock was working just as well when the alarm went off just as I was about to discuss lucid dreams. Although I was disappointed that I seemingly lost a good opportunity to potentially have a lucid dream, it again felt by design. As it turns out, the following night I did have a lucid dream. Maybe that was also by design.

My recommendation is not to be frustrated with false awakenings, but instead to use them constructively to find further meaning in the overall dream. If you accept that false awakenings have a purpose, then it could be that lucidity (or the ending of) also has a purpose. False awakenings at their core beg the question, "Who is doing the dreaming anyway?"