

# Institute for Dream Studies

  
*Providing educational and training opportunities in  
dreams, dreamwork and dream group leadership....*

Questions from and responses to inquiring students – Prepared by Betsy Grund, MEd, CDP, Graduate of Institute for Dream Studies' Certification Program.

1) What do you think the reason is that we have dreams?

I think that humans and other beings dream as part of the process of evolution. It is a common notion among those who revere dreams that all of existence was dreamed before it was manifest in reality.

There is extensive documentation giving evidence of important scientific, artistic, and practical inventions inspired by dreams. The Periodic Table of Elements, the melody of the song "Yesterday", and the invention of the sewing machine are examples. Those are famous examples of widely known human inventions that have influenced human evolution in important ways, and there are many, many more such examples.

On a personal scale, there are lots of reasons why dreaming is important and a whole spectrum of approaches for thinking about it. You can start with a scientific approach, which shows that our brains are able to reorganize information and rest in ways not possible during wakeful time. (See # 2 below.)

You can also look at the other end of the spectrum where religious approaches to dreaming are numerous! Every major religion has plenty to say about the value of dreams for guidance on personal and community affairs.

Psychology is somewhere in the middle of the spectrum - one thing that psychological approaches tell us is that our dreams are bringing us information about ourselves and our lives that is important for us to know (at the time of the dream and at other times when we remember it). It is widely accepted that dreams help us to move forward in our healthy development as people. We have different "developmental tasks" at different times in our lives and the dreams help us grow so we can accomplish the tasks.

2) How does the human brain create dreams in our minds while we sleep?

As I indicated above, it is hard to explain all of the benefits dreams offer us if we only consider scientific approaches. But the short answer is that when we sleep, our right brain (creative, emotional, irrational, "being" oriented) is active and our left brain (analytical, verbal, logical, relates to time/space, "doing" oriented) is quiet. The right brain "pulls" information from our memories and all the other inputs from our life experiences and combines them in a way that gives us an experience called a dream. That experience helps us to be oriented in a healthy way when we wake up. Science tells us that everyone dreams every night - (even animals!). If a person is deprived of REM sleep for even a few days, they become confused and irritable and if deprived longer one can become psychotic, suffering hallucinations, etc.

There is a lot of evidence showing that we have access to a wide variety of types of

information (precognitive, prodromal, etc.) during different states of consciousness, including dreaming. I personally believe (and there is much evidence supporting my belief) that dreams help us access information not easily available with our other senses. (See Carl G. Jung, concept of "Collective unconscious" - part of his theory of structure of the Psyche (meaning soul).

Think of it like an iceberg: Waking Consciousness (like tip of the iceberg), Personal Unconscious (the part in the water), Collective Unconscious (the ocean of energy we all are part of).

3) Do you believe that dreams are our subconscious mind telling us things? Yes! (See above.) And in addition, they can contain information from the Collective Unconscious as well.

4. Do people have dreams that change their lives?

Yes, absolutely - check out a book *Dreams That Change Our Lives* edited by Bob Hoss and *Transforming Dreams* by Kelly Bulkeley.

Most people have at least a few dreams that they always remember because the experience was so powerful. Carl Jung (a famous Swiss psychologist and doctor) called these "big dreams". Most dreams change our lives in at least a small way (like by cheering us up or reminding us of something important we have to do) and my experience has been that many of them have messages for us that can help us with our relationships, creativity and health (mental and physical). Check out *Wake Up to Your Dreams: Transform Your Relationships, Career and Health While You Sleep* by Justina Lasley.

5. Do you think that dreams are just memories of that day or week?

Most dreams do have an element of "day residue" because that is what is "handy" for our brains to use - however, if you work with a dream and the images, you usually find that there is a symbolic meaning attached to whatever the image is in the dream, in addition to the fact that it is a part of daily experience.

6. Why do you remember some dreams but not others?

We dream at all levels of sleep (REM sleep and deeper and shallower ones). Because the dreams are created when the right side of the brain is active (that's the creative, emotional side), the dream images can be very hard to put into words (that is a left brain function - verbal, logical, chronological time).

7. Why do you think we have nightmares?

We have Nightmares because something very important needs to be resolved or experienced, and if a dream is scary, we are more likely to remember it.

A. Sometimes a nightmare provides a way for the dreamer to experience something scary and ends up helping them to prepare for a waking event that causes the same kind of fear.

B. Sometimes, dreams carry warnings so we can take action to keep ourselves safe. For instance, there is a lot of research right now regarding women who have had dreams warning of breast cancer – sometimes the dream will show exactly where the tumor is and what size. It is amazing what information our bodies know, but information of which we and our doctors (and their diagnostic machines) are unaware. That this information is often communicated to us in our dreams is one excellent motivation for remembering and recording dreams!

Check out the chapter “Dreams That Physically Heal” by Justina Lasley in the book *Dreams That Can Change Our Lives*.

8. What do you think is the connection between psychology and dreams?

Dreams are a topic within the discipline Psychology (and many other disciplines as well, such as Religion/spirituality/metaphysics, Arts/creativity, Medicine, Language/Literature, Philosophy, Anthropology/Sociology, education/learning, and probably others).

I think dreams are an important topic in psychology because dreams reflect aspects of individual personality/life events, interpersonal relationships, and transpersonal phenomena (like spirituality). Dreams are a psychological phenomenon which contributes to an individual's healthy development and ability to adapt and function - this is true, whether the individual is aware of/remembers dreams or not. When the individual is aware of/remembers and works with their dreams, there can be enormous benefits for improving psychological healing and development.

8. In your expertise have you experienced dreams foretelling the future? Yes, the phenomena of dreams "coming true" is common and documented. They are most often called Precognitive Dreams.

9. If dreams are subjective, how do you interpret them amongst different people? First, the theory that fits with my experience in working with dreams for almost 30 years, is that "only the dreamer can know with certainty the meaning of his or her own dream" (Jeremy Taylor). Further, meaning and insights are marked by an "aha" or felt shift by the dreamer. This suggests that yes; dream meaning/interpretation is ultimately subjective to the dreamer.

Second, dreams also contain many elements and themes that are universal. Consider Carl Jung's studies of archetypes and archetypal psychology. When we work on a dream in a group, we most often find that a dream can have a profound insight/aha/meaning for others in the group besides the dreamer. This is because dreams address many aspects of the 'human condition'

When I am working with clients, I work with their personal associations to the symbols and metaphors in the dream, and we also work with the archetypal meanings - meanings that could be related to all people. Many dream analysts insist that any specific symbols in a dream should be researched in order to expand the possible

meanings. For example, if, in a dream, the particular species of a tree in the dream is known, then researching the characteristics of that species could yield important information and lead to deeper/broader insights for the dreamer.

10. Is it common for dreams to manifest in real life?

There is documentation of people experiencing healing in dream states and waking up to find that the physical healing actually has taken place.

Prepared by Dream Integrity <http://betsygrund.com/>