

Lucidly Aware, but Mentally Trapped? Escaping Conceptual Boundaries

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The movement from dreaming to lucid dreaming involves a shift in awareness; we realize ‘This is a dream!’ Suddenly, a portion of the waking self’s awareness engages the unconscious realm of dreams. But what then? Aware in this new realm, we often overlay an invisible structure of beliefs, expectations and ideas upon it. Instead of relating to the actual unconscious and its potential, we instinctively establish and engage the invisible structure of our belief system. Without even realizing it, lucid dreamers act like a bird encircled by its own concepts, its own mind-cage, and fails to see the unlimited space there, or the open door.

I was reminded of this a few months ago, when I posted a simple question in the ‘advanced’ section of a lucid dreaming forum. I asked if anyone had used lucid dreaming to heal a physical problem? The first month, no one responded, even though the counter showed a couple hundred people had read this simple post. I assumed that the lucid dreamers at this (largely European) forum had no lucid dream healing experiences to share.

Then, something surprising happened. One lucid dreamer replied with a possible lucid healing experience, whereupon numerous lucid dreamers emerged to challenge the idea! They expressed deep doubts that a lucid dreamer could influence the healing of any physical ailment, except perhaps emotionally related issues. They wanted scientific proof before even considering such a ‘radical’ idea.

Of course, some experienced lucid dreamers have sought physical healing, while consciously aware in the dream state, and achieved considerable success with a rapid disappearance of symptoms. Ed Kellogg, Ph.D. has personally investigated lucid dream healing and written a number of papers on it (visit http://dreamtalk.hypermart.net/member/files/ed_kellogg.html). In my book, *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self*, I have a chapter on “Healing in Lucid Dreams” showing approximately a dozen apparently successful lucid healings and a few unsuccessful attempts.

This idea is not new. In 1985, Stephen LaBerge wrote in *Lucid Dreaming*: “The fact that our laboratory studies have revealed a high correlation between dream behavior and physiological responses presents a rare opportunity for developing an unusual degree of self-control of physiology that might prove useful for self-healing.” Later, Patricia Garfield agreed with this idea, citing some actual lucid healing experiences in *The Healing Power of Dreams* (1992). She concludes, “The potential for healing in lucid dreams is enormous.”

The forum’s debate about the idea of lucid dream healing demonstrates that lucid dreaming’s potential seems largely constrained by the lucid dreamer’s own conceptual boundaries. As long as the concept of healing one’s self in a lucid dream seems radical or impossible, it becomes so in one’s experience. But as soon as a lucid dreamer opens to the concept positively, something truly revolutionary happens: the previously impossible becomes possible. At that point of conceptual expansion, new events are allowed and healings occur.

This small issue relates to a much larger one; namely, to achieve the real potential of lucid dreaming requires revolutionary conceptual openness. Without that revolutionary conceptual

openness, the lucid dreamer merely contends with the unexamined limits of his or her conceptual boundaries.

Like an invisible fence, each lucid dreamer's belief system and courage begin to define the boundaries of their lucid explorations. To a large degree, we only explore to the extent that we feel comfortable; otherwise our fears constrain our unconscious explorations. Similarly, we only explore that which we believe exists or conceptually accept; there seems no need to explore what we have pre-determined to be impossible.

Thankfully, the larger awareness, which we encounter in some lucid dreams, beckons lucid dreamers to re-conceive the dream realm, and open their minds to being even more adventurous. However, an inflexible mind can ignore these hints and suggestions, and persist in old patterns of belief. I know in my case, it took years and years of odd behavior from dream figures before I granted some the capacity for 'independent agency.' Since I was steeped in the cultural belief that 'all dream figures' exist as a product of my mind, I could not accept conscious dream figures having their own independent agenda and ignored the evidence for that, since it conflicted with my beliefs at the time.

The quickest resolution lies in surrendering to the lucid dream state, letting go of limiting concepts and accepting the unconscious as a mystery. To do this requires the capacity to allow 'not-knowing,' where you actively offer yourself the freedom of infinite wonder.

With each lucid surrendering, the conceptual boundaries begin to expand and the mind grows. At some point, you realize that concepts act as a hindrance to unconscious experience and distort its truest expression.

As you wrestle with emotions that arise and the fears of what conceptual freedom might mean, you begin to untie the knots of self limitations. As these self expressions unravel, you feel the lucidity of unencumbered awareness.

Lucid dreaming allows us many freedoms, including the freedom to test our beliefs and assumptions. Let go and allow the larger Awareness beyond lucidity to express the real mystery.