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The Secret World of Night

**A layman's guide to the
mysteries of sleep and dreaming**

by Steve Winter

"I know not whence it was bidden nor why. From out of the mists of night it came, cloaked in angelic robes to mask its hellish origins, and descended upon the land with a silent fury, compelling all to cease their labors and seek respite under an alluring cloud of intoxication. Woe unto any who dare oppose this demon, for its name is Morpheus and its trident is sleep, the Thief of Time."

- author unknown, 19th century -

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It's time to come clean. This is not a purloined passage from a Gothic romance as I implied in earlier editions. It's my best attempt to make it *look* like a stolen quote. This was my own invention, but I still like the way it reads.

- SW -

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Introduction

[The following is the original, unedited preface to "The Secrets of Perfect Sleep and Dynamic Dreaming" as it appeared in the Living Skill Media 1987 print edition.]



You might...you just *might* be in for the surprise of your life. The world of the night is far, far more complex and fascinating than many would dare to hope. There are opportunities for growth, adventure and just plain fun open to any who dare answer the knock. I have glimpsed a few of the wonders available for view, and gained much more from my nights in the past few years than I have from many of my days.

But I needed to be told how these mysteries could be accessed, understood and harnessed, and I owe many thanks to Patricia Garfield, author of "Creative Dreaming", and Joe Karbo, author of "The Lazy Man's Way to Riches" for offering me a guiding hand.

Now it's my turn to spread the word. I have looked and looked for a reference which would give me handy access to all the subjects covered in this book. None did, so I created my own. This book then serves three purposes. It is, in my considered opinion, the single most concise source of data for the layman on sleep and dreaming that I could find at the time of writing. It is a guidebook into the world of the human mind ignored or minimized by most of the modern medical community. And it is also my sourcebook.

Sweet dreams....

- Steve Winter -











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-  Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a deserving author will receive some of his fair due for the enormous amount of work that went into this project.

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If you order by telephone, we'll tell you how to enable the registered features right over the phone.



About the author

by Cub Lea

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;oldmoon.bmp} Steve Winter is a layman with no experience in formal dream research or training in the field. Everything presented here is culled from his own experience and personal research.

His interest in sleep and dreaming started very young. He recalls cherishing his dreams as a child despite the seeming disinterest and occasional discouragement of his parents. He discovered the concept of dream consciousness at about age eight, but it wasn't until his late teens when he first heard about lucid dreaming and began to refine both his knowledge and abilities.



He has experimented personally with most of the techniques and ideas presented in this book for dealing with insomnia, sleep reduction, dream enhancement techniques, sleep learning and subliminal learning, personal cybernetics and much more. He claims to have had considerable success with sleep induction, relaxation techniques, dream induction, lucid dreaming and dream control. He describes himself as a dabbler who has had degrees of success in all these areas but seldom experiences consistent results, which he attributes in part to the slippery nature of sleep and dreaming itself and his own perfectionist approach to the pursuit.

He brings a personal touch to his writing which can only be obtained from first-hand experience with the subjects he writes about, and an authority that stems from his constant need to know why. Unlike many writers in this field who begin with data and attempt to find experience to back it up, a great deal of Steve's experience comes from "accidental" discovery of many of the ideas presented here, discoveries within himself which he later sought to prove using the existing research.



Readers should also find that in spite of his personal attachment to the subject, he attempts to remain as neutral and free of judgment as possible throughout the book. Some of this is a conscious effort to conquer his own judgments but much of it comes naturally to him through his own experiences. He also attacks his subject at as deep a level as possible, and the conclusions he reaches often bring him into direct conflict with accepted thinking in these areas. He is aware that he can and does make mistakes and attempts throughout this book to remind the reader when he is speaking from his own experience, flying in the face of convention or engaging in pure speculation.

Assisting Steve with the graphic design and hypertext layout for this project was more than a pleasure. It was, much like the book itself, a labor of love.



Steve Winter is 36 years old, a self-described "veteran of too many psychic conflicts", and an ardent student and critic of self-improvement techniques and technologies for achieving altered states of consciousness. He lives in Western Canada, currently works under another name as a freelance ergonomics consultant and has asked that his address, email address and phone number not be published in this work. Cub Lea is an author and software interface designer, lead developer of *First Train for the Internet*, founder of Dynamic Living Media, and a

spokesperson on issues relating to computing and mind control. He lives in Burnaby, BC and can be reached at (604)298-6415 or cublea@cyberstore.ca.)



Bibliography and recommended reading

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;bookrow.bmp}The following is a partial list of the resources used in the creation of this electronic book and brief notes outlining any special features of these books. These are recommended to anyone seeking more information on sleep and dreaming. Most of these resources date back prior to 1990, but while many new books have appeared on the subject these continue to be excellent resources. Where possible I have listed the publisher of the paperback version as a cost-cutting measure.

Benson, Herbert H., with Miriam Z. Klipper, **“The Relaxation Response”** *William Morrow & Co., Avon Books 1975*: Still the definitive layman’s guide to relaxation techniques and their biological and psychological effects. Relies heavily on clinical data; suggested for those who find less scientific approaches flaky or frightening.

Faraday, Dr. Ann, **“The Dream Game”**, *Afar Publishers, Perennial Library 1976*: primarily concerned with psychoanalytical aspects of dreams and dream interpretation. If transactional analysis and Jungian psychology appeal to you, this book is an excellent foundation text for building a personal dream symbology.

Garfield, Patricia Ph.D., **“Creative Dreaming”**, *Random House, Ballantine Books 1976*: This book did perhaps more than any other to spark public interest in lucid dreaming. Garfield takes a much more emotional and spiritual approach to dreaming than LaBerge and devotes considerable attention to the techniques and lifestyle of the Senoi. Recommended for those who might find LaBerge’s book too stuffy.

LaBerge, Stephen Ph.D., **“Lucid Dreaming”**, *Random House, Ballantine Books 1986*: A decade newer than Garfield’s, this still stands as THE definitive lay text on lucid dreaming. Backed with a veritable mountain of research. Recommended for those who might find Garfield’s work a bit flaky.

Luce, Gay Gaer, **“Body Time”**, *Pantheon Books, Bantam Books 1971*: One of the very few popular works with strong scientific backing on the subject of biological clocks. This book goes into considerable depth on the physiological, psychological, and anthropological implications of rhythmic biological cycles and covers some speculative territory still seen as “new age” a full twenty-two years later.

Luce, Gay Gaer and Segal, Dr. Julius, **“Sleep”**, *Lancer Contempra 1966*. Long out of print, this is often found in second-hand bookshops and remains to this day perhaps the finest single lay text on all aspects of sleep. A superb sourcebook, and very little of its material has been rendered obsolete by more recent findings. Highly recommended. This was probably the most-used resource in the creation of this book.

Monroe, Robert A., **“Journeys Out of the Body”**, *Doubleday, Bantam Books 1982*. Probably the most popular work ever on the subject of out-of-body experience (OOBE). This was followed by “Far Journeys” in 1985 which presented a more personal, less scientific look at the phenomenon. Scholarly work in a field that tends to resist a scholarly approach.

Segal, Dr. Julius and Luce, Gay Gaer, **“How to Avoid Insomnia: The Guide for Troubled Sleepers”**, *Doubleday & Company Paperback Library 1971*. Another out-of-print title from two of the most knowledgeable authors in the field. This covers

common-sense approaches to insomnia and looks at a wide range of psychological and physical abnormalities which affect normal sleep.



Medical disclaimer



This book is designed to provide information in regard to the subject matter discussed. It is offered with the understanding that the author is not engaged in practice of health services, nor consultation in regard to health, but a layperson involved in research only.

The therapies discussed in this book are presented to educate and entertain. Neither the author nor the publisher shall have liability or responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the information contained in this book.



Any therapies or activities described in this book are strictly adjunctive or complementary to medical treatment and are not recommended as treatment for any ailment diagnosed either by the reader or by a competent health professional. Self-treatment can be hazardous and the reader is therefore urged to seek out the best possible medical assistance wherever available whenever symptoms may present themselves.



The suggestions offered here could hide the cause or have unwanted effects on the treatment of insomnia caused by a clinical illness. None of these techniques are recommended for more than short term use. None of the techniques outlined in this text should be used by anyone suffering from chronic insomnia or a recognized medical condition without the consent of a physician. In all cases, consult your physician before putting *any* of these suggestions into practice.



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**“In a litigious society, only the saints, the dim
and the legal community sleep soundly...”**

- Steve Winter -



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If it's our fault, we'll do everything in our power to fix it. If it's not our fault, well, we need this disclaimer to protect ourselves against people who

enjoy frivolous lawsuits.

Tips for using The Secret World of Night

The Find button



This special feature, activated by the button on the button bar, lets you track down any word or phrase in the book in a matter of seconds. This feature also lets you print topics and copy information to the clipboard for pasting into other documents. (Please respect copyrights when doing this.)

The Table of Contents window

Use the Navigator window for a complete on-demand menu of everything in the guide. This button opens it from here, and you can also open it by clicking the **Map** button on the button bar.

Bookmarks and annotations

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;bookmark.bmp}The third feature you'll find handy is bookmarking. You can maintain a set of bookmarks for the Guide which will quickly take you to any topic or submenu you like at the click of a menu item. Try it...it will make finding a lot of useful points much easier once you begin to work seriously with the Internet.

Take notes!



That's what the **Notes** button on your button bar is for. Unlike annotations, which work only for one topic at a time, this feature will allow you to collect your notes for all topics in the guide in a handy, single file, and the utility can also be used to keep notes for any other work you may do on your computer. Thanks to Gregg Braun for this useful, and free, utility.

Keep an eye on our Web site!

<http://www.firsttrain.com>

Okay, so it's a plug, not a tip. Sue me.



Goodies

“Free inside every box”



Some of the goodies and gadgets used to make this software so complete are available to you from here if you'd like them. These extras are not available in all versions of Dynamic Living software.



Please note: Dynamic Living provides no support for the functions available in this topic. If you cannot figure out how they work, you'll have to find help somewhere else.

Tangled TrueType font



Click this button to extract the TrueType font “Tangled”, adapted from the popular Tanglewood/Tangiers fonts especially for the topic headings in *Secret World of Night*. It will be extracted from this helpfile and Control Panel will be launched to install it into your system. Ordinarily the headline font used in *The Secret World of Night* is only available while you're using the software. When the Fonts applet starts, switch to *Secret World's* installation directory to install it.

NoteBook and Customizing Windows Help



These two packages are actually complete components may be provided to others separately if you like. Both have been released free by the authors...*provided* you include *all* files specified here.

In order to distribute Customizing Windows Help, you will need to include the following files on the disk or in the archive: CUSTHELP.HLP, CUSTHELP.ICO, TEST.HLP, WINSIZE2.DLL and CATALOG.HLP. Redistributions of NoteBook need only include NOTEBOOK.EXE and NOTEBOOK.WRI. (If NOTEBOOK.HLP is found in your installation directory, it must be used in place of NOTEBOOK.WRI.)

The Secret World of Night may not be distributed separately or with any of the files in the distribution archive or on the shareware disk removed.



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Using the navigator



The navigator is designed as a fast-access alternative to the standard menu used by this book-on-disk. It is available from any point in *The Secret World of Night* by selecting the **Map** button on the button bar. Menus are displayed hierarchically, similar to the way they are displayed in Explorer or File Manager, and they are also color-coded. You activate your choices by clicking either the book or document icons or by clicking the text next to these icons.

? Clicking a blue menu item takes you to that item's submenu of choices. You can jump around the menu at will by clicking any closed blue book item.

? Red menu items, marked by an open book, represent the sets of choices currently available. If there are two or more red items, clicking the topmost red item takes you up one or two levels of the menu by "closing" the book.

? Black *document* titles take you directly to the topic or menu with the information related to that title. Black *book* titles, marked with purple closed-book icons, take you to the submenus for those sections, sometimes in the navigator itself and sometimes in the main window. Most of the sections in *The Secret World of Night* contain introductory information and menus of their own.

A note to help authors

"How did you do that?"



Please don't write to ask this. We have no intention of sharing our secrets via email. Instead

we encourage you to find out for yourself, and there's a fairly easy way to do this.

There is now an excellent free decompiler available which will convert Windows Help binaries to RTF formatted text and extract all bitmaps and baggage, and even write a project file. If you decompile this software you'll learn precisely how we did our stuff, what DLLs we used, and if you care to spend a few hours FTPing, we'll even tell you where to get the tools.

The two FTP sites we relied upon most for developing this software were <ftp://onygfx.com/pub/winhelp> and <ftp://gmu.edu/pub/winhelp>. If your FTP client doesn't like these URLs, try them in your browser. The decompiler was most recently filenameed **HELPDC15.ZIP**.

“How can I do that?”



Just follow our examples. Anything more than that would be spoonfeeding. We do remind you that this material *is* copyrighted, although many of the DLLs we used are freeware.

“Why are you doing this?”



If you had gone through half of the heartache we experienced when developing this software, you'd probably feel the same way. Damned if we'll watch *anyone* go through that kind of pain and frustration if we can help it.

Besides, they call it *winhelp*, not *winhoard*, and we had a lot of assistance from other Winhelp authors in developing and fine-tuning this project.

Extension software

Some or all of the following Windows Help extension libraries and miscellaneous utilities may have been utilized in enhancing the look, feel and functionality of The Secret World of Night. Check your installation directory to determine which of these files were used. **Note:** The publisher reserves the right to alter this list without notice.

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See the documentation NOTEBOOK.WRI/NOTEBOOK.HLP for information regarding Gregg Braun's NOTEBOOK.EXE. It is freely distributable with other projects.



A typical night's sleep



A “typical night’s sleep” probably does not exist. Sleep is as individual as we are. Each of us weaves a different nightly (or daily) pattern. But there are many similarities between sleep patterns among individuals. By coming to an understanding of a “typical night’s sleep”, perhaps the basic principles we know about sleep can shed some light on other principles relating to sleep disorders and sleep enhancement.

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Pre-sleep rituals

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{ewc LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;day_nigh.bmp}

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How it all starts

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;bedstory.bmp} A night's sleep begins for most of us with a ritual. It may consist of nothing more than stretching out fully-clothed on a spot on the floor and closing the eyes, or it could be a long, drawn-out ceremony involving as many as fifty separate activities, including a yawn, a stretch, a rub of the cheeks, letting out the family pet, gazing in the mirror, closing the curtains, turning off the lights in a precise order or at random, checking the locks and windows, checking for appliances that might be left on, fixing the hair, urinating, undressing from day clothes and donning night dress, turning down the covers, fluffing the pillows, adjusting the bed so it doesn't squeak, cocking the door so just enough light seeps in from the hall, reading for a few moments, watching the Tonight Show monologue or the late news, a prayer, making love or masturbating, mentally reviewing all the day's activities, mentally rehearsing tomorrow's tasks, and once all this is done you might, you just *might*, be ready to settle in for the night.

But regardless of how simple or complex the individual activities might be, almost everyone has a pre-sleep ritual. If you've ever watched a dog spin around three times and drop to the floor before sleeping you might have guessed, as others have, that man is not the only mammal with a pre-sleep ritual.

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Why all the fuss?



Many theories have been presented to explain the meaning and purpose of these rituals, but I subscribe to the idea that these rituals are learned responses to stress. I believe that when we look at the great spiritual leaders in history, and at the great spirits of our own age, we can deduce what a normal pre-sleep routine looks like. And the great spirits of our own time are always our children, infants in particular. The Christ's, Buddha's and Mohammed's of any age seem to sleep when and where they feel the need to sleep, regardless of what time it is or what's going on around them or what time it is. Infants do the same.

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...yawn...

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;yawn.bmp} The yawn seems to be almost universal among mammals, and perhaps lower vertebrates as well, as a way of enhancing relaxation. Depending upon who you believe, yawning can be viewed as a means of either

suppressing tension and fear or releasing it.

Children yawn much more readily than adults, perhaps because they've been less conditioned to suppress a yawn. But children are also much more vulnerable and more open to feelings of fear and uncertainty, and the rate at which they learn and take risks insures that they experience these feelings much more frequently than adults.

It's no secret that conscious feelings of fear are not conducive to sound sleep, so the yawn may be a built-in sleep aid. Perhaps it's genetically-encoded into animals above a certain stage of evolution. Whatever the purpose, yawning is a highly effective mechanism for suppressing fear.

But aside from yawning, there doesn't appear to be much in the average person's pre-sleep ritual that the body truly needs for security or safety. People of robust good health don't even need a bed to sleep on. They fall asleep on noisy buses, in waiting rooms, on concrete floors, sitting or lying down.



A learned response to stress



It seems that almost everything we do to lull ourselves to sleep, in fact *all* private ritual, is a learned response to stress. It is either something we've been taught by someone at a time when we needed help or something we've invented for ourselves which has proven to work for us. And it seems that therapy of the type that takes you back into the original experience in order to change your response is the only way to permanently rid ourselves of our need for these rituals.

As this type of therapy is generally expensive, painful, time-consuming and often offered by practitioners who don't understand the nature of the therapy, maintaining these rituals throughout our lives may be necessary for most of us to get the sleep we need.



Stage 1 sleep: alpha



Once we've satisfied our pre-sleep needs for comfort and security, are safe in bed and ready to sleep, the real fun begins, and events unfold that had science completely baffled until the development of the electroencephalograph (EEG), the polygraph and the specialized sleep laboratory. Let's take a look at what happens to us.

- ? [Slowing the pace of body and brain](#)
- ? [What's simmering below the surface?](#)
- ? [Altered states we can't escape](#)
- ? [Highly suggestible...especially to our own thoughts](#)

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Slowing the pace of body and brain



As we relax and allow sleep to come, brain waves level out. Fast-paced beta waves, measured in our brains as the waves signaling that we're awake and alert, begin to be replaced by alpha waves, and the EEG traces a wave pattern of between nine and twelve cycles per second. Alpha waves are the waves seen when we're in light meditation, when we're learning, daydreaming, playing with ideas, and being our most creative. They're the waves which, when they appear on a patient's trace, show the therapist that biofeedback treatments are working.

Thinking is unfocused in an alpha state. The mind wanders, flitting from idea to idea, image to image, with no apparent rhyme or reason. While in alpha you may be reviewing the events of the day in a non-linear way, or just daydreaming. The sleeper often feels as if they can control the state and pull yourself out of it at any time. This is usually a lot easier thought than done.



What's simmering below the surface?



Every now and then an emotionally-charged image or thought pops into mind and the pattern is interrupted. Getting past the alpha stage may be impossible for people with severe emotional disturbances until they have become too exhausted to be affected by disturbing thoughts or images. In years past heavy exercise before bed was often recommended for such people as a sedative, and unfortunately it may have reinforced the problem. Oxygenation actually worsens the condition.

Eventually the alpha rhythm becomes constant and the waves grow smaller. At this point, it would take a very disturbing thought to bring the sleeper back to beta alertness. The body relaxes further, and pulse and breath rate have slowed noticeably. Oxygen intake is down and carbon dioxide levels in the blood have risen. The sleeper could spend a minute or an hour in this deeper state of relaxation, and unless you were adept or had the training given to

many meditators or mystics, you would not know how much time had elapsed.



Altered states we can't escape



Sensory information of all types is altered in alpha sleep. If you tasted something, you couldn't know for sure if it was a memory or a leftover bit of food in your mouth which you were tasting sharply due to your relaxed state. If you smelled something, you would probably have to pull yourself back to consciousness in order to be sure you weren't imagining it from memory. In your mind's eye you see images growing ever sharper, and you may drift from knowing you're in your bed to being in short dream scenes or "dreamlets" and back to feeling yourself in your bed again.

It is believed at this point that sleep has set in, albeit light sleep. There are adepts who claim they are still fully conscious in this state and able to do as they choose. Having conscious awareness in a deep alpha state or even deeper may actually be a skill we can learn, because we know that creative people often reach their most important insights in this state.



Highly suggestible...especially to our own thoughts



It is also believed that many insomniacs have conditioned themselves negatively to worry so much about their insomnia, and worry so automatically, that they can be deep into alpha sleep and still believe they're wide awake, fretting over their restlessness. Paradoxically, many insomniacs, when awakened from this state, will swear they were not asleep at all but instead were fully conscious.

It isn't easy to convince these people that they have been asleep while all this has been going on, and this indicates another important aspect of this stage of sleep: high suggestibility. Insomniacs can literally brainwash themselves into believing they have been awake when the EEG trace clearly shows light sleep.



The EEG is designed to measure brain and nervous system activity, and is not to be confused with the EKG or electrocardiograph, which measures circulatory activity.

The myoclonic jerk

“What the...”

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;pow.bmp}As the alpha waves grow stronger and last longer, there comes a sudden convulsing of the body known as the myoclonic jerk. Many, perhaps most people, have no memory of ever feeling this sensation. But if you’ve ever held your mate or watched the family dog while they drifted off to sleep, you’ve probably seen or felt it in someone else.

The myoclonic jerk lasts only a split-second, but it’s an actual convulsion. The whole body shudders from a brief burst of electrical energy in the brain. I feel this jerk frequently, sometimes several times a week. It almost always shocks me back to wakefulness and keeps me from falling more deeply asleep.

A disturbing, and perfectly normal, experience



Many people are frightened to the point of terror by their first conscious experience of *myoclonus*, and it can be particularly terrifying if you have no experience in consciously observing yourself in deep alpha sleep, because you might suddenly become self-aware at a level of consciousness which is entirely unfamiliar to you. The high state of suggestibility you experience here combined with fear of this new situation could prompt your subconscious to present you with images to fit your level of terror. Hopefully, now that you know this, you’ll be able to catch yourself when this happens to you next time and start defusing the fear that may accompany it.

The myoclonic jerk appears to herald the onset of the next phase of sleep, but I can’t state that as a proven fact. The problem is that there isn’t a clear consensus among experts about whether Stage 1 alpha sleep is actually sleep or just a pre-sleep trance state. Many experts claim that the next phase, what I’ll call Stage 2 sleep, is actually Stage 1.

How to induce a conscious experience of myoclonus



It is not easy to induce a conscious experience of myoclonus, and perhaps not even advisable to do so, but it can be done. It appears that heavy exercise an hour or two before retiring heightens awareness in a way that makes conscious experience of myoclonus much more likely. It should also be noted that any experience that induces myoclonus will also interfere with sleep depth, which is not usually advisable.



Stage 2 sleep: theta



As soon as the convulsion has occurred, the sleeper is functionally blind. Sensations on the optic nerve no longer affect the brain's visual processing centers enough to register in memory. This may explain how some people sleep with their eyes wide open. In this state it is extremely difficult to wake a person with a burst of light alone, but once again this appears to depend upon training. People tend to be easily wakened from theta sleep by calling their names, which is obviously a learned response, so there's no reason why someone couldn't learn to be awakened by light.

Strange physical sensations



In this stage of sleep, a sleeper who still has some consciousness or ability to remember may recall feelings of falling, weightlessness or body vibration. Occasional alpha waves still show up on the EEG trace, but the waves are much smaller at this point and in recent years we've taken to calling them theta waves. Thoughts are still fragmented and dreamlike, but the sleeper is not actually dreaming yet. The eyes roll lazily from side to side, perhaps following the images in the mind's eye, but they do not move as rapidly as they do during actual dreams.

As time passes, relaxation continues to grow more complete and the sleeper becomes harder to awaken. Perhaps ten or fifteen minutes have passed since alpha waves first appeared steadily on the EEG trace, and as the state deepens, fewer and fewer people have their thought processes register in their memories. Even thoughts from a lighter state of unconsciousness may be completely unrecalable in the morning unless the sleeper awakens immediately and makes a strong mental note to remember what they were just thinking. And that might not be a bad thing.

Deep trance

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}This state of deep trance or light sleep is being used more and more in subliminal or deep-relaxation training systems. Walkman-type learning systems can be bought in stores and by mail that induce theta brain states for the purpose of learning new attitudes, behaviors and beliefs, or even for regular learning.

A decade ago, it was believed that the key was to get people into an *alpha* state, where it was thought that they were highly suggestible, but it now appears that new information takes hold much more effectively in a *theta* state. Many people learn through using these systems that they can be conscious of their thoughts and images while in this state, and some can induce periods of theta consciously in their waking lives for the purpose of creative problem-solving.



Stage 4 sleep: delta



Brain waves continue to change and perhaps thirty minutes after we've settled in to sleep, twenty minutes or so after alpha waves began, ten minutes after theta, our EEG trace begins to show long, slow, and surprisingly strong wave patterns emanating from your brain. These are delta waves and they herald the onset of deep sleep, during which these long, slow waves will predominate.

Paralyzed...



Temperature, pulse and breathing continue to drop as the strength of the delta waves increases. Our senses are now almost immune to stimulation. Only a few vital lookout posts are still manned and ready, and only a few stimuli with the correct passwords for these guards will awaken us. Some are learned, but many seem to be encoded in our genes or our collective unconscious. Among these stimuli are a baby's cry, the smell of smoke from wood or straw, the sound of our own name and intense pain or a sharp movement. If we experience one or more of these, we'll be awake almost instantly if we're healthy.

But if we're awakened more casually, perhaps by our alarm clock, it will take a moment or two for us to resume normal movement. In this state the body is paralyzed and we need time to adjust to a sudden brainwave pattern of light alpha or beta alertness. You might have felt this paralysis if you woke from a fitful night's sleep and couldn't bring yourself to turn off the alarm. You weren't just tired or lazy. You were physically unable to do it.

The "somnambulatory state"

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;fridge.bmp}But you might not be so paralyzed that you can't raid the refrigerator, take a stroll down the block in your pajamas, mistake your mattress for a toilet or carry on a conversation with the local phantoms. Strangely enough, for all the paralysis demonstrated in laboratory experiments, it is this stage of sleep where we tend to wet the bed, sleep walk, sleeptalk, sleep eat and demonstrate other types of "somnambulatory disturbance". We're close to discovering how and why this happens, but we're still not entirely sure of the biology involved yet.

The paralysis exists for a reason. This is the stage of sleep where the real healing occurs, where the serious work of repair and restoration at the cellular level can occur free of the energy demands of our minds, senses and muscles.





Whether delta sleep is Stage 3 or Stage 4 depends upon which researcher you talk to and which book you read. Some refer to it as Stage 4 because it is deeper than dreaming sleep, which is called Stage 3 sleep in this context. But delta sleep comes before dreaming sleep in our natural sleep cycle, so for that reason others refer to dreaming as Stage 4 and delta as Stage 3. In this text, I refer to deeper delta sleep as Stage 4 and dreaming or REM (rapid eye movement) sleep as Stage 3.

Stage 3 sleep: the REM or dream state



From fifteen to fifty minutes after the onset of delta sleep, the wave traces will begin to show deep alpha waves as the person rises to Stage 2 sleep. But we will not complete the cycle by rising into Stage 1 sleep. At this point we may roll over to allow for better circulation to those areas where the bed was putting pressure on muscles, nerves or joints. We'll probably turn several times a night like this without being aware of it, but we could also lie in one position for the whole night, particularly if the bed is extremely soft or, as is the case with waterbeds, creates no pressure points.

“Paradoxical sleep”



A massive disturbance now appears on the polygraph trace as the next stage of sleep begins. This is not simple brain activity. It is heavy activity that appears to the observer to be the tracing of someone who is wide awake. Adrenaline floods into the bloodstream. Other hormones reach high levels, some of them the highest levels of the day. The head and neck muscles are completely slack, but the jaws may contract causing the teeth to grind. Epileptics may suffer seizures at this time and not at any other, not even while awake. Heart rate, blood pressure and breathing become erratic, swinging wildly between extremes.

It might look to the observer as if we are occasionally holding our breath for dangerously long periods of time. All the usual signs of intense emotional activity are seen in the body, and in males there will be an erection from birth until death, while in females the clitoris may become engorged. Brain waves in this stage are so clear and identifiable that traces can be used to diagnose a range of illnesses that can't even be diagnosed while the patient is awake.

Rapid Eye Movement



As dramatic as all this appears, the clinical term for this stage of sleep takes its name from a phenomenon seen by everyone who has watched a sleeping pet for any length of time: Rapid Eye Movement, or REM sleep. The eyes dart across the visual field under closed lids, and we

seem to have many indications that the eyes are following the action of the dream.

But as violent as the action appears, when we are awakened from this first dream phase of the night we're likely to report having dreamed about doing quite mundane things. Some will swear they weren't even asleep, but actually doing what they were dreaming, which might have been catching a bus or making a cup of coffee. But contrary to what was believed in years past, we do not act out these activities in our sleep by sleepwalking or sleep talking as we are dreaming. These activities are reserved for delta sleep, not REM sleep.



The cycle continues

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;surf.bmp} In just a few minutes the dream ends, physical activity calms down again and we sink down again into Stage 2 and then delta sleep. This time around we stay in delta sleep for less time than during the first cycle. Then it's back to Stage 2 again and into REM sleep for a longer and more intense dream than we had first time around...at least, more intense from our point of view, and the ebb and flow of the night has been established. To whomever may be following our polygraph trace, it doesn't look much different from our previous dream.

Repeating ourselves



After REM, we may drop through Stage 2 and into delta again, provided we're physically comfortable, but if not, the discomfort of bladder or bowel urge, illness or physical pain may draw us up into beta consciousness instead. But once that's taken care of, it's back to delta sleep for a shorter period, up into REM for a longer and still more intense dream, back to delta again and up to REM for what will probably be our last, longest, and wildest dream of the night.

For most of us, it ends there, between five and seven hours after we first dozed off, four cycles from Stage 2 to delta to REM to delta to REM to delta to REM to delta to REM and then awake to start the day. Some people may go through as few as two cycles in a full night's sleep and others, particularly children and those recovering from illnesses, as many as five. The cycles themselves last an average of 90 minutes each, but they can range from 75 to 120 minutes in length.



Awakening



If we awaken on our own after our sleep period, without the stimulus of an alarm clock or a spouse's nudge, we'll probably awaken immediately upon the completion of our last REM period. If a conscious effort is made once we awaken, we can store that dream in our memory for easy recall in the future. If we don't make such an effort, many believe the dream is still in memory but remains deep in the recesses of our subconscious and a great deal of effort will be needed in future to recall it.

Night's end

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;stormend.bmp} A few exceptional individuals will remember every dream of the night, and in startling detail. Perhaps they were encouraged as children to pay attention to their dreams or maybe they're just naturally interested. Some have trained themselves as adults to remember all their dreams, and there seems to be proof that this is no wild claim, since they seem to remember dreams that begin with the mundane and end with the dramatic.

Men who awaken from REM sleep will still have an erection, and many men have mistakenly called this a "bladder erection", indicating either the need to urinate or a penis engorged with urine. The desire to urinate will probably be real enough, since the kidneys have been processing fluid for several hours, but the erection is not associated with bladder urge. Instead, as stated previously, it has much more to do with electrical activity in the brain, particularly the limbic system which controls emotions and "lower" animal functions. It is possible that women too experience a type of erection, but it is unclear whether this is as universal as it is in males.

Impediments to dream recall



If we're awakened by an alarm, we might not be fortunate enough to awaken from a REM period. Dream memory will still be possible but less likely. The alarm or radio will be such a strong stimulus, even an irritation for many people, that it will draw all of our attention and effort will be focused on regaining enough consciousness to turn the damn thing off. It has been shown repeatedly that rude interruptions of REM states choke off our ability, and our desire, to mull over our nightly adventures without serious risk of falling back asleep. Dream memory is fragile and quickly lost, but as I mentioned earlier, it seems to be stored somewhere. Many people have had a waking situation trigger the memory of a dream they had months or even years earlier that they may have forgotten almost instantly at the time.



The meaning of sleep: a personal viewpoint



If you didn't know about such things as stages of sleep and rapid eye movement before getting this software, then it should now be clear that there is much more going on in sleep than people might guess from their own experience. But this section has dealt primarily with the measurable, physical aspects of sleep. But sleep is as much emotional and spiritual, or mystical or mental if you prefer. It has meanings and connotations and provokes associations as numerous and varied as there are sleepers. Anyone so bold as to proclaim that sleep has no special meaning that can't be determined from physiology or by examining our genetic heritage as hunter-gatherers simply doesn't have all the facts.

Sleep: as varied in meaning as the subconscious



In my own case, sleep has a variety of meanings. For instance, I'm not sure in my own mind that astral projection, or soul travel, isn't actually possible, and that each night as we sleep our spirits don't soar to a higher plane to evaluate the day's activities and prepare for tomorrow's lessons. This belief is held by a great many religions and mystical schools. It might even be an archetype, a social belief built right into the genes of all humans or all those descended from certain races. It's an exciting possibility.

Sleep is also a rude interruption of my work at various times. When I'm in a productive period, my work day begins at noon and usually continues until 2:00 a.m. At times I consider it downtime, hours during which my body and brain are closed for maintenance and repair, and it can occasionally irritate me to no end that the human body requires this sort of babying.

An escape hatch



At other times it's an escape hatch for me. I welcome it as a means of attaining some freedom from the slow drabness of depression or illness. A night's sleep can disappear in a flash, and if I can stay in bed in the morning, reward me with a fabulous adventure as well.

For many years sleep meant an opportunity to improve myself, to practice techniques and use suggestions for improving my behavior and personality, and more recently it's been an opportunity I've used consciously to solve waking problems.

The road out?



I don't mean to imply that I don't enjoy my work. But as one who has suffered low-grade depression for most of my adult life, I don't particularly enjoy much of the rest of my life. And I love adventure, which comes hard when you're depressed. And lately, I've even been able to use sleeping hours to help me get to the bottom of my depression and hopefully find my road out.

I spend a third of my life "dead to the world". But there is life behind closed eyelids...life

and meaning, and at times even a sense of purpose. And these are only a few of the meanings sleep has for me. Listing other meanings doesn't seem to have much of a point to it, since everyone attaches their own meanings to their experience.



Sleep and children



It is now believed that children sleep in the womb. What's more, it looks very much like they dream as well. It may be more than just a phenomenon related to the mother's sleep or a reaction to her sleep chemistry. It may be part of the fetus' normal development. For example, we know that shortly after the onset of sleep there is a spurt of growth hormone from the pituitary gland from infancy well into adulthood, and in especially healthy humans, perhaps even until death if the function is not impaired by disease, degeneration or dietary insults such as sweet foods near bedtime. This may be one of many sleep patterns and physiological reactions established long before birth.

Sleep patterns in children

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;bedkid.bmp} At birth, children may sleep up to 22 hours a day, probably averaging about 18 hours a day. It seems likely that the amount of chemical and physical trauma endured in the womb, and the degree of trauma endured in birth, are probably stressors from which the child will need to recover, and may determine whether an infant requires more sleep than normal. The need for sleep drops with growth and usually reaches a stable level around puberty. Sleep need will drop only slightly over the next decade and will not usually fall again until after age 50. But from age 50 to 70, sleep time may fall by as much as half.

These sleep need patterns, associated as they are with the various stages of life, tend to support the theory that total sleep time is directly proportional to the amount of integrating time the brain needs to fully comprehend what has happened during the waking hours. Among the many purposes for sleep in humans, we believe one of them is "filing time".

Filing our memories



While we sleep, we shuffle impressions, make associations and file memories. Information is transferred between the two hemispheres of the brain so that logical events make emotional sense and physical sensations can have a rational meaning. Some even believe that dreams are little more than a leaking or overflow of information, or perhaps a means of providing us with a testing grounds for new information.



Sleep and death

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;rip.bmp} Many, perhaps even most people, associate sleep with death. It is the place where our elders die, peacefully or in pain, if they are not struck down by some chaotic event in the course of living their lives. It is where we rest when we are ill. And all of us born on this continent remember the horrifying child's prayer that begins "Now I lay me down to sleep". It's not likely that many of us escaped childhood without wondering one night while unable to sleep whether we might indeed die before we woke. There are people who have sleep phobia because of the association with death, and some associate it with anesthesia or the numbing of all feeling, which is in itself a living death.

Lost will, sex and rebirth



Sleep can also be tied deeply in consciousness to loss of control and lead to neurotic attempts to avoid sleep. These phobias are particularly common with people who may have experienced some unthinkable terror in infancy or early childhood, such as being raped in the wee hours of the morning or perhaps having a severe illness which the parents could not acknowledge.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;cupid.bmp} The bed is also the place where the sexual expression of love is most frequently made, and sleep is the ultimate release that follows what many consider the ultimate pleasure. Sex and death have also been linked psychologically, especially when sex involves orgasm. People suffering severe depression or extreme pain may look upon sleep as preferable to life, making it in effect a temporary death they can experience daily, and such people will often sleep for what seem like extremely long periods of time.

And to complete the cycle, sleep not only represents death and release but rebirth and renewal as well. Most of us know well the experience of collapsing asleep after a hard day and awakening fully refreshed and ready to begin again.



Social aspects of sleep

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;isolatn.bmp} We must not forget that sleep evokes powerful emotions relating to companionship and loneliness as well. It is not well known in North America that sleeping alone in one's own room is not normal to humanity, and in fact it's not even normal to our history. The concept of the private bedroom didn't even gain prominence until the 1400s. In most of the world, the entire family sleeps together in one room or else the parents sleep in one room and all the children in another. In nations where great numbers of people cannot sleep indoors, whether due to poverty or cultural reasons, people huddle together to sleep for warmth and the protection of numbers.

The trend back to communal sleeping

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;people.bmp} There is a growing trend in North America back to communal sleeping. Many progressive pediatricians and child psychologists are recommending that parents allow their children to sleep with them in the parents' bed until the child is ready to move away from the parents. Usually children will first want their own bed in the parents room, with the option open to sleep with Mom and Dad when they want, and later decide to take a room of their own or join the other parents. It is believed that children given this experience grow up much more well-adjusted, and apparently the nearness to the children actually reduces the stress on the parents.



! Sleep and the human mystery



I'll close this chapter by opening perhaps the biggest can of worms of all. Perhaps the most significant aspect of sleep to human psychology is its connotations of total freedom. The bedroom is the place where most of us feel most free to let down our hair. It is the one room of the home where the most demure and prudish will fart, belch, snort, swear, and think and speak the unthinkable. Our most psychotic fantasies find their way to consciousness in our dreams. Unutterable hopes and apocalyptic fears may dominate the mind both asleep and awake as we lay in bed. And there is no threat of punishment, no censure or risk to anyone except, *perhaps*, the sleeper.

As above, so below



Whether we're alone or in company, the quiet darkness of night lays bare our thought processes and reveals the true nature of who we are to all of us who care to watch our minds at play. And sad to say it, for a great many of us, perhaps most of us, it's not a pretty picture.

There also exists a rather strong parallel between sleep and spirituality. Once mastery over one's daily existence is achieved, it appears that spiritualists and mystics find their next challenge in solving the riddles of the *unconscious* mind by mastering sleep. Conscious mastery of the "spontaneous" alterations of consciousness occurring in the alpha state are goals of many disciplines, and some of the more ancient and secret disciplines hint that they attempt to assist the practitioner in mastering states of consciousness as deep as Stage 4 or delta sleep.



Conclusion



This chapter is not provided merely as an introduction to scientific and psychological discoveries about sleep, although it may have been that for some readers. Instead it was meant more as a means of demonstrating the complexity and intricacy of sleep. I feel this is an important concept to grasp if you wish to come to an understanding of the complexity of sleep-related problems and potentials. This partial explanation of the mysteries of human sleep should give you a framework for understanding and accepting many of the techniques and ideas to come

If you care to make the journey, either as a pleasure excursion or for the whole odyssey, the secrets of perfect sleep and dynamic dreaming await you, and all you need are a few “lost hours” each night to travel. Experienced tourists may wish to browse the countryside for areas of particular interest without missing any major attractions, but if you’re new to this country, I’d like to invite you to come for the whole tour and really get a feel for how the natives live, and what you might be able to gain from their customs and beliefs.



 **End of chapter**

Factors interfering with healthy sleep



This chapter is necessarily incomplete, because in her infinite wisdom Mother Nature has seen to it that there are an infinite number of factors which could have a detrimental effect on sleep. But they seem to be divisible into just a few distinct categories. These include physical weakness or illness, environmental distractions, emotional upset, disturbed daily routine or upset schedules, unbalanced body chemistry, physiological disturbances and lack of desire or ineffective sleep techniques.

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An introduction and qualification

Credit where credit is due



In 1966, Gay Gaer Luce and Dr. Julius Segal shone a beacon by releasing their landmark Doubleday book entitled “Sleep”. More than a quarter-century later, I still have not seen a more definitive layman’s reference to sleep in all its aspects. In 1968 they used their research for “Sleep” as the nucleus for a second title, “How to Avoid Insomnia” (original title: “Insomnia: The Guide For Troubled Sleepers”). A great deal of research has been done in this field since its publication, but it still stands as a useful and thorough piece of work.

There have been many mainstream releases on insomnia and its various causes and cures since the 1960’s, and as with the diet books, it’s hard to separate the truly useful ones from the marginal or downright quackish works. What we have available today is a mass of information, most of it good, and most of it useful too, but most of it is focused on and effective for only specific types of insomnia. There are many different causes and types of insomnia, just as there are many different forms of obesity. What I have discovered lacking is an integrated attack on the problem which takes into account all of the physical, chemical and emotional factors which play roles in human sleep.

This work's intent: light reference



What I have attempted to do here is to gather as much information as I could find regarding the many different forms of insomnia and possible home cures and treatments and distill it into one small source reference. This provides a much better resource for the true insomnia sufferer than any single volume by an author propounding his or her pet theory. Chronic insomniacs usually have one major problem which underlies their insomnia, but we all seem to fall prey to several different types of insomnia at various times in our lives and we need different techniques to cope with or cure each of them.



I wish to make it clear to all readers that this text should not be taken as a panacea or cure-all, and I wouldn’t dare claim that the information provided here is sufficient to deal with every type of insomnia. But it should be sufficient to help you determine what type of insomnia you have and provide a few tools for dealing with the specific problems you may experience.

On a personal note I have little faith in the medical community when it comes to sleep disorders, but the law requires me to make this statement loud and clear:

Insomnia is often a symptom of more serious underlying medical problems. If symptoms persist, see your doctor.

Most of these ideas require very little effort or discipline on your part. I believe the best self-help techniques and technologies are those which function transparently, painlessly and

almost effortlessly, particularly when the immediate need is for help in coping with specific problems. Healing a long-standing case of insomnia isn't likely to be as painless, but I don't believe it should involve undue suffering either. The insomniac has already suffered. What effective self-treatment of any condition requires is courage, the courage needed to redirect some of the misused energy spent not sleeping into activities and techniques which will help you get the rest you seek.



Physical weakness or illness

The symptoms are more disruptive than the illness



Most of us have come to expect that illness is going to interfere with a good night's sleep. While it often forces us through weakness to spend more time in bed than normal, a cold or a case of the flu seems to affect sleep in other ways. Our bodies' immune responses to these insults seem to cause chemical changes in our bodies and brains that disrupt our normal sleep chemistry. Frequently it's the symptoms themselves, such as body pains, stuffy nose or headache that keep us from falling asleep and wake us during the night with discomfort.

On the other hand, sometimes we fall prey to these viri because we're exhausted, and we get that awful "tired-sick" feeling. But we don't need a bug to get the insomnia. Plain old fatigue or low-grade depression can have the same effect. Few of us can boast that we've survived into adulthood without having had the bizarre experience of being so tired that we couldn't sleep. Unfortunately, I haven't found any techniques for overcoming this type of insomnia that don't require drugs or heavy behavior modification.

The reason this type of insomnia does not respond well to simple self-treatments is that the body seems to make demands on us when we're ill or overtired that could have roots in our genetic heritage. A tribal farmer or hunter might be at serious risk if he fell into deep sleep when overtired, because the stress that caused him to be overtired likely has to do with some sort of serious threat, such as war with another tribe, climatic disaster or being under siege by predatory animals.

Remembering our biological roots



Early humanity may have had a built-in sentinel for disaster which caused him to recoup his sleep loss over several nights or prevented him from sleeping too soundly when suffering a mild illness. Many people notice that a good night's sleep shortens a cold or flu, but the feeling of illness is also much more intense for that short period of time than it is when the illness is prolonged.

If the roots of this type of insomnia truly are genetic, built in by nature to protect us during times when we needed this protection, only time and many generations will have a serious impact on it over the long term. In the meantime, the standard pharmaceutical remedies and whatever techniques may have worked for you or a family member in the past will probably be just about the best you can do.

Mind you, I could wind up rewriting this text in another five years and have to completely retract everything I've said about genetics and eliminate any hope these observations may offer. Let's hope research does prove me wrong, because I've needed help in this area from time to time myself.



Environmental distractions

The enormous range of tolerance



It never ceases to amaze me the conditions in which some people can sleep soundly. I recall a man I once worked with who delivered newspapers to retailers and coinboxes. He'd arrive at the printing plant around midnight, and if the presses hadn't finished their run he would curl up on a rough wooden pallet and sleep over the roar of the press and the shouts of the workers until his papers were ready. But most of us aren't blessed with this kind of ability to relax. Virtually any sort of distraction will be disturbing to some people. Marriages have found their breaking point in one spouse's snoring. Other marriages have been saved by separate beds which prevent one partner from being disturbed by the other's tossing and turning, which is something we all do in our sleep.

The bed itself, or lack of a bed, can be equally distressing. I've had mattresses with worn padding which allowed spring coils to dig into my ribs, and if I didn't find the absolute perfect spot on the bed, I had a lot of trouble getting to sleep. Pillows can be a problem too. A sensitivity to the off-gases from any of the synthetic materials in your bed, bedding, nightclothes or sleeping environment can be pure hell if they're not discovered and dealt with, as can be allergies to feathers in pillows, wool in mattress pads or pesticide residues in cotton.

Unfamiliarity breeds discontent



The shape and feel of the bed can be equally important to some people, and a mattress which is too soft or too firm can turn some people's nights into an ordeal. Whole industries have been founded on the quest for easy, comfortable sleep, and just about any city of any size has a specialty shop for people with just such problems. Some people have nervous systems which adapt to virtually any sleeping arrangement, but at the cost of difficulty sleeping if that arrangement is altered. Tales of city folk unable to rest amid the quiet of a night in the country are common, as are stories of street people who are unable to sleep on beds when offered shelter in hostels.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;dogbark.bmp} But even the most perfectly arranged sleeping environment won't insure sound sleep if the rest of the world doesn't cooperate. We've all been awakened at 3:00 a.m. by a neighbor's dog, kept from falling asleep by the incessant whine of sirens passing in the street or the shouts of teenagers or bar patrons, or irritated by a single mosquito buzzing our ears for what seems like hours on end. Fortunately, these are among the easiest sleep- disturbers to deal with.



Emotional upset

The stressor we don't acknowledge



This is perhaps the single most common cause of chronic insomnia. Grief over the loss of a loved one can impair sleep for weeks, even months. Tension, fear, excitement and anxiety over anything from exams to a new job to relationship difficulties can have a similar effect. Depression can either impair sleep or increase need. Euphoria or elation, which can be just as much of a disturbance as depression, usually impairs sleep, but this tends to be less harmful than depressive sleep loss.

Almost any strong emotion will have an effect on sleep. But beyond that, there are some schools of thought which believe that our sleep can be adversely affected by emotions we don't even feel. By this I mean repressed emotions such as long-standing resentments we think we've left in the past, old fears we haven't conquered but only shoved to the back of our minds, and grief over past events which has never been expressed.

Gender-typed repression



Women tend to be subject more to repressed anger and resentment while men tend to have more unexpressed grief. This does not appear to be as much a biological difference as it is a cultural stereotype. When life is not abundant, and it rarely has been for any length of time in the history of Western cultures, women are prized for their stamina while men are prized for their strength. Each permits a different type of emotional expression while denying another.

Even the skills we use to cope with strong emotions can interfere with healthy sleep. Some types of meditation have adverse effects on sleep patterns, as do most types of mood-altering prescription and recreational drugs. All of these problems can be effectively dealt with, but they often require a great deal of effort and difficulty to treat, perhaps because this area of human understanding is still not well understood and treatment options are still limited and uncertain.



Disturbed sleep routine

Socially-enforced stress



The sleep complaints of shift workers have been studied often and are well-documented, and sleep disturbance appears to be only one of a whole syndrome of problems resulting from this highly unnatural stress to our body clocks. In recent years we've begin to see institutions become more concerned about the effects of jet lag and shift-change depression.

More enlightened firms, taking their cue from Japanese and European firms that look upon their employees as long-term investments needing protection and care, are beginning to deal with the situation through changes such as longer layovers for airline workers, longer periods between shift changes, shifts that rotate in increments shorter than eight hours to ease shift-change depression, and longer "weekends" between shift changes to allow employees more time to recover.

There's no satisfying some people



Even a regular daily routine can play havoc with some people's internal clocks, and thus their sleep patterns, and the medical community is beginning to see that there are in fact "larks" and "owls", people who function best in the morning or evening respectively. "Larks" may never be at their peak on the job if required to work evening or night shift, and "owls" are similarly handicapped when chained to a nine to five grind.

We now understand some of what makes a lark or an owl. Studies of people left in caves or lightless areas for long periods reveal that when left to their own devices, people don't tend to sleep on a strict 24-hour schedule. Rather than being tied to the earth's rotation, our body clocks seem to vary by as much as two hours either way from a 24-hour cycle, and people not tied to clocks tend to "free-run" their sleep schedules according to their body clocks.



Creative people in particular seem to enjoy this flexibility. Those who don't have the luxury of freedom from clocks may find themselves continually overrunning or running behind a body clock that stubbornly refuses to stick to a 24-hour schedule. This goes a long way to explaining why some people can't ever seem to fall asleep with ease while other never feel good in the morning.



Unbalanced body chemistry

Another little-recognized stressor



I personally suspect that a great deal of occasional and even chronic insomnia can be eliminated, or at least improved considerably, through corrective measures with body chemistry. These measures can include dietary improvements, supplements such as vitamins and minerals, and alternative remedies such as herbs and homeopathic solutions.

For example, I tend to wilt in the summer heat and after a day in the sun I'll twitch and toss for hours before falling asleep. When I began drinking a solution of salt substitute containing mostly potassium chloride at bedtime, the cramps and twitchiness disappeared and I slept soundly. A great many recovering alcoholics and those with diabetes in their family sleep better with extra calcium and magnesium. When I'm sick, extra protein in the evening helps. And valerian root tea has been used as an effective sedative for centuries.

Insomnia: one of the first signs of any deficiency



A serious deficiency of any nutrient can affect your sleep, either keeping you awake or causing you to oversleep, and by serious I mean a deficiency in which improvement is seen when supplements are given or dietary adjustments made. Reports covering years of clinical experience from experts in therapeutic nutrition tend to support the conclusion that people can and do experience acute deficiency symptoms even when blood tests show normal or low-normal levels of the specified nutrient.

Many experts believe the "normal" levels used as medical benchmarks in many areas are normal only because we're undernourished and generally not healthy as a society. Normal health may actually be poor health on a continuum of worst to potential best, and that might mean that the recommended daily allowances don't support great health, but only what we're used to calling good.

Other biochemical factors

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;oldmoon.bmp} Other biochemical imbalances can affect sleep as well. Menstrual cycles can affect women, and many men swear that the moon phase has some relationship to their sleeping patterns. If we find male cycles similar to female menstrual cycles, this might not seem too far-fetched, since menstrual cycles also tend to have the same length as lunar cycles. Hereditary problems and degenerative illnesses can all set up imbalances in the body which can result in anything from an extreme sensitivity to touch to faulty brain chemistry, and both could have profound effects on sleep. These areas are better left to physicians and researchers, so only brief mention of these will be made in this book.

Injury can also cause imbalances which may impair sleep so severely that we suffer madness or even death. Such cases are rare, but they do exist. Your doctor can no longer tell you that no one ever died from lack of sleep, because people with certain severe forms of brain injury or biochemical disruption have in fact succumbed when their bodies could no longer stand the stress of restlessness.





Lack of desire or ineffective sleep technique

A tempting target for the hypochondriac label



It's tempting to group these causes of insomnia under the umbrella of neurosis. I don't personally like the term neurosis because we've been taught that it has to do with weakness in the human spirit. In most cases the culprit is bad information offered by well-meaning people at vulnerable moments. Most of us could sleep like babies every night if we could only remember how we slept as babies. But a great deal has happened to us since then and the memories aren't easy to find, although science assures us that they're there somewhere.

Recall the discussion on sleep need. As we age we simply don't need as much sleep. Unfortunately, sometimes we feel like we need more than we really do, perhaps as a way of dealing with an uncomfortable life passage. Our inability to sleep may feel like a lack of desire to sleep, and it may be that our bodies, minds or emotions are trying to tell us that we need more time awake to work through things or cope with difficulties. Some particularly difficult passages seem to demand that we exhaust ourselves to near the point of madness or illness before we break through whatever is in our way. Consciously, we may want very badly to sleep and refresh ourselves, but our subconscious, which may know better what we need in the long run,

Recall also the discussion on pre-sleep rituals and how these rituals are developed through life as means of coping with new situations. Many of these rituals were adopted to help us sleep at times when our bodies were rebelling against sleep. Unfortunately, we keep many of these rituals long past the time they served us, almost like an addiction to pills or alcohol that sticks around after the need for stress or pain reduction has passed.

Ritual tolerance or outgrowing old needs?



It's possible that a ritual that once put us to sleep, such as watching the Tonight Show monologue, reading a magazine or a chapter or two from a novel, has become something which winds us up so much that it keeps us awake. Psychologists might call it neurotic to perform pre-sleep rituals which keep you awake, but if no one ever told you that what you're doing is stimulating you instead of relaxing you, how could you know?

It's also possible to have an unworkable attitude toward sleep. If we look at sleep as a waste of a third of our day, a nightly ordeal or something we should expect our bodies to do on demand, we're fighting nature and eventually we'll lose. Sleep is necessary, the ordeal is not sleep itself but rather those things that keep us awake, and human sleep is cyclical and tied to body clocks that take master yogi's and meditators years to learn to control on demand.



Conclusion



We've briefly examined at most of the common, and some of the less common causes of occasional and chronic insomnia. In the next chapter we'll be discussing specific treatments for insomnia. Before continuing you may want to go back and collect a few brief passages for your own personal insomnia cookbook using NoteBook (available from the **Notes** icon).



When you find a treatment or idea you think you'd like to try some time, clip the text on that idea and paste it into your personal notes under a title using the name of insomnia from which you suffer. Some techniques will be effective for more than one type of insomnia, so you may want to paste the relevant information in more than one place in your personal reference. If you do this while you're reading, you'll have a handy reference you can call up in just a moment or two when you need it. This might be preferable to trying to think of appropriate keywords to search the text at a time when you're tired, cranky and need help **now**.



Dealing with insomnia

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Dealing with sleep-related fears



We all know there's nothing to be afraid of about sleep. That's precious little consolation to those who feel real fear, or worse, *don't* feel fear that they have trapped within them, and have that fear disturb their sleep. Here's hoping you find consolation, and some workable ideas, in this section.



[Control compulsion questionnaire](#)



[The origins of control compulsion](#)



[Unresolved fear: the heart of compulsions](#)



[Feeling like you're going to die](#)



[The risks in managing and treating sleep-related compulsions](#)



[Possible compulsive behaviors affecting sleep: a short list](#)



[Honoring and accepting compulsions](#)



Control compulsion questionnaire



In the last chapter I used the “N”-word. These days the fashionable term for neurosis is codependency. But it all boils down to control compulsion, which results in anxiety, fear and anger when things aren’t going as planned or expected. We are all compulsive controllers in some areas, but if you don’t know the depth of your compulsion, you might like to try this little quiz. It’s not a diagnostic indicator designed to see if you need therapy. It’s included to help you determine how much assistance and support you might need in coping with this problem until you’re ready to tackle it head-on, which you might never feel the need to do if your coping skills are good enough. These coping skills will help you work with the aspects of your control compulsion which keep you from getting to sleep. Then again, if part of your compulsion includes suspicion of tests and questionnaires, it might be easier for you to skip this test altogether.

Control compulsion quiz

1. Do you often think you’d feel a whole lot safer flying if you were the pilot, or at least were able to sit in the cockpit?
2. If you were required to drive cross-country, would you rather be the one behind the wheel, even if the best driver you know offered to drive?
3. Have friends or relatives ever commented to you in a well-meaning way (not in anger) that you’re domineering?
4. If you owned your own business, would you prefer to keep it small enough that you could manage all the daily details yourself instead of allowing it to grow and hiring new people to help with important tasks?
5. When you’re not confident that your children can do a chore you’ve asked of them, or they don’t do as good a job as you’d hoped, do you take over the job yourself?
6. Are you the one who always handles the family finances? Or, if you live alone, are you uncomfortable about letting anyone else handle your banking or tax returns?
7. Do you consider yourself a worrier, or have you been told by family or close friends that you spend too much time worrying?
8. When you fantasize about things going wrong, do you also fantasize about how you’ll react in that situation and try to react appropriately in your fantasies?
9. Do your dark fantasies include things such as nuclear war, apocalypse, major earthquakes or similar disasters?
10. Are you always fully-insured, and if you’re not, does lack of insurance cause you frequent concern for your future?

Scoring the questionnaire



If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you have a degree of control compulsion, and the more yes’ you have, the more severe the problem is for you. If you scored four or higher,

you are probably a classic “control junkie”, and if you scored ten out of ten, you have a serious problem which is having a dramatic effect on your life.

It isn't healthy to have even one “yes”, but sad to say, in our culture it's quite normal to have five or more. Everyone raised in North America is at high risk for control compulsion. It used to be that women were spared some of this difficulty and men were given privileges in order to cope with the stresses, but no more. Today everyone gets it.



The origins of control compulsion

An important explanation



I do not in any way wish to minimize the seriousness of this problem. In fact, I'm going to devote a fair bit of text to the subject because I believe it is extremely important that we all understand that these problems do not stem from our own evil natures but from events and circumstances in our lives which, at the time, we truly could not control and which presented us with a real threat.

In some cases we can rationalize the problem by learning the difference between what we can and cannot control, but because this problem begins so early in life and is reinforced by parents and society throughout our lives, it's foolhardy to attack it from the point of view that it's "all in our minds".

We simply can't be on guard for everything we are taught to be responsible for, so we begin putting that vigilance in our bodies in the form of tight muscles which remain ever-ready to react to threat or difficulty, and when we run out of conscious effort, we begin using drugs and foods that keep us alert and wary by filling our bloodstreams with stimulants and irritants. No, it is most definitely not all in your mind.

Phobias



In the case of full-blown phobias, treatment through a qualified professional may be your best alternative. This might include drugs to help you manage the condition until you can get the help of someone truly qualified or matched to your specific needs, because capable people in this field aren't as common as we're led to believe. But I can't deal with this type of treatment here. All I can offer are coping skills and perhaps some understanding, and coping skills aren't cures. Ultimately you'll have to go to the root of the problem and correct a belief or attitude so deeply buried in your subconscious that you probably have no conscious knowledge of its existence.



If you own an IBM-compatible computer, some excellent material relating to the causes and treatment of phobias and personality disorders is available through shareware. I personally recommend Doyle Henderson's book-on-disk entitled "Amazing New Truths About Your Emotions" (copyright 1992, Scientific Specialists) for anyone interested in learning more about this aspect of mental and emotional health.

Unresolved fear: the heart of compulsions

The first place to look

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;scream.bmp} Control compulsions all stem from fears, and I believe all fears stem from genuine threats. Humans are born with only two fears: fear of falling and fear of loud noises. All other fears are learned or imposed, and most of our deepest fears are learned before age two.

Imagine the terror of an infant, knowing that it is hungry and that no one is answering its cries. Every mammal knows instinctively that if it goes hungry long enough, it will die. Until it is developed enough to crawl to a cupboard and get its own food, a child has no way of feeding itself. The terror felt when hunger isn't satisfied is literally perceived by an infant as a threat of death. If this terror is felt long enough or frequently enough, or is not relieved by a parent on a consistent basis, the child will come to believe it can only rely on itself for survival, and it will no longer trust the parents or anyone else to help when it is in need.

Later in life this person may hoard food or overeat and be completely baffled that no treatment seems to help the problem. It seems that until the person comes to grips with the original cause of the problem, which is the events early in childhood which formed the faulty belief system, no lasting help can be had. And when one realizes that sufferers must face their fear of death in order to overcome it, it's no wonder treatment and cure look impossible.



! Feeling like you're going to die

A more common phenomenon than most realize

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;rip.bmp}The need to control stems from the need to avoid this constant confrontation with deep terror so confusing that in unguarded moments when it does hit us, we feel like we're going insane because nothing in our present-day world could possibly be making us that terrified. We feel utterly compelled to do anything to please the young child inside of us who feels as if he or she will die, and many believe this compulsion is at the heart of all addictive and compulsive disorders.

Control compulsion can affect sleep in two ways. First, if the fear doesn't specifically relate to sleep, it can cause us to do things to our minds and bodies which prevent us from sleeping well, such as eating foods which stop the fear but leave us with a "hangover" or other adverse side effects, or thinking incessantly about our problems which keeps the fear down but also keeps us too wound up to relax. Any type of compulsive behavior can interfere with sleep in this fashion.

Second, if the specific fear relates to sleep or nighttime, the simple act of darkening the room and lying down could call up the old fear and prevent us from sleeping. This type of problem is common to sexual abuse survivors who were abused in the middle of the night, children of violent or addicted parents where there was violence in the home after the child went to bed, or people who might have had brushes with death early in their lives such as a near crib death that the parents never knew about. These are only three possible causes of sleep-related phobia. Many people with such problems find that the only way to cope is to work or stay awake nights and sleep in the daytime until they can find help for the root problem.

Misinterpretation of natural events



In either case, sleep and the relaxation which precede it are felt as a loss of control. The old terror gets a chance to rise to the surface and the child inside can cry out for help or attention. What many people find is that once they can identify the core of the problem, they don't mind staying with the fear until it subsides. But getting to the core can be excruciating for many people.

Fears can be chameleons, changing their shapes throughout our lives. As we grow, we're confronted by new threats and what might originally have been a fear of death stemming from infancy transforms itself into a fear of poverty or burglars. Fortunately, it's a lot easier to deal with these changes in the nature of our fears than it is to conquer the original fear itself.



The risks in managing and treating sleep-related compulsions

Your “sickness” might be better for you than “the cure”



Be aware -- and be wary -- that any attempts to cope with your fears rather than deal with them directly are liable to create one more change in the nature of your fears and one more puzzle to sort out if and when you finally get around to treating them. Some people who treat core personality disorders advise clients not to abandon or modify their current coping skills until they're ready to accept treatment because of the extra difficulty involved. In other words, unless your current coping skills are clearly affecting your health or shortening your life, they feel you shouldn't mess with them. I've personally discovered that there is some wisdom to this thinking.

Be aware also that fears don't always show themselves as fears. They can masquerade as anger that doesn't seem to have a target, a vague sense of restlessness or anxiety, and most elusive of all, as behaviors that the rest of the world might describe as good or beneficial.

Some compulsions get social sanction

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;bothends.bmp} Workaholics suffer from an addiction which the world around them doesn't want to see treated. If you find yourself at bedtime scrambling around your home, tidying everything and seeing that every last detail of the day is completed before settling down to rest, it is probably more a sign of compulsion than a healthy indication of your conscientiousness. Below is a list of some sleep-related behaviors that might be ways of coping with deep, untreated fears. By themselves they don't necessarily mean you have a sleep-related personality disorder. They may be needed to deal with problems that exist in the here and now.



Possible compulsive behaviors affecting sleep: a short list

- ? Collecting stuffed animals; need to have stuffed animals in bed in order to sleep
- ? The need to have bedclothes on, or have no bedclothes, in order to sleep
- ? Hard exercise before bed in order to “relax”; this may be a way to exhaust oneself past the point where one can sense any fear
- ? Meditation or deep relaxation techniques needed in order to sleep
- ? A particular type of food or drink needed at or near bedtime, particularly if it is known to be a stimulant rather than a relaxant, e.g. coffee or sugary foods
- ? Masturbation or sex needed before sleep as a means of relaxing, especially when climax or lack of a climax will prevent sleep
- ? A sleep routine that cannot be interrupted or shortened without compromising the ability to fall asleep
- ? Mental exercises performed in bed before sleeping as a habit, such as mentally reviewing all the day’s activities, mentally checking that all doors are locked and electrical appliances are off when they’ve already been checked, reviewing a certain memory ritualistically such as a song that must be remembered fully or an accomplishment, embarrassment or real catastrophe that gets replayed repeatedly
- ? Need for a certain type of sheet or blanket if sleep is not to be impaired
- ? Strong physical stimulus of any kind needed in order to sleep; e.g. a hot shower, sexual stimulation, loud music or music under headphones, enough food to feel physically full.
- ? Prayer or meditation considered necessary in order to sleep
- ? Frequent inability to fall sleep before sunrise, or ability to only sleep lightly during the night
- ? Light or sound source needed during the night in order to sleep, or absolute lack of light or sound through blinds and/or earplugs
- ? Inability to fall asleep before or after a certain time

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Unfortunately, there seems to be no effective way to rationalize these difficulties, but making sense of them can go a long way toward easing the guilt you might feel over what seem like bizarre or harmful coping strategies. Many of the things we do to cope might be harmless except for the guilt and shame they create because of what we’ve been taught about them.

What we *can* do, however, is use some of the techniques described in the chapter on using sleep for problem-solving to discover where the problem originated without actually having to deal with it head-on. It might be an enormous relief to discover that the reason you can’t sleep without a stuffed animal has nothing to do with immaturity or mental illness but instead stems from a time when there was chaos in the family and your teddy bear was your only friend.

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Honoring and accepting compulsions

Preparing for a fight



Many of the concepts I've discussed here are very new and they still meet with strong resistance from the medical and psychiatric establishment. Keep in mind that twenty years ago we were also told that sensible eating was all the average person needed for good nutrition, and today we know that what passed for a sensible diet twenty years ago is a long way from what experts now accept as healthy.

I cannot stress too highly how firmly I believe that the sleep-related fears I discuss here must eventually be dealt with if you wish to live a free and happy life. I won't offer advice on how to cope with these problems, but I do believe that the best way to deal with them until real help can be found is to act on your natural impulses and accept the existence of your control compulsion as something you need in order to function as an adult until you can finish with your childhood.



I believe we're all entitled to these defenses in a world where real understanding and help for these problems is still rare and expensive. And considering the numbers of practitioners who haven't been fully trained for the work, fraught with the real risk that the help you need could wind up doing you more harm than good. I have been victimized by poorly-trained therapists and know several others who have suffered the same fate. My hope remains alive because I've known people who have been helped enormously by capable professionals.



Preparing for a good night's sleep



If the last section seemed like a tease to you, fear not. We'll get into some serious self-help ideas here. And in case the disclaimer was unclear to you, allow me to state that I am not a licensed professional therapist or counselor, but only a researcher. I believe a lot of these ideas can be successfully applied by oneself but I do not wish to see harm come to anyone from what I present here. These are ideas for you to consider and use as you and your medical professional see fit. I once believed wholeheartedly in what I offer here, but I now realize that virtually everything I present here is a temporary solution. For some "temporary" can mean the rest of their lives, but for others it might mean the idea works once and never again. None of these ideas should result in long-term harmful side effects, but we are all different and it's simply impossible for anyone to promise absolute safety for everyone.

- [? **Cooking up your own sleeping pill**](#)
- [? **Hypnosis and sleep induction**](#)
- [? **Hypnotic reading**](#)
- [? **Memory floods and how to deal with them**](#)
- [? **What to do when it all stops working**](#)
- [?](#)

! Cooking up your own sleeping pill

The internal pharmacy

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;rx.bmp}We appear to have proof that the brain is a much better pharmacist than our pharmacist, and in more ways than we might have imagined. It creates its own painkillers, called endorphins. It creates its own antidepressants and tranquilizers called neurotransmitters. It even appears to create its own hypnotic chemicals for sleep. When you consider that the tools already exist in your own brain, it only makes sense that finding a way to tap into these natural sleep drugs would provide the most natural and effective way possible to promote sleep. Since these chemicals are known as hypnotics, why not try a little hypnosis to bring them out?

As any doctor can tell you, hypnotic drugs are relatively short-acting, and our natural hypnotics seem to behave in the same way. Stimulating natural hypnotic chemicals will probably only be effective for those who have difficulty falling asleep and no trouble staying asleep once they doze off.



The problem is that hypnotics have a “rebound” effect, which I’ll discuss in more depth later. Once they’ve worn off, you’ll experience a stimulation effect which will keep you awake. If your sleep cycle is relatively normal, this effect shouldn’t occur until morning when you’ll need the alertness anyway. But if your sleep cycle is disturbed or marked by sharp peaks and valleys, you could find yourself awake in an hour or two and unable to get back to sleep. Many people find they can’t do deep-relaxation exercises in the evening and sleep through the night.



! Hypnosis and sleep induction

Repetitive ritual

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}When it comes to promoting sleep, hypnosis involves using a familiar, comfortable ritual to lull the mind into a deeper state of consciousness. I won't bore you with the details of how to create an ideal bedtime routine. You'll find that in any book on insomnia written since time immemorial.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;yawn.bmp} You can guess what's involved....play soft music, force a few yawns, drink a glass of warm milk (an excellent idea biologically-speaking, but more on that later), do boring things, brush your teeth, and so on. Simply develop a regular routine and vary it as little as possible, just like mother taught you to do. And mother is the very reason why you do this. There seems to be considerable evidence that we establish neurological patterns early in life which trigger biochemical reactions based on set and setting.

If bedtime was a reasonably peaceful time in your household, recreating the environment or pattern you knew as a child will actually help restore childlike sleep patterns by biologically triggering the same chemical responses in your body.



The downside to this is that you lock yourself into a childlike state in following this pattern, and the insomnia could be a very real withdrawal effect triggered by your growing away from the family in some other area of your life. This makes creating a bedtime routine a coping mechanism as opposed to an actual treatment, and you may wish to limit your use of a strict bedtime ritual to periods when good rest is needed for a day's work or some other important goal.



Hypnotic reading

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;reading2.bmp} One of the most interesting items to cross my desk while I was researching this book was an article published in *Prevention Magazine* in February, 1984. The article was written using subtle hypnotic techniques designed specifically to put you to sleep without you realizing what effect the words were having. Back issues of *Prevention* are common fare in second-hand bookstores and thrift shops, so call around if you'd like a copy. Rodale Press may have reprints of the article available as well. This was one of the simplest and most unique hypnotic tools I have ever seen.



Memory floods and how to deal with them



One of the most common features of inability to fall asleep is memory flooding. You may find yourself lying in bed and reliving past events or fantasizing about future occurrences. These experiences don't necessarily have to feel negative or painful to accompany insomnia and you may feel no sense of anxiety around the memories. You may even enjoy this time with your thoughts. This problem can be worked around quite easily with a number of simple techniques. Each of them will probably offer no more than temporary relief.

? [Meditate to clear your mind](#)

? [The simplest solution: let yourself stew](#)

? [Burn off the mental energy](#)

? [Burn off the physical energy...your brain may follow](#)

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Meditate to clear your mind



The first thing to try is a meditation exercise to clear your mind. This can be a pre-sleep relaxation period in which you consciously try to rid your mind of every thought that enters it. Avoid TV or heavy reading after this exercise because you'll be highly suggestible while in this state. The sooner you get to sleep the better. This technique works by disciplining your consciousness to a deep level where these memories and fantasies are easily ignored. You're actually putting yourself "under" by dropping your brain waves and body cycles below the level where memory floods can occur.



The simplest solution: let yourself stew



The second technique is dreadfully simple and probably the only way to cope with the situation if you have no intention of letting go of this time you spend with yourself. Simply go to bed earlier so you'll have more time. If you don't like the idea of losing this time in your day, try to accept the idea that part of you is demanding that you take this time or you wouldn't be flooded with memories every night. Make this time a priority in your life, because this memory flooding is probably serving a valuable purpose to you.



Burn off the mental energy



The third technique is Pavlovian and rather harsh, and I don't particularly recommend it except

for the fact that it works like a charm over the short term. If you simply wear yourself out mentally before bedtime, you won't have the brain energy to spend on your memories and fantasies. Computer games before bedtime, especially the action games, are excellent for draining the brainpipes but be aware that hangovers of some sort are likely if you keep this up for any length of time.

Anything that excites you, from sex to exciting fiction, will have a similar draining effect and should help you drift off more easily. The key is to determine what aspect of your person is most affected by your mental activity and sedate that part of yourself. If you lie awake and feel your heart race at every thought, some cardiovascular exercise should calm that reaction. Exercise before bed is usually considered bad advice by insomnia experts, but it can often be extremely effective over the short term for some people.



Burn off the physical energy...your brain may follow



If you twitch and shudder, treat your limbs to some housework or hobby activity that requires movement but not a lot of exertion. If the images in your mind are what most commonly accompany insomnia, watch a movie or TV show which is more lurid and brilliant than the images. This will overwhelm your visual cortex, allowing you to sleep more easily.



What to do when it all stops working

The court of last resort



These are all stopgap measures. None of them will provide more than temporary relief, and that may be all you'll ever need. But a great many of us will find that eventually the insomnia takes over and simply can't be treated with the manipulative techniques I've described above.

This happens because the insomnia is a direct result of anxiety. You may not feel it that way, but if you can't sleep and these reactions accompany sleeplessness there is more going on than meets the eye. Eventually you may have to decide to simply hang in with the insomnia for as long as it takes.

I believe in the energy model of psychological disorder, and as soon as the brain has had enough of the memories and fantasies, it will start to fade or perhaps disappear altogether. The anxiety will simply burn itself off. You can bet the farm that if you decide to go this route your insomnia will get worse for a time. The only method I've seen for dealing with that is to simply let it get worse and carry on as best you can until it's over, and support yourself as much as possible during the ordeal.



If the insomnia becomes particularly severe you'll probably need some sort of therapy, whether it's dietary change or psychological treatment, to get you through the roughest periods or keep you from feeling crazy. I'll talk more about this aspect of insomnia throughout this part of the book.



Creating an environment for sound sleep



The suggestions in this section will work best for eliminating occasional sleep difficulties and decreasing sleep-related stress. They can also provide long-term benefits through reinforcement of other psychological and physical techniques when you need to use them. But there is a serious drawback to optimizing your sleep environment. Once you create an ideal setting and grow comfortable with it, you will probably find your sleep is disrupted any time you need to sleep away from your own home. You can minimize this disruptive effect by using only the minimum amount of optimization needed to restore healthy sleep. If you need a lot of crutches to make this work, try to select crutches you can carry with you wherever you go rather than devices you can only use at home.



[Creating compatible bed partners: snoring and kicking](#)



[Environmental noise](#)



[Making your own noise: what to do if you can't stand earplugs of any kind](#)



[Light as a sleep impediment](#)



[Effective sleep temperature](#)



[Selecting the proper mattress](#)



[Accessorizing for extra comfort](#)



[Morning fatigue: a chemical hangover or bad air?](#)



[Dealing with that pesky mosquito](#)



[Insomnia and the natural environment](#)



Creating compatible bed partners



Few things will create more friction between couples than incompatibility in the bedroom. What most people don't realize until it's too late is that this notion has at least as much to do with *sleep* compatibility as it does with *sexual* compatibility. Here are a few suggestions for dealing with incompatible sleep behavior. They might just save the relationship.

- [? Snoring and kicking](#)
- [? Shared responsibility for the problem](#)
- [? A few other suggestions for dealing with incompatibility](#)
- [? Twitching](#)
- [? Coping with a blanket hog](#)

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Snoring and kicking



Perhaps the most common complaint, especially among married couples, is the sleep activity of a bed partner. If snoring is the major complaint, see the chapter on snoring (also submenued in the section on Sleep Abnormalities) for specific advice on dealing with the problem. That problem has to be dealt with at its source for any kind of long-term relief, but there are a few things you can do to help yourself. In any case where one partner's behavior is affecting the other, you'll have to reach some sort of agreement on how responsibility should be shared for any discomfort that may be involved in dealing with the problem.

If the two of you can agree that the problem is not one which can be solved through simple behavior modification on the part of the offending partner, it's my belief that any sacrifices should be shared equally. The victimized partner may have a right to request that the other party bear all of the responsibility for a certain period of time in order to even things out and help eliminate any leftover resentments.



Shared responsibility for the problem



Marriage and life partnership revolves around sharing and sharing alike. Point out to your bedmate that he (it's seldom a she who has this problem) is causing you serious discomfort and it's his responsibility to help himself both for the sake of his health and your comfort. If the snoring stems from a malformation or can only be treated with surgery, you may be faced with an expense you can't handle or a long wait for elective surgery. If it is something that the snorer can deal with himself, there will still be an adjustment period while the snorer goes through medical or self-treatment.

Either way you'll have to cope with the problem in the meantime. If a good night's sleep is a high priority due to children or a work situation, you might want to make temporary arrangements to have one partner sleep in a different room on alternating nights or weeks to

allow you to catch up on your sleep. In fairness, you should alternate this hardship unless one of you has difficulty sleeping in a strange bed, because it's not necessarily the fault of the snorer that they snore.



A few other suggestions for dealing with incompatibility

If either or both of you can't fall asleep without a warm body beside you, you could try moving to the next room or have your bedmate move to the next room as soon as the snoring starts to keep you awake. Once again, this should be a shared burden unless drinking or some other controllable behavior causes the snoring. This may sound severe, but if the snorer is particularly loud it may be the only workable solution.

If it's nothing more than a minor annoyance, you might want to invest in a room divider. These are six-foot square frames of fabric filled with insulation, and they can be purchased second-hand from office supply stores for as little as \$20.00. You could mount it on casters so it can easily be slid between a pair of twin beds, or mounted on a track on the ceiling so you can slide it between you if you sleep in a single large bed.

You could also build an L-shaped foam rubber tent which you can mount on the headboard. Once the snorer falls asleep you can drop it between you and muffle the noise. The L shape allows it to cover the head and provide a barrier on your side while still giving your partner lots of air from the far side of the bed.

A foam barrier or divider is also an excellent way to deal with a bedmate who kicks in their sleep. If you sleep in the same bed and can't justify using a divider or barrier, pain might be the only way to deal with the problem. As cruel as it may sound, you can often retrain a kicker by kicking back hard enough to cause a small amount of pain at the moment your bedmate starts kicking. Chances are good that your partner will never remember being kicked back, which doesn't make it any less cruel, and the behavior modification will take place at a very deep psychic level.



If you decide to give this a try, be aware that this kicking is often related to early childhood experience and you're likely to see some other form of childish behavior emerge in place of the kicking once it has been controlled. You'll have to decide whether you'd prefer to deal with it in another form or leave things as they are.



Twitching

Another tricky problem is a twitchy bedmate. I had a girlfriend who twitched for a minute or two every night before falling asleep. I was usually half-asleep when it started, and she'd finish her twitching with the sleep shudder, the myoclonic jerk, which would almost always jolt *me* back to consciousness. We enjoyed falling asleep in each other's arms, or at least she did...all too often I found I had to pull away as soon as she began to drop off.



Coping with a blanket hog

When it comes to types of sleepers, there are logs and there are thrashers. Thrashers tend to be blanket hogs, and this can be particularly irritating if you don't have an acre of blanket. The first thing to try is, sure enough, an acre of blanket. A king-size sheet and blanket might be just the thing to provide your partner with plenty to grab and steal while still leaving enough for you.

If experience has already proven that this idea won't work, you might want to try using a pair of single-sized sheets and blankets held together with a few button-sized bits of Velcro.

Keep them small so they're easily torn apart when the frenzy starts and hold together nicely when you cuddle or make love. Remember that the hook half of Velcro can be very uncomfortable on the skin if you sleep naked, so remember to share this discomfort equally by alternating hook-loop-hook-loop on each of the sheets and blankets.



Environmental noise

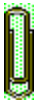
Uncommon sense



If other noises are a problem, the common sense solution is earplugs. These can be especially useful for apartment and rooming house dwellers who have to endure noisy neighbors or night shift workers who need to sleep through the daytime activities of those living around them.

The “uncommon sense” may be the *type* of earplugs you choose. Any new appliance, from eyeglasses to a dental plate, takes time to become comfortable. It may be a few minutes or it could be a few weeks, but once earplugs do become comfortable you can use them for virtually the rest of your life whenever they’re needed.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;dogbark.bmp} The nice thing about earplugs is the constant protection they provide. The most bothersome noises to most sleepers are not the continuous hum of an air conditioner or the wind whistling through the branches but sudden, abrupt sounds such as dogs barking, refrigerator motors switching on and elevator doors opening and closing. Every home has a variety of abrupt noises, but most of them are well below the level of those I just listed, and these softer sounds are a lot less troublesome.



Earplugs won’t kill noise completely, but they will drop the level of disruptive sounds to a non-disruptive level, which is all that’s usually needed. The downside to earplugs is that they exaggerate internal noises. You’ll usually find that earplugs make heartbeat, breathing and salivation much louder, but these tend to be soothing sounds once you get used to them.

An inexpensive solution



Standard industrial-type sponge rubber earplugs can be purchased at most tool shops, industrial supply depots or workwear stores for less than a dollar a pair, and closer to a quarter a pair if you buy by the gross. Each pair should be used for no more than a week, less if you are prone to infections or don’t wash your ears often. Bacteria will grow on them in the daytime and you could risk an infection if you don’t change them regularly. Foam earplugs are too porous to be washed effectively unless you soak them in a hot soap or alcohol solution. Soap might cause skin sensitivity and alcohol might cause the foam to deteriorate and become hard or scratchy.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;rx.bmp} Not everyone finds the standard foam-rubber industrial-type earplugs comfortable. Many pharmacies offer a range of non-disposable earplug designs you can try. If plastic and rubber are too uncomfortable for you, there’s still an option open to you. My favorite type of earplug is cotton batting, and you can make your own cotton earplugs by wadding up a bit of cotton in water or saliva (I prefer saliva, and I don’t feel it’s disgusting in the least), perhaps adding a drop of cooking oil or mineral oil to each wad. The oil is added for comfort. Cotton will dry out in your ear overnight and the drop of oil will insure that the wad doesn’t feel like sandpaper against the sensitive skin of your ear canal.



A ball-shaped wad may not fit your ear canal as snugly as a sausage shape, so experiment until you find a size and shape that fits your ear. Don't make it too tight, because the wad will expand as it dries. The wad should be well saturated but not dripping when you insert it. The biggest drawback to cotton wad earplugs is the loss of insulation which occurs as the wad dries. This might not be a problem if you have no problem once you've fallen asleep, but it might make cotton a useless idea if your problem is staying asleep.



Making your own noise: what to do if you can't stand earplugs of any kind



Skin or nervous sensitivity may make it impossible for you to use earplugs of any kind. In this case, you'll have to try "sound-blocking". Use of a soothing noise source as a way of increasing your bedroom's background noise level will reduce the overall level of all other sounds, just like earplugs.



[Sound-blocking tips](#)



["Pink noise" generators](#)



[Audio tapes of natural pink noise](#)



[Things to watch for when using noise generators](#)

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Sound-blocking tips

The most obvious idea is a fan or air conditioner, or a TV or radio tuned to a dead or unused channel. If you use an air conditioner fan for a noise source or have an air conditioner in your bedroom, the ducts, filter and fan blades should be clean and mold-free or it might contribute to health and sleep problems of its own. A fan will circulate air in the room, increasing your oxygen supply and actually decreasing your drowsiness level (more on that later), but if you run close enough to your bed and at a high enough speed, it should produce enough wind noise to block out water hammer from your plumbing, passing trucks or trains, mosquito buzzes and snores.

If you're not already stewing about the day's events, you should find that the noise becomes invisible in just a few minutes. It may disturb you if you wake up in the middle of the night, but if so can simply turn it off. This type of noise source should not be used for more than a few nights, so if you need more long-term help, use this as a stopgap measure while you get that help. Fan and air conditioner noise is known to audio technicians as "white noise", a non-specific sound that covers a wide range of the audio spectrum. White noise is unnatural, and while it blocks other noises, it has irritating effects of its own.



"Pink noise" generators



If you like the idea of a soothing noise source, pink noise will provide a much better long-term solution. Pink noise is white noise with guts. It has more bass and treble to it, and mimics natural sounds much more closely than white noise. Pink noise is associated with the sound of distant waves crashing against the beach or a strong wind. You can mimic pink noise by using a better sound source than your fan or TV set.

A good stereo system tuned to a dead area of the dial will produce pink noise. It's important to have the speaker close to your head so that the sound is full-bodied and thus less irritating to your nerves.

You can also buy pink noise generators through better electronic specialty shops and sleep aid dealers. Some of them have built-in speakers and some will plug directly into your stereo system just like a tape deck or CD player. These specially-designed devices can range in price from \$25.00 for assemble-it-yourself kits to several hundred dollars for top-of-the-line units. You shouldn't need to pay more than \$100 for a fully functional unit. Stand-alone pink noise generators have the advantage of a built-in modulating device which creates swells and decays like waves crashing and receding on the shore.



Audio tapes of natural pink noise

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;surf.bmp} If you can't find or afford a proper noise generator, you can purchase audio tapes of the surf to play on a tape player usually for less than \$15.00. These tapes can be annoying because after twenty minutes or so there's a gap while the tape turns over. This gap in the sound might be accompanied by a loud clunk if your tape player automatically reverses itself. If it doesn't turn over, it may shut itself off, reporting another loud clunk to shock you back to wakefulness. Or it may not shut itself off at all, meaning that some time in the first week or two you'll likely wake up to discover that your surf tape has been broken.

You can avoid these problems by purchasing a special kind of tape called an *endless loop*, which works similarly to an eight-track tape in a cassette shell. Radio Shack still carries these tapes for \$10.00 or less, but they're becoming scarce. Simply copy your surf tape onto an endless loop tape and you can leave it playing all night while you sleep. It never shuts off and it never needs rewinding. I suggest the longest loop you can find, which in the current Radio Shack Catalog is twelve minutes, because there's a strip of metal sensing tape on the cassette where the two ends of the loop meet.



Every time the loop plays through you'll hear a gap in the sound lasting approximately a third of a second, and the less often you hear it the less disruptive it will be. These tapes tend to wear out rather quickly because of their design, so you'll need to make a new one every month or two. They'll also require that you clean your tape player's heads approximately twice a week. If you want pink noise as a permanent part of your sleep environment and you don't live near the ocean, you'll probably save a lot of money in the long run by purchasing an actual pink noise generator.



Things to watch for when using noise generators



Whenever you use a sound-generating device to mask background noise, be sure the sound system is grounded properly or you could get "60-cycle hum", low-frequency electrical buzzing, in the mix. This is much worse for you than white noise. Proper grounding of your appliances and electrical circuits will insure hum-free operation.



Be aware that noise of any kind is a nervous stressor. If your nerves are already so ragged

that you need sound-blocking devices to achieve some level of comfort, make sure that you do not use such devices for more than a short time while you look for alternative *long-term* solutions.



! Light as a sleep impediment

A much simpler problem for most people

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;citynite.bmp} Light shining through the eyelids is a much simpler problem to deal with. Some people are kept awake by street lights through the curtains or the morning sun shining in their eyes. Some even have trouble sleeping in the city when it's cloudy enough to reflect and amplify night lighting.

The solution to this problem is as simple as it seems: cover your windows better! If a mate's love of bright sunrises is a problem, a good compromise solution might be covering the windows in a way that allows light through but keeps direct light off of your eyes. If your partner's reading habits are the culprit, a sleep blindfold might help if it's not too uncomfortable. If this is a hardship, an arrangement similar to a hospital curtain could be rigged to isolate the reader's light from your eyes.



Effective sleep temperature

Keep your cool for sound sleep



You may love the feeling of baking under a hot sun all day, but at night you have different needs. If excessive heat keeps you awake in the summer, try a ceiling fan. They have become so popular that they can now be purchased just about anywhere for under \$50.00. The slight breeze they create adds to what the weathermen call wind chill, meaning an 85 degree night might feel closer to 75 degrees with the fan blowing gently.

In particularly hot periods you may sleep with no covers, and men might find that the breeze tickles their leg hair. This can be dealt with by increasing the fan speed enough to cool the room even further and covering yourself with a sheet. A fan mounted in a bedroom window will have a similar effect, but these usually operate like room fans and could be quite noisy.

No sweat



If you tend to perspire heavily in your sleep, sprinkle talcum powder on the sheets to absorb it. This shouldn't cause a cleaning problem since sweat-soaked sheets need to be changed often anyway. The powder probably won't last long each night before it stops absorbing sweat, but it might be long enough to allow you to comfortably drift off. Don't overlook switching from synthetic to all-cotton sheets and sleepwear. For many people who perspire in their sleep, cotton is the only suitable material for bedclothes and bedding.

Room temperature is just as important as body temperature. The ideal air temperature around the head for easy, sound sleep also happens to be the same temperature recommended for energy savings: 65 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit (15 to 17 Celsius), preferably at the lower end of the scale. I personally prefer it much colder, down in the mid-fifties if possible.



Selecting the proper mattress

Different strokes



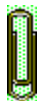
There are few things you can do to contribute more to sound, comfortable sleep than selecting the right mattress for your body and temperament. Mattresses are always a subjective purchase since everyone has different standards of comfort. There has been a long-standing axiom in health circles that everyone needs a firm, supporting mattress for good spinal health, but according to several practitioners I've spoken to over the years, firmness should always take a back seat to comfort. Some cannot sleep well on anything less than stiff springs. Some sleep more soundly on a hard floor than a soft bed. Others prefer something that holds them like a cradle, such as a waterbed.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;waterbed.bmp} If you can afford a waterbed, there are now styles and types to appeal to just about every type of sleeper. The old-style water mattresses which felt like a giant hand can now be purchased with coiled, waveless mattresses that feel more like air. Gel kits are available to prevent any movement of the water. Air mattresses are still popular, particularly with those who like a firm mattress with no springs.

Couples can now purchase twin waterbeds so one partner can sleep on a rolling surf while the other sleeps on motionless gel. Many are switching to non-traditional mattresses. An old girlfriend purchased an eight-inch slab of heavy foam which she simply covered with a sheet. I have friends who can't tolerate plastic and sleep on all-cotton futons. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be a way to purchase all-cotton futons which don't have traces of DDT, so gases may be a problem regardless of how you buy. My own bed is a combination of one soft four-inch foam slab and one medium-hard. When I feel a need for more comfort, I'll sleep with the soft side up, and when I want support I'll simply flip the two over.

Coil springs: almost as despicable as taxes

One of my worst sleep enemies is the coil spring. I despise mattresses with springs I can feel through my thinly-insulated hips and ribs. Some people can't sleep on anything else. If you're one of those people and jutting springs are a problem, look into a wool mattress cover or a one-inch-thick stiff foam sheet to insulate you from the steel.



You've probably heard it more often than you'd care to remember, but I'll repeat it here anyway. You'll use your mattress more than any other piece of furniture in your home, and it ought to be something you can't just live with, but truly enjoy and appreciate. It's worth the investment in your own well-being for a mattress that suits you.



Accessorizing for extra comfort

The gadget factor



Many people have their own unique sleep gadgets and devices. The use of sleep accessories to improve your comfort can go a long way toward relieving a lot of emotionally-induced insomnia. Among my tricks are a velveteen pillowslip and a second pillow which I place between my legs. Velveteen quiets hair noise, shuts out the noise of blood coursing through my ears and neck, and feels more comfortable on my face than cotton or most synthetic materials. The pillow between my legs is designed to help keep my spine aligned properly, since I have a tendency to lower back problems. It is a pain to rearrange every time I turn over, so I don't always use it.

Just as infants sleep better with a tape of womb noises playing in the background, many adults seem to need tactile stimulation. Body pillows were something of a fad a few years back, and they seem like a sound idea. A body pillow is usually a four- to six-foot pillow designed to feel like a giant teddy bear or a body lying next to you. People grieving the loss of a mate or the end of a relationship seem to sleep better with a body pillow, but they are not inexpensive items. Prices can range from \$35.00 to well over \$100.00.

Neck pillows and no pillows



Many chiropractors and health shops offer a neck pillow which a lot of people find indispensable to comfortable sleep. This pillow tends to be thicker at the bottom edge than in the middle so it supports the neck in a more natural fashion. There may be something to the claims by male migraine (cluster headache) sufferers that "neck pillows" can prevent cluster headache episodes by forcing a more natural alignment of neck and skull bones, reducing the risk of painful blood vessel dilation and nervous inflammation.

Some experts advise using no pillow at all. If you sleep on your back, that's probably good advice. Most people sleep on their side, and if you sleep this way a pillow is needed to prevent strain to the neck. Some people naturally bunch up a fat pillow so it offers greater support to the neck, but it's not certain whether big, fluffed pillows are healthy. They could block breathing from one side of the nose, which many holistic practitioners say is a definite no-no.



Morning fatigue: a chemical hangover or bad air?

“Twentieth-century disease”



It seems that more and more of us are falling prey to symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome or “twentieth century disease”. This severe fatigue seems to be a cumulative effect of the chemicals in our food and environment, and the unnatural way in which so many of us live. Some simply suffer from morning fatigue, a sense of apathy that seems to disappear by noon.

The culprit could be synthetic chemicals in your bed or bedding. I love foam mattresses, but I will not sleep on a new foam mattress if I can purchase a used one. Synthetics of all types seem to take up to a year to “gas off” to the point where the fumes released as a leftover of the manufacturing process are down to a minimal level.

Allergies can also be a problem. Feather pillows can be pure hell for people with hay fever, and they can even cause neurological symptoms that seem to be psychosomatic once the hay fever has been treated. Some people deal with allergy by eliminating all natural materials and replacing them with synthetics, but this may have undesirable effects. Cotton seems to be the most benign material for clothing and sleeping, but as I mentioned, almost all cotton-producing land has been fouled and it's too late to buy cotton 100 percent free of DDT.

A common culprit: stale air



Morning fatigue can also be caused simply by bad air. Today's homes are becoming more energy-efficient, but the price of this sealing is decreased fresh air flow. Oxygen levels drop during the night in the bedroom of a well-sealed home, which is fine for putting you to sleep but horrible for waking up refreshed and alert. If energy consumption is a concern in your household, you can still find a fresh air solution without wrecking your power budget.

Most bedrooms don't have their own thermostats, and electric or forced-air heat will only kick in when the thermostat drops below a certain level. In homes where I've needed more fresh air, I've opened a window and placed a rolled-up towel over the bottom of the bedroom door to allow fresh air in but not through. The cool air stayed mainly in the bedroom, far from the thermostat. I often woke to a cool bedroom, but the rest of the home was warm. I compensated with extra covers and felt all the better for the cool, fresh air.



Cigarette smoke is another possible source of morning fatigue. Many smokers don't realize that their bedtime cigarette in a bedroom with closed windows will be like smoking lightly all night. This second-hand smoke is worse than regular smoke because it's not filtered, and it's more harmful to the body because as our body clocks cycle toward their low points early in the morning we are much more vulnerable to harm from toxins.



You can prevent *lingering* morning fatigue by putting off that first cigarette until after breakfast. A hungry body needing nourishment and energy is less able to handle toxins, and experts have

estimated that a cigarette before breakfast is three times as harmful as one after breakfast.



Dealing with that pesky mosquito

Bug spray: a no-no in the bedroom

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;mosquito.bmp} Under no circumstances do I advise keeping a can of bug killer at your bedside to zap a stray mosquito that keeps bussing your head. Type A personalities tend to lie awake waiting for the mosquito to light in an identifiable place so they can put it permanently out of commission. If you're the type who never feels up to turning on the light and killing the offending pest, you'll have to live with it, probably all night. Most people don't realize that mosquitoes bite more than once. Some species will bite you fifteen times or more if allowed the opportunity.

If all you want is enough peace and quiet to drift off so that you don't notice the beast, pull the sheet up over your head leaving just enough room for ventilation, and keep air circulating in the room somehow. Your breath is loaded with carbon dioxide which the mosquito uses as a homing signal, and in mosquito season the best protection you may be able to get is to have a fan blow across your head all night to disperse your breath and provide a wind barrier to the mosquitoes.



Insomnia and the natural environment



Geographical location has an effect on sleep, and I deal with this in more depth in another section. Some say that the earth's magnetic orientation has an effect as well, although it doesn't seem provable at this time. Winston Churchill was a big believer in magnetic effects, and regardless of where he slept he found he could not get adequate sleep unless his bed was aligned to the Magnetic North Pole.

“Something in the air”

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;cloudl.bmp} Atmospheric pressure seems to have a much more measurable effect on sleep, although it might seem subtle compared to more direct biological and physical stresses. If you don't believe this, ask your local arthritis sufferer who feels atmospheric pressure changes reflected in the level of discomfort in the joints. Some types of weather adversely affect people's sleep. I sleep best in periods of change and always seem to awaken most refreshed after a thunderstorm. Some prefer the rainy season for sleep, while others find the dog days a good time to catch up on lost sleep.

One factor that does seem to make a difference is the level of ion activity in the air. If you have an air cleaner, it probably comes with a negative ion generator. This is supposed to enhance alertness by changing oxygen molecules into more readily-absorbed negative ions. Anything which enhances alertness can interfere with sleep. You may want to turn the ion generator off at night, or attach it to a timer which turns it on an hour or two before you wake up. Ion balance in the air changes with the weather as well, but you can't always predict that a high-negative day will be sunny and bright or a high-positive will be cloudy and dull.

“Astrophysical” sleep disturbance



A great many women seem to suffer “astrophysical” sleep disturbance tied to their menstrual cycle, which in turn seems to be tied to the 28-day lunar cycle. This sleep disturbance is not likely to be related to moon phase itself, but more toward chemical imbalance which can be corrected with simple adjustments in diet during the period of highest stress. Men can suffer the same distress, although its symptoms tend to be noticed less inwardly as symptoms and feelings and instead are often projected outward to the surrounding environment.



! Crossing the first hurdle; how to fall asleep



Due to the possible influence our choice of graphical images may have in your perception of these descriptions, and potential prejudices that may be instilled as a result, no special graphics are used for the remainder of this chapter.

? **Achieving the relaxation response**

? **Technique 1: thought-stopping**

? **Technique 2: thought manipulation**

? **Technique 3: focusing on a single thought**

? **Technique 4: mantras and sounds**

? **Technique 5: relaxing the body**

? **Technique 6: self-directed relaxation imagery**

? **Technique 7: structured visualization**

? **Other techniques**



Achieving the relaxation response

Teaching yourself the unteachable

The most common *surface* cause of insomnia is inability to relax. Naturally, it follows that the best way to deal with this difficulty is to learn a few skills for relaxing yourself enough to allow sleep to come more easily. These skills will seldom cure a condition of chronic or regular insomnia, but they can go a long way toward improving your ability to cope on a day-to-day basis with problems which have no obvious or readily-available solutions.

This section will teach you a wide range of relaxation techniques which you can pick and choose to suit your temperament and needs. They all require some discipline, but none of them need more than a little practice in order to perfect them. One important side benefit to learning these techniques is that they are much like riding a bicycle. Over the years your skills can get a little rusty, but it won't take more than a bit of refresher training to regain those old skills should you ever need them later.

Side benefits

An additional benefit is that most of them can be used to achieve relaxation for other purposes in situations where you don't necessarily need to sleep, but just to enhance your alertness. Until I discovered a working technique that fit my own needs, it had been fifteen years since I was able to fall asleep in a moving vehicle. As long as I keep my technique in trim, which usually doesn't take more than three or four tries after even the longest period of abstinence, I can fall asleep just about anywhere provided there's no other impediment to sleep.

The secret behind this technique is the achievement of the relaxation response, reaching a state of consciousness where your brain is creating alpha waves instead of the beta waves associated with alertness. Once you're in a state of alpha, technically you're not yet asleep but your consciousness is in a nether region between sleep and wakefulness where it is very easy to drift into deeper sleep.

The trick, if you can call it that, is to become conscious of when we're in an alpha state and realize that we can choose from that place whether to remain in alpha, return to consciousness, or drift off into deeper states of consciousness. It's possible to retain self-awareness even in deep sleep, at least according to some expert meditators, but for most people learning and mastering alpha is all we'll ever want or need.

A skill you may already have

If you already practice a meditation technique such as Transcendental Meditation or a deep relaxation technique known to produce alpha rhythms and you don't use this technique to combat your insomnia, you may have some sort of mental block against remembering to use it when it's needed. This is not an uncommon problem, but it's tricky to deal with. Until you take care of the reason for that mental block, you may have to be satisfied with continually trying new techniques until they stop working for you, because until the root cause of the block is dealt with, any coping technique will stop working after a period of time.

Developing a personal technique for inducing alpha brainwaves is as close to a natural panacea for insomnia as it's possible to get, but it won't work all the time even for the healthiest people. It should also be remembered that in its own way, inducing relaxation even through these "natural" techniques is every bit as artificial a sleep aid as barbiturates.

The key seems to be to develop your own personalized technique which comes naturally to you. There is evidence that man is the only mammal to whom this ability does not come naturally, and that some people, among them the healthiest psychological specimens on the planet, seem to be able to do this naturally. That's a pretty strong indication of how important this ability is and how important it can be to find your own method of learning it.

Not all people's minds work the same way, so I'll outline seven different methods for achieving alpha-state relaxation. There are many, many more besides. Most churches and religions have their own methods which are taught to their followers. Any good psychologist will know a number of techniques they could teach you in just a few minutes. The psychology section of any bookstore will probably contain no fewer than twenty different books which teach different techniques and methods. Any religious, mystical or psychological content you wish to add is your business and your choice; I've tried to make these as neutral and universally applicable as possible.



Technique 1: thought-stopping

This first technique contains some basic information on relaxing the body which will be applicable to most, if not all, of the other techniques.

Step by step

If you wish to do this in the daytime, sit comfortably in a chair that supports your head. If you choose to do this at night before bed as a means of falling asleep, lie on your bed in your normal sleep position. If you want to lie down but not fall asleep, choose a posture different from your normal sleep position. For example, if you normally sleep on your side, lie flat on your back instead.

Allow all the muscles in your body to relax using any technique familiar to you. Some use a visualization technique to “see” their muscles relax. Some use tense-and-release exercises. Some “shake out” the tension. Any such technique which has proven to work for you will be fine for this exercise.

Once you feel physically relaxed, you should notice your breathing has slowed somewhat and perhaps become more shallow. Concentrate now on clearing all thoughts from your mind. Gently push aside every conscious or involuntary thought which enters your mind. This includes all thoughts about pushing your thoughts aside and judgments of how well you’re doing.

Many people find this frustrating and difficult, and it may take a considerable period of time to achieve results if you’ve been living a hyped-up lifestyle for many months or years. Don’t get discouraged, and if you find that this is just too difficult or disturbing thoughts keep surfacing which cause your heart to race, try a different technique instead. Most people will find the tone and frequency of their conscious thoughts slows considerably in just a few minutes, and with practice it will only take a few seconds. You might also find if you’ve never tried this before that you drop off to sleep very quickly, whether you want to or not, the first few times you try this.

If relaxation is all you wish to achieve, keep pushing thoughts aside until your mind seems clear and alert, and go no further. You can stay in this state as long as you like, and all you need to do is carefully monitor the level of mental activity you allow in your mind. But if you wish to achieve sleep you’ll have to go further than this, and you need not pay attention to your level of alertness. All that’s important is that you keep pushing aside thoughts as they come into your mind, and they’ll keep coming and coming and coming.

The key to this technique seems to come from the effect all this denial of thought has on your brainwave pattern. As you focus on the internal activity of your own brain, you let go of your focus on the outside world. This letting go of external stimuli allows the body to relax naturally, without your conscious effort. As the trivial thoughts pass out of your consciousness, you are faced with deeper, less conscious material, and the normal everyday thinking part of your brain relaxes naturally, once again without your conscious effort.

Eventually you’ll start to see dreamlike images rather than have normal waking thoughts, and when this starts to happen, your first level of unconsciousness relaxes naturally. Once that has occurred, you’re in light sleep, and if you wish you can simply drift along with these dreamlike images and let them carry you into sleep.

However, if you get this far normally when you fall asleep and still seem to wake up, you’ll have to take your mind one step deeper by pushing aside these dreamlike images. These images may be replaced by odd, nonsensical thinking patterns as the carbon dioxide

levels in your bloodstream rise. Unless you've had experience with altered states of consciousness or trance states, you should discover that you can't take this exercise much further before you are no longer able to push aside your thoughts.

When this happens, you'll be at least in stage 2 sleep, a very deep state of relaxation, and some people can even manage to carry themselves into deep, delta sleep and still retain what feels like conscious awareness. If you're one of those people who can do this, you may have some problem other than simple insomnia, or you may only think you have insomnia because you don't sense yourself ever losing consciousness. This is a relatively rare condition, however.



Technique 2: thought manipulation

This technique will not produce good results if used for relaxation and should only be used for amusement, “pure” meditation or sleep induction. It is also much gentler than the first technique and may be more beneficial to those who find themselves shocked or disturbed by the thoughts which emerge into their consciousness.

Step by step

Instead of concentrating on ridding your mind of all thoughts, try instead to follow those thoughts and consciously make them dreamlike. You should be able to achieve this by deliberately trying to make your thoughts follow an illogical sequence or to turn your daydreams or memories of the day’s events into an illogical sequence. In theory, this practice should actually be counterproductive to inducing sleep, but in practice it almost seems to kick-start the mind into creating the conditions of pre-sleep which normally accompany these flights of fantasy. You’ll know the technique is working when you find yourself having difficulty manipulating your thoughts into illogical sequences, or discover that they’ve gotten so illogical that they don’t need any help from you.

This technique may be particularly difficult if you’re an especially logical person or in a period of your life when you’re logically dominated. Those who have a regular creative or imaginative outlet, perhaps through reading or playing an instrument, should find this technique much easier to use than those who do not. It may also be unworkable for you if you’re overly serious about it. Resolve to let your mind run wild and have fun with it rather than doing it as a way to prove to yourself that you can be illogical.

This is another technique which may result in disturbing thoughts or images surfacing. If you find that this is a persistent problem with you whether you’re using a sleep induction technique or not, see a counselor or psychologist to help you come to terms with these thoughts. Chances are that it’s not the thoughts which bother you as much as it is the feelings they trigger in you, and you’ll probably need help in coming to terms with those feelings.



Technique 3: focusing on a single thought

The more disturbing your own thoughts are to you, the more protection you'll need from their physiological effects if you're to work around them and get to sleep. Some people find that focusing on a single thought acts as an anchor to reality against which they can measure and understand any unusual mental phenomena. This technique is frequently used in meditation.

Step by step

Instead of clearing your mind or directing your thoughts, choose a single thought to focus on to the exclusion of all else. For purposes of inducing sleep the thought should have a relaxing connotation or be associated with sleep or unconsciousness. Some people choose a point of white light when meditating and change it to a black hole when inducing sleep. As a child I used clouds. This is actually the "counting sheep" technique. As soon as any thoughts enter your mind, intensify your focus on that one thought. Eventually you'll lose the ability to keep your focus on that one thought, at which point you'll be unconscious.

It will probably be wise to change that thought regularly, because it seems that we acclimatize ourselves to certain images until they take on almost God-like qualities in our minds. Eventually we seem to reach a point where it seems as though God fails us somehow, and at that point if you don't change the image or the technique, it will be an uphill battle achieving results with it from that point on. Select your images carefully and with attention to the feeling that the image gives you.



Technique 4: mantras and sounds

This is really just a variation on the previous technique. Instead of using a visual image, focus on a number, a vowel, or a one-syllable word.

Step by step

You'll probably have your best results choosing a sound that flows easily from the tongue, such as "One" or "Mmm". It appears that certain sounds, and even our mental images of the sounds, have powerful impact on our emotions. The thought seems to set up a resonating vibration at the subatomic level which seems to balance us at a physiological level.

Different sounds seem to have different effects on different people, perhaps reflecting the way we all react differently to the sound of orchestral strings or a distorted electric guitar. Transcendental Meditation (TM) instructors give new pupils a sound taken from a Sanskrit syllable said to resonate specifically with the pupil's psyche, and these sounds are not to be shared. These sounds are known as mantras, and if current research into subatomic physics is any indication, it does appear vitally important that you choose your "mantra" carefully and watch for any adverse side effects. The wrong sound could indeed have nasty effects on a sensitive person.

Once you've chosen your sound, focus on the sound mentally, either by chanting it in whatever rhythm feels comfortable to you, or if it's a continuous sound such as "mmm", hearing it in your mind's ear continuously and as loudly as you can, pushing all other thoughts aside.

A variation on this variation is to chant the sound in time with your breathing. In your mind's eye, follow the air through your nostrils, into your lungs and back out your nostrils again, repeating the sound as you do, and perhaps even "seeing" the sound drift in and out of you on your breath. It's probably best to avoid tying the sound to your breathing until your respiration has slowed and you can follow it in your mind's eye without your breath being interrupted by your attention. At all times through all these exercises you should keep your breathing as natural and involuntary as possible.



Technique 5: relaxing the body

None of the previous techniques are likely to work for you if your body is not sufficiently relaxed. If you find yourself getting restless, itchy, twitchy, or having to swallow frequently while you attempt any of these exercises, you need more physical relaxation. Try the following exercises to unwind before you use the mental techniques. Chances are good that if you take care of your physical relaxation before doing mental work, the other exercises will come more easily to you. They might not even be needed if the surface cause for your insomnia is physical tension.

[? Exercise 1](#)

[? Exercise 2](#)

[? Exercise 3](#)

[? Exercise 4](#)

[? Closing note](#)

[?](#)

[?](#)

[?](#)

Exercise 1

1. About a half-hour before retiring, take anywhere from a minute or two to a half-hour to do a full-body stretch. Start with the most tension-prone set of muscles on your body. Don't worry about choosing the wrong set of muscles, because the most obvious tension points are probably the most immediate problem. Stretch them lazily and easily, as opposed to an athlete's performance stretch. You don't need to cause pain here, but merely to set the muscles in motion.

Continue by stretching every set of muscles you know how to stretch, from your scalp (if you know how to stretch those muscles!) down to your toes. The increased circulation from the stretch will create a relaxing warmth through your body and that relaxation will have an equal effect on your mind. Don't worry if you miss a few sets of muscles. Most people don't know how to stretch every muscle in their bodies, and many of us have a great deal of pain locked up in muscles we forgot we have. If you're already dealing with a distressing case of insomnia, the last thing you need is to start triggering blocked pain held in atrophied muscles. That kind of work can wait until you're better equipped to deal with it.

[?](#)

Exercise 2

2. This is a much more extreme relaxation technique than the previous method and should not be undertaken unless you are in good health and are relatively sure you will not risk cramping, tendon or muscle pulls, or hernia.

Lie on your bed, preferably flat on your back with no pillow under your head, and slowly build a wave of tension through your whole body. Let it stiffen every muscle you have until your breathing becomes restricted and you're even a little unsure about whether you might soil yourself! Once you've heightened the tension to the point where you can't stand it one more second, slowly begin to release the tension until you feel no tension left. Once you've relaxed from this wave, you should be better able to pick out areas of tension in your body. Repeat this tension wave until you can find no more tight areas once you have fully relaxed the tension. This works particularly well for twitchiness when you've been unable to find any other cause for it.



Exercise 3

3. This exercise takes more time, but it is much safer than the tension-wave for those with physical difficulties. Repeat the same process as mentioned above, but isolate specific groups of muscles to tense and release, and cycle through them in turn. If your mind seems to be geared to relaxing from the feet up, start with the head. Tense and release facial and scalp muscles, then the neck, shoulders, arms, hands, chest, stomach and abdomen, buttocks and groin, legs, and finally the feet. If you're oriented the opposite way, start from the feet and work up. This exercise allows you to go easy on any area of your body which may be recovering from injury or prone to pulling or pain.



Exercise 4

4. Make a conscious effort to slow down your pace in the last half hour before bedtime. Gradually slow down everything you do, from your movement to your speech to even your thought processes. This may be one of the few useable techniques for those with physical problems who can't use the other techniques, and it might be a necessary preliminary step for high-pressure personalities who can't focus well enough to use the other techniques. Many people find the exercise quite simple...until they need it to help them through a bout of insomnia. Regardless of how difficult it seems, it almost always helps to wind you down enough to allow for easier onset of sleep.



Closing note

None of the above techniques will work if your problem is not relaxation, but too little tension. Some people find themselves in the position of being so open and vulnerable that they are struck with terror at the slightest bit of additional relaxation. I have had periods in my life where relaxation techniques have made me feel suicidal...or homicidal. Clearly what I needed then was a way to create more tension, not release it. If any of these techniques result in feelings of panic, stop using them immediately. You'll need help to overcome this fear. Try using Technique Seven as a means of creating a feeling of relaxation without necessarily working the muscles needed to achieve it.



Technique 6: self-directed relaxation imagery

This technique stems from using a concept or idea with strong sensory meaning rather than something as neutral as a sound or a point of light or darkness.

Step by step

Imagine that you're slowly descending down an escalator or elevator into the depths of unconsciousness. If descending is an unpleasant prospect for you, imagine you are rising into a heavenly feeling of drowsiness and sleep. If neither of these are suitable, imagine that you're on a cloud or a raft, drifting slowly away from your city, away from your country away from your whole world.

It might help to visualize signposts and to count them off with your breath. If you're drifting down, you could start at 100 and count down one "floor" with every breath. If you're rising, start at one or zero. Make the image as detailed as you can. This will help to clear everyday thoughts and allow you to work around conscious worries that may be keeping you awake.



Technique 7: structured visualization

Step by step

Imagine that you're a wax sculpture. If that's too personal or too difficult, imagine a wax sculpture of yourself lying on the bed with you standing over top of it acting as your own healer, angel or witch doctor. Imagine that this wax sculpture is lying under a warm purple lamp. Red is actually the warming color, but some researchers have found that when using visualizations like this, purple tends to achieve better results. Picture this waxen image, or you as the wax sculpture, slowly melting under the heat of this warm purple light. See the liquid wax slowly dripping off of you into a puddle on the bed. Follow the image through until you are nothing but liquid with almost no bodily sensation. By the time you reach this point you should be almost completely relaxed and easily able to drift off to sleep.

A variation on this technique has been offered in a number of books on sleep and relaxation. Rather than use a substitute image for your body, use your real body. If you have difficulty with your body image, change it for the exercise. If you have trouble even seeing your own body in your mind's eye, don't fret. The idea is to use whatever picture of your body you can find.

Mentally focus on specific areas of your body, from your feet to your head or vice-versa if top down has a more relaxing connotation to you, and try to see and feel that part of you relaxing. If this is difficult, use an anchor for the image, such as your breath or heartbeat. Imagine tension flowing out of that area through your blood or your breath. You may find some areas particularly resistant to relaxation, but once you get a feel for the technique just a few breaths should be all you need to relax each area of your body enough to help you fall asleep.



Other techniques

Variations on a theme



There are countless other techniques which will do the job, but these seven should cover most physical and psychological conditions and most personality types. No single technique works for everyone and none of them will work all the time, but they should provide a good starting point for teaching yourself to relax.

Once you develop a degree of proficiency with relaxation techniques you should discover that you can use them virtually anywhere to relax, recharge or fall asleep. But if you do decide to adopt one of these as your regular deep relaxation technique, don't select the one you use for inducing sleep. This could cause confusion of the mental training process and you may discover that your deep relaxation exercises put you to sleep at inappropriate times or your sleep-induction exercise has you out of bed, awake and refreshed, a half-hour after bedtime every night.



You may find a sleep program most effective if you use both a relaxation technique and a sleep induction technique, one at bedtime and the other at least eight hours prior to bedtime.



Better sleeping through chemistry



No, this isn't an advertisement for pharmaceuticals. Instead it is intended as a comprehensive primer on the effects of body chemistry on sleep and ways we can modify (usually that translates to "normalize") our body chemistry as a means of dealing with insomnia. This is an extensive section with several submenus.



[A healthy body sleeps more soundly](#)



[Drugs and sleep:](#)



[Correct nutrition and sleep](#)



[Blood sugar, hunger and sleep](#)



[Sex, sebum and sleep](#)



Drugs and sleep



Few things will have a more dramatic effect on our ability not just to sleep, but to achieve *restful* sleep, than the artificial chemical stimulants and depressants we use to get us through our day or night. Even if you thought you knew the effects of drugs on healthy sleep, you'll probably find some unique insights and discoveries here.



[Sleep aids](#)



[Safe withdrawal from barbiturates and tranquilizers](#)



[Caffeine: a common impediment to healthy sleep](#)



[REM sleep: the big loser with virtually all drug use](#)



[Alcohol: another sleep killer](#)



Correct nutrition and sleep



As Western society increasingly turns to ancient methods of health management as an alternative to costly modern treatments, more and more people look to their diets as a key to health overcoming disorders and discomfort. The good news is that sleep difficulties are usually one of the first problems to respond to dietary treatments. The bad news? I haven't found it yet.

- [? A few raisins cures summer insomnia](#)
- [? Modifying health at the molecular level](#)
- [? Amino acids and proteins for insomnia](#)
- [? Calcium and magnesium: natural nerve tonic](#)
- [? B vitamin deficiency: where one is low, they all suffer](#)
- [? Potassium and sleep](#)
- [? A few final words on nutritional treatments](#)
- [?](#)

! Blood sugar, hunger and sleep

Dieting, blood sugar levels, hypoglycemia...they're more than just buzzwords. They can have a profound effect on your nervous health, and thus your ability to sleep well. And even if you already knew this, it's likely there's a lot you *didn't* know about this aspect of human biology on sleep.

{ewc

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IC2.DAT;dinner.bmp}

[! Sound sleep and a hungry belly don't mix...or do they?](#)

[! Sound sleep and stable dieting](#)

[! Hypoglycemia: a non-illness contributes to poor sleep](#)



Sex, sebum and sleep

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;lips.shg}Here's something you probably knew all along...human contact is one of the most effective sleep aids known. But perhaps you didn't know *why* it is so effective.

[!\[\]\(c507f772dba2b921f86777f01218e570_img.jpg\) **Satisfying sex: assisting each other to better rest**](#)

[!\[\]\(4729e517bc6a7cd81c8025b9646574fb_img.jpg\) **Nature's own sleeping pill: a kiss goodnight**](#)

[!\[\]\(cbe80b694ebd74fcfe136a095b608235_img.jpg\)](#)

A healthy body sleeps more soundly

A balancing act

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;labstudy.bmp} In case your doctor, your mother or your neighborhood health food freak hasn't told you yet, let me fill you in on a little secret. A clean, efficient body takes care of its owner very effectively, and that includes allowing you to sleep well even under stress. Balancing our body chemistry offers many new avenues to improving your health and compensating for the stresses of our culture and our daily lives, and self-care in this area is constantly gaining in popularity among both the medical profession and the general population.

Body chemistry is *extremely* important to good sleep. In fact, I believe that balancing your body chemistry by means of diet, supplements and behavior modification offers you your best options for long-term self-care for sleep difficulties, and if nothing else seems to be working for you, this area of self-treatment will probably provide you with the help you need. In fact, I'd be willing to bet good money that anyone who discovers that normal techniques for improving sleep don't work is either suffering from a physiological imbalance or a badly out-of-sync body clock. It might even be safe to say that both could be the culprits, since one will aggravate the other.

A considered claim



I don't make this claim without a lot of substantial information to back it up. More than half of the North American population consumes drugs on a daily basis which are known to have adverse effects on healthy sleep. More and more doctors are beginning to recognize that they are not as all-knowing about nutrition and individual nutritional requirements as they once claimed so loudly, and as a result our society is starting to see that a vast segment of the population, perhaps the majority, suffers from symptoms of nutritional deficiency. And one of the classic symptoms of deficiency in at least a dozen essential nutrients is sleep disturbance.

We are also beginning to acknowledge a direct relationship between environmental pollutants, toxins and allergenic substances and a whole host of medical conditions, among them insomnia. But the good news seems to be that once we begin creating a healthier cellular environment, a great many of the psychological and emotional problems we normally link with insomnia seem to disappear.



Sleep aids

Sabotaging sleep: the help that hurts



If you've been taking sleeping pills of any kind for any length of time, even the mild herbal variety, you are sabotaging your own sleep. No medication designed to promote sleep is intended to work for more than a short period of time, and once they become a habit, prescription and over-the-counter sleep aids wash out vital nutrients needed for nerve health.



This nervous deterioration results in an increased need for the pills just to stay on an even keel, and eventually they stop producing any drowsy feeling at all. Tolerance is a factor to be sure, but it is exaggerated by the harmful biological effects of the drugs themselves. Once tolerance has been built up to any barbiturate (e.g. Fiorinal, Seconal, Tuinal, Nembutal) or diazepam (e.g. Noludar, Valium, Ativan, Serax, Dalmane), the only sedative effect they produce is psychological.



Safe withdrawal from barbiturates and tranquilizers

An extremely important warning for prescription users



Anyone who has been using tranquilizers or sleeping pills for a long period of time who still suffers must stop taking them eventually, because eventually the toxic effects can be lethal. These cumulative effects are worsened by the loss of vital nutrients, and this malnourishment makes kicking the drugs even more difficult. Fortunately there is a way to kick with relatively little discomfort, and in order to do it safely and painlessly, you need the right support from your physician, the people around you and the way you treat your body.

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The steps to safe withdrawal

First, find help you can trust



First, you must find a doctor who is willing to wean you off of your habit rather than force you to go cold turkey. It may not be a good idea to see your regular doctor for this help if he or she has been prescribing the pills, because if they choose to take you off cold turkey rather than slowly wean you, you may face a greater risk than you would by continuing to take the pills. Many physicians are not as aware as they could be of the dangers of withdrawal from barbiturates and tranquilizers. **Many people die from their withdrawal symptoms.**

Second, commit to quit



Once you find a doctor willing to help you quit your habit and have agreed on a program to do it, make the commitment by having your regular doctor cancel your prescription. This will cut off your supply line and prevent you from backsliding. You shouldn't feel a need to backslide anyway, not if the dosages are reduced gradually enough. You shouldn't even need to worry about changing your lifestyle, since gradual withdrawal seems to allow our buried *natural* urges to come to the surface easily and find safe, available outlets.

Your regular doctor may be offended that you would seek help for your problem elsewhere, but don't allow this to concern you. Any physician who would permit a patient to become addicted to sleeping pills is not someone I would entrust with my health. If they seem genuinely concerned, show them this information and tell them that you did not want to risk cold turkey withdrawal. If they understand the consequences of cold turkey withdrawal, they'll understand. If they still can't accept your actions, I wouldn't send my worst enemy to see them.

Third, replace what's been lost



Your physician may be able to prescribe other drugs which help to alleviate the side effects but do not act as mood-altering substances. This will help you to deal with cravings. You should also be aware that high doses of vitamin C and B complex are often used in treatment centers to assist pill users in withdrawal. If you wish to start using megavitamins, *add them to your program as gently as you subtract your sleep aids*, because along with the accumulated toxins

from the drug itself, these high doses of vitamins will tone your whole system by flushing all kinds of toxins. Too high a dose too soon could result in an overload of toxins being flushed through the liver, kidneys and lymphatic systems, producing symptoms resembling the flu. This is called "healing crisis" by some natural practitioners, and it's a sign that your system is clearing itself of a lot of poisons, but it could be too much for you to deal with all at once.



Pay particular attention to minerals when you're getting off of sleep aids. Unless you're on a strict diet you probably get plenty of salt in your diet, and most people these days pay attention to their calcium intake. But magnesium is needed with calcium to help balance nerve function, and potassium is needed by the muscles for electrical balance. Cramps and twitchiness probably indicate an increased demand for potassium and magnesium, at least temporarily. You can keep your potassium levels high by eating bananas, potatoes (even potato chips contain much more potassium than sodium), raisins, currants and dried apricots.



Avoid potassium tablets or capsules if you can. A banana or a handful of raisins contains as much potassium as even the strongest capsule and raw potassium salts are caustic to the digestive tract. Magnesium tablets can be purchased and consumed safely, although if you are prone to constipation you should avoid taking either calcium or magnesium within three or four hours of any meal or snack containing a substantial amount of fat.

The best balance for recovery from addictions seems to be one part magnesium to one part calcium until you've successfully beaten the habit. This means that if you take a one-gram calcium supplement daily, you should also take a one-gram magnesium supplement until you've kicked the habit and gotten through all withdrawal symptoms. In the case of tranquilizers, don't be surprised if withdrawal symptoms persist for weeks or even months after you stop taking them. These drugs are incredibly effective, but they come with the disadvantage of being extremely difficult to remove from the body.



Caffeine: a common impediment to healthy sleep

Paradoxical reaction



Oddly enough, some people find that caffeine acts more like a tranquilizer than a stimulant. Caffeine stimulates the release of insulin which burns up blood sugar and produces fatigue. Most people find that it acts as a stimulant and irritant. Caffeine also burns up nutrients needed for nerve health, particularly potassium and magnesium, and this can be just as detrimental to healthy sleep as the stimulant effect. Heavy caffeine users, those who drink more than five cups of coffee, seven cups of tea or six cans of cola a day, will need nutritional support and may also require a gentle withdrawal program.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;rx.bmp} Here too vitamin supplements will help and may also cause detoxification symptoms, since tea, coffee and cola all have other toxins which will accumulate in the body. You will need to pay particular attention to potassium, especially if you've had muscle cramps or skipped heartbeats.

There are also replacement drugs for caffeine just like there are for heroin and sleeping pills, and while I've never seen this mentioned anywhere, there is no reason why you couldn't use cocoa as an intermediate step to kicking caffeine. Cocoa contains some caffeine, but its main active ingredient is theobromine, a sister to caffeine which blocks withdrawal symptoms without producing a high level of stimulation. This should help you avoid the shattered nerves and headaches so often associated with caffeine withdrawal. You must use natural powdered cocoa for this purpose, because commercial chocolate may not contain theophylline or theobromine.

There's no free lunch...know the risks



Be aware that cocoa comes with its own set of risks. In addition to theobromine and some caffeine, it contains a stimulant called phenylethylamine, which is nearly identical to the stimulant our brains release when we fall in love.

The basis for chocolate addiction is very real, and understandable if you've ever been sensitive enough to feel the effects of PEA in chocolate on your mood. This might help you feel more secure, assisting you in getting to sleep, but it could also make you feel tense and irritable if that's your usual response to falling in love. As any romance addict will tell you, PEA can be a highly addictive drug, perhaps worse than caffeine, and it might pay to keep an eye on your behavior if you decide to use cocoa to get off of caffeine.



REM sleep: the big loser with virtually all drug use

Smokers aren't off the hook either



Smokers, whether of legal or illegal plants, aren't off the hook either. It is known that nicotine interferes with the onset of sleep. It is probably in your best interests to avoid smoking for at least twenty minutes before bedtime. The nicotine effect seems to wear off in thirty-minute cycles, so this will give you ten minutes to settle in and relax enough to avoid cravings. Tobacco also leaches vitamins and minerals from the body, adding another potential impediment to healthy sleep.

Most regular marijuana and hashish smokers have probably figured out that cannabis interferes with REM sleep, since sleep after smoking cannabis tends to be dreamless and deep. It is possible that this loss of REM sleep is partly responsible for the short-term fatigue and long-term loss of motivation experienced by many veteran smokers.



Alcohol: another sleep killer

“If it puts you to sleep, it’ll keep you awake”



Loss of REM sleep occurs with virtually every drug listed here, and over the long term this will have a noticeable effect on your psychological and emotional health. Early awakening and inability to fall back asleep is a familiar problem to drinkers and barbiturate users, and cannabis and tranquilizer users frequently feel an inability to get enough sleep no matter how long they stay in bed.

The stimulation which wakes barbiturate and alcohol users is known as the rebound effect. It is a result of the body’s attempts to compensate for the unnatural depression created by the drugs. After the drug has worn off, the body, which has been fighting the effect, tends to overshoot a normal frame of mind. Caffeine and cocaine users tend to get depressed, and barbiturate and alcohol users feel overstimulated. This happens as soon as the drug’s effects have cleared the system, which is why so many drinkers and sleeping pill users tend to fall asleep easily but have difficulty remaining asleep.

Many people don’t notice the downside

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;wine.bmp} When these substances are only used occasionally, you’ll often sleep right through the rebound effect and awaken only with a drug hangover. As use continues, the suppressed stimulation builds up and the body will awaken early as a matter of course, sometimes periodically and sometimes chronically, until the drug is stopped.

When it is, the former user often experiences a period of a night to several nights of “dream overload” when they awaken repeatedly from extremely vivid, colorful dreams. This occurs as the body struggles to make up for lost time. It’s as though the brain has a backlog of dreams to be experienced before sleep returns to normal. Unfortunately, if drug use has been prolonged, it may be impossible for the user to ever return to normal unless a way can be found to release all the suppressed stimulation or depression which was combatted by the dreams. This may require professional help, and it almost always requires the support of understanding friends and family members.

Over the long haul, use of any mood-altering drug will have a direct effect on your feeling of well-being, leaving you more fatigued and/or irritable than you would probably prefer. Chronic loss of REM sleep, and with some drugs the deeper phase of delta sleep, opens the door to a host of stress-related problems of which sleep disturbance may be one of the least harmful.

Theft from nature...a crime that never escapes justice



There’s another aspect to drug use and its effects on sleep which bears repeating. Alcohol and barbiturates rob the body of its own natural tranquilizers, reducing the raw materials needed by the body to make its own tranquilizers and stimulants. Over the long term, the systems designed to create these natural substances eventually atrophy like disused muscles, and retraining these biological systems is never easy or painless.

Chemical aids to sleep or alertness are fixtures in the lives of a great many people just as an artificial limb is a fixture to an amputee. The choice of whether this problem is to be dealt with or lived with is up to the individual, but it seems clear that without exception, these drugs all

rob the person of some ability to be at their best. I don't presume to know what percentage of sleep disturbance is drug-induced, or at least exaggerated by drugs, but I have no doubt at all that probably half of all "poor sleep" in the general population can be linked to the drugs we consume.

Put *that* in your glass and drink it.



A few raisins cures summer insomnia

Another personal observation



I used to hate summer. I hated it with a passion. Every day I'd wake up feeling wrung out rather than refreshed and alert. By mid-afternoon the last thing that seemed enjoyable to me was baking under a hot sun. At night I'd lay in bed and sweat, tossing and turning and twitching -- the twitching was the worst -- usually for an hour or more, before drifting off into what was often a fitful night's sleep.

Eventually I learned about nutrition and biochemical reactions to the environment. I discovered that I had a "fast" metabolism. My body flushed food usually within eighteen hours, and with it, all the vital nutrients. I needed a lot more food than most people I knew to get me through the day, but it still didn't seem like enough somehow. What I didn't realize was that it was enough. It just lacked a balance which suited my body.

Saved by the book



Several books on nutrition pointed to mineral imbalance as a cause for twitchy muscles. In my case I knew I got plenty of magnesium, so I looked at the rest of my diet. Sure enough, what was missing was potassium. It didn't take long before I realized that a handful of raisins, a few dried apricot or a banana in the evening had a profound effect on my ability to fall asleep, and most of the weakness I'd feel the next day was also alleviated. This simple solution didn't completely eliminate my symptoms, but it made summers much more bearable for me..

My situation is far from unique. I've seen reports by the dozen describing how insomnia has been "cured" by everything from thiamine to iodine. Once the underlying biological need was satisfied, the symptoms simply disappeared.



Modifying health at the molecular level

Striking the balance between nature and technology



The human body is extremely rugged and resilient. The mere existence of many people on this earth is evidence of that fact. But at the same time it is also incredibly fragile and delicate. It never truly functions at its peak and there is always something wrong with it regardless of how healthy we become. Man's search for perfection is unending, and in this century we've been blessed with tools for enhancing our lives undreamed-of by our grandparents.

Technology has afforded us the ability to modify our health directly at the molecular level using nutrients and specially-targeted drugs and therapies. And not a moment too soon, because that same technology has also been put to uses which place us under stresses and risks every bit as new and surprising. Sadly, the benefits of these advances never seem to come to market quickly enough to save the first victims of progress. But recent advances in our understanding of the metabolic processes and the resurgence of ancient techniques for enhancing health have provided us with a powerful arsenal for dealing with stress.

Sleep disturbance: the universal stress barometer



One of the first signs of stress most people experience is sleep disturbance, and stress will be a recurring theme throughout this book. But recall if you will that sleep disturbance is also one of the first signs of nutrient deficiency. This is because the two cannot be separated. Increased stress results in increased need for nutrients.



To this day the medical profession continues to resist the use of many natural treatments and adaptations of natural principles such as meganutrient therapies in the treatment of physical problems. Many prominent physicians have even gone so far as to claim that corrective nutrition and meganutrient therapies are dangerous, and at best are a waste of money.

But in the cold light of truth, there is no question that if meganutrient therapies constitute "food abuse", the effects are far less harmful than drug abuse, and in the treatment of relatively minor disorders such as insomnia there is no question that nutrient therapy is every bit as safe as psychological treatment (make no mistake, both have their risks), and when the two are combined they may be comprise the best treatment for our minor ills which our technology has afforded us. Each has historical roots in the practices of witchdoctors and priests, herbalists and witches. They are simply refined techniques.

Radical views?

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;barker.bmp}I couldn't blame anyone for considering me a faddist, a radical or a rabble-rouser. One's health should never be taken lightly, and we should no more jump head-first into any promising new trend as we would drive around a blind corner for the first time at high speeds. We need to know the risks involved and the probabilities of success before we can make a reasoned, responsible choice.

I've done more research into corrective nutrition and nutritional therapies than most medical practitioners and many nutritionists, and I've experimented carefully on myself for

nearly two decades. I have the background to trust what I'm telling you, but I don't know you personally, and until you've done enough of your own research and safe self-experimentation you have no reason to trust me. But I will state that I believe corrective nutrition is the most promising single method of treatment developed in the last thirty years.



Amino acids and proteins for insomnia



Part of what I said in the previous section was meant to qualify what was said on the subject of nutritional treatments in the section on drugs and sleep, but it was also intended to lead into this section, which deals in depth with root biological factors which can impair proper sleep.

An exciting discovery



One of the most exciting developments in this particular field which directly concerns insomnia is the discovery that the use of an amino acid, or simple protein, known as L-tryptophan, is one of the most effective, safe and side-effect-free treatments for temporary sleep disturbance ever discovered. This substance is one of thirteen similar substances which combine to create the proteins our bodies need to function, and it is found in varying amounts in all protein foods. It was proven repeatedly to reduce the time it takes to fall asleep, although it doesn't work for everyone and the effects wear off quickly.

You may know of this treatment. You may even have used it. You might also be aware that it has been illegal to purchase L-tryptophan for private use for several years now both in Canada and the US. It seems that a variety of bizarre and serious side effects occurred from the use of commercially-available L-tryptophan tablets and the government banned its sale, along with the sale of many other amino acid supplements.

Depending on who you choose to believe, the culprit behind these tragedies could have been the fact that single amino acids were never meant to be consumed by themselves in relatively large doses, or the manufacturing process resulted in an unnatural product or byproduct responsible for the side effects. It appears that the latter was true, as some manufacturers reported zero incidence of side effects from certain preparations, and even high doses of L-tryptophan in tablet form were no more than one might get from a couple of bananas or a good sized serving of turkey. I kept L-tryptophan in my home and took it on average once a week for more than five years, and the only potential side effect I noted was a degree of impairment in my judgment.

How L-tryptophan does its thing

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;cogs48r.bmp}Tryptophan seems to function by accelerating the production of a hormone called serotonin in the brain. This hormone is associated with relaxation and sleep, and doses of serotonin were once used to induce sleep for laboratory experiments. We can't buy L-tryptophan any more, but there are ways to obtain fairly high concentrations of it from everyday foodstuffs. Turkey, eggs, bananas and milk contain high levels of this particular amino acid, and the effect seems to be more pronounced when the food is eaten warm or hot.



Bananas and milk are particularly effective, bananas because they contain actual serotonin as well and milk because of the added tranquilizing effect of the calcium and the sugars which assist the conversion process. It seems modern chemistry has proven yet another old wives'

tale: a glass of warm milk at bedtime really does help you sleep. Cheese is often cited as the best tryptophan-containing food for sleep induction, but be careful of using commercial cheeses for this purpose. The fat will slow its absorption, making warm low-fat cottage cheese a much better choice.

The tryptophan is found in milk protein, so any high-protein milk product should do the job. One inexpensive option is a tablespoonful of whey powder in a glass of fruit juice, which tastes a lot like an Orange Julius. Whey powder can be purchased for much less than skim milk powder and is higher in protein. But regardless of how or where you get your tryptophan, it bears repeating that this is a short-term solution. Even though foods are natural, the use of these foods is for artificially stimulating brain hormones, and we cannot do this for any length of time without building up a high level of tolerance to the effects.

An “obvious” solution that isn’t

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;candy.bmp}On the flip side of the coin, a common sweetener may actually interfere with good sleep. Aspartame, known to most of us as NutraSweet, is made up of two amino acids known as aspartic acid and phenylalanine. Curiously, phenylalanine is to adrenaline, our alertness hormone, what tryptophan is to serotonin. NutraSweet breaks down into these two component chemicals when it enters the gut, and the phenylalanine is converted to adrenaline unless it has other jobs to do.

The thing to remember about amino acids or proteins is that they work as a team in repairing and rebuilding tissue. They won’t do their job unless several other amino acids are present. They are shunted off to the brain for the production of higher than normal hormone levels only if they are taken alone or with too little of their teammates. So if you eat a high-carbohydrate snack at bedtime with lots of NutraSweet, you’re probably not giving yourself a protein boost, but an adrenaline boost instead.



Calcium and magnesium: natural nerve tonic

A clue from modern medicine



Angina sufferers may know that injections of epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) have a startlingly quick effect on relieving angina pain. Some people may remember in days long past when magnesium salts were used as surgical anesthetics. Only in the past few years have we begun to discover -- or rather *rediscover* -- the critical role magnesium plays in nerve health. The uses of this mineral, a light metal similar to aluminum, in the human body are too numerous to list here. But one interesting fact about magnesium is that irritated nerves, excitability and insomnia will usually be found in people with deficiencies so minor that most physicians will ignore it.

Calcium is every bit as important to the nerves. In fact, it is so vital for nerve health that when it is absent from the diet, we'll pull it out of our bones to feed our nerves rather than let our nerves go completely raw. Most people don't need calcium for their nerves, because the regulating mechanism for this mineral appears to be quite sturdy and sensitive to the needs of our nerves.

But like any system it can break down or function abnormally in some people. Supplements help restore calcium balance by "flooding" the system with calcium, but we don't usually have to worry about overflowing our systems. The more we consume, the less of that amount we absorb. The same appears to be true of many nutrients, which is why meganutrient therapies can be so effective. We may have an enzyme system gone so awry that we need a thousand times the normal daily intake of a certain vitamin just to be able to absorb enough to stay healthy.

Magnesium: a more finicky nutrient



The regulating mechanisms for magnesium seem to be a little more finicky than for calcium. Most alcohol-related amnesia is probably traceable at least in part on magnesium deficiency, because two drinks will cause our bodies to excrete magnesium at four times its normal rate. A six-pack of beer every day or three cocktails could double your requirement for this mineral, and it's difficult enough to get the minimum requirement.

If you truly suffer from a magnesium deficiency, a supplement of a gram or more of magnesium, which is a safe amount for the vast majority of people, will have noticeable effects in two to four hours. Magnesium sulfate, or epsom salts, is fine for injections and used by many naturopaths, but this form of magnesium can't be absorbed if it's taken orally. In fact, it might have the undesirable effect of flushing other nutrients instead of adding to their stores.



A diet low in greens, nuts and whole grains (not just wheat) is probably a diet low in magnesium, and you will probably benefit from supplementation until you make an adjustment in your eating habits. Magnesium is referred to as a "relatively non-toxic" nutrient, meaning that enormous doses are needed before side effects occur and the side effects stop almost instantly when the supplement is discontinued. Very high doses are needed to cause harmful side effects in most

people.

Normal requirements for calcium and magnesium

Under normal circumstances, we need about a half-gram a day of this mineral and supplements of a gram or so are almost universally safe for short-term use.



Calcium, on the other hand, seems safer but it can be toxic in doses which would be safe amounts of magnesium. If you've ever known that dog-tired feeling after eating a big turkey dinner, you've felt the effects of calcium overdose. Depending on their diets, turkeys' flesh can be extremely rich in calcium. Lethargy is the first sign of excess calcium. Kidney gravel is not, as some believe, a sign of excess calcium but instead a symptom of deficiency of calcium, probably accompanied by too much oxalic acid. (Oxalic acids are most commonly found in high amounts in soy, spinach, cocoa, coffee, carob and other legumes.)



Perhaps the ideal supplement for everyday use is dolomite tablets. Dolomite is a form of naturally-occurring chalk that contains the same ratio of calcium to magnesium most commonly needed by our bodies. It is also the least expensive form of supplement containing both minerals. They occur in a carbonate form in dolomite, which is exactly the same form the calcium takes in TUMS antacid.

A caution about supplementation



As mentioned previously, calcium and magnesium supplements should not be taken with fatty meals by those prone to constipation. They tend to combine with fats to form hard, indigestible soaps. There was a scare around dolomite tablets several years ago which prompted a lot of users to stop taking them. It seems that some dolomite was mined from a source containing high amounts of other minerals, toxic minerals such as arsenic and cadmium. Most of the edible dolomite chalk sold today comes from a single, *safe* location.



B vitamin deficiency: where one is low, they all suffer

A global deficiency?

I hinted previously at the critical nature of B vitamins in nerve health. This is another deficiency where insomnia is usually one of the first symptoms. Having studied stress and nutrition for several years, I have come to the belief that nearly the entire population of the civilized world could benefit from a daily B Complex 50 supplement. This supplement is a balanced formulation containing either 50 milligrams or 50 micrograms, depending on the level of potency of the vitamin in human health, of every known B vitamin.

I believe in this need because the stresses placed on our bodies by technology and culture are so great and so constant that we appear to have a genuine need for it. The farther we get from nature the less efficiently our bodies function and the more stress we endure, placing us in a position of double jeopardy until we can restore our contact with nature and our bodies' normal, healthy functioning.

Haphazard experimentation and subjective proof



Taking pills is a haphazard way of dealing with dietary deficiencies, and our vitamin needs aren't balanced in the way that most vitamin preparations are. Experimenting with individual B vitamins can be equally haphazard because they all seem to interact with one another in some fashion. Many diagnostic systems have been developed to test for our absorption of specific vitamins, but none seem to be as reliable as we would like.

The real test seems to be entirely subjective: how does a specific supplement make you feel? There are few techniques I can recommend for diagnosing your vitamin requirements (in fact, as a layman I shouldn't be recommending any), but if you'd like to investigate this further, Michael Colgan has written one of the best guides to determining your individual requirements. It is titled "Your Personal Vitamin Profile" and Colgan has updated and refined his techniques over the years. This book also contains specific ideas for dealing with insomnia caused by less common deficiencies which I have not covered here.



Potassium and sleep

A double whammy



Potassium deficiency can result in two common problems which are both sleep disturbers: cramping and diarrhea. (Magnesium deficiency can also be a cause of cramping.) If either of these keep you awake, or wake you earlier than you'd like, you might have a problem similar to mine, which is a taste for salt and a diet low in the potassium needed to balance sodium.

I've already mentioned food sources for potassium, but if you can't eat nuts, potatoes or fruit, there is a way to increase your potassium intake without resorting to risky tablet or capsule supplements. Several salt substitutes, in particular a brand called No-Salt, are composed primarily of potassium chloride. (Table salt is sodium chloride.)

If you can't find this at your food store or pharmacy, or if the other ingredients in No-Salt cause sensitivity or frighten you, you should be able to purchase pharmaceutical-grade potassium chloride directly from a druggist. Dissolve no more than a half-teaspoon of No-Salt or a quarter-teaspoon of pure potassium chloride in at least eight ounces of water or juice, and never drink this on an empty stomach.

Potassium tablets: too little or too toxic



Potassium tablets are a bad idea for most people because potassium chloride is caustic, and even well-dissolved potassium salt should be buffered with food. Anyone with a history of gastric distress, ulcer, kidney problems, or taking any medication designed to increase or decrease blood pressure or fluid retention should consult their physician before taking a potassium supplement or stick with food sources for this mineral.



A few final words on nutritional treatments

Thyroid problems: no trivial matter



Thyroid problems can also have an adverse effect on sleep, but I have not seen a great deal of nutritional literature which addresses this problem. If you have a thyroid disorder in combination with a sleep disturbance, speak with your physician or endocrinologist about possible dietary aids to sound sleep. Megadose iodine supplements are not recommended.

Regarding supplements and doses



Before I close here, I want to clear up a bit of confusion regarding the dosages and use of supplements if I can. The dosages mentioned here are known as corrective doses, designed to rebuild body stores to a normal level. Once a proper metabolic balance has been restored, supplements can usually be discontinued providing you have adjusted your diet to include adequate amounts of any nutrients you may have been lacking.

For some of us, making these dietary adjustments is difficult to impossible, and stress factors may make any “normal” diet inadequate for many people over the long term. In cases like these, continuous corrective treatment may be the only option, but try to get the nutrition you need from your diet before developing a dependency on supplements.



It is possible that long-term use of supplements can have adverse effects on our enzyme systems resulting in an inability to maintain adequate nutrition without them. This wouldn't be a problem if we could be guaranteed a lifetime supply of supplements, and we may be able to have just that, but I believe it's more sensible to err on the side of caution.



Sound sleep and a hungry belly don't mix...or do they?

Bedtime snacks: preventive medicine?



Mmph! I shudder at the thought of going to bed hungry. It seems to me, and I know I'm not alone in this opinion, that few things could possibly be more detrimental to easy, sound sleep than going to bed hungry. Occasionally I wonder how many people wind up taking sleeping pills in order to stay on their diets and wind up doing more harm than good by taking the pills on an empty stomach or suffering the effects of these powerful drugs with less than a full nutritional load in their bodies.

Sleep experts generally agree that we sleep best when satisfied, not on a full stomach and not hungry. This may not sound very reassuring to the dieter, but there's a point to be considered here for those on weight loss programs. Dieters are more likely to "cheat" when they're tired and cranky after a poor night's sleep than when calm and well-rested. It seems to make more sense to consciously decide to satisfy hunger pangs a couple of hours before bed with a snack chosen in a reasonable state of mind than to binge on junk food in order to get through a day after too little sleep the night before.

Low-calorie prescription-busters



If you can't sleep without pills or food, here's an idea that might satisfy you. It seems that hunger can be sated with far less caloric intake with a high-fiber snack. An ideal bedtime snack might be a small bowl of warm, sweet (artificially sweetened if you like) milk over high-fiber cereal, or a bowl of oatmeal or muesli, or a *light* potato pancake (potatoes are high in fiber) with a small piece of cheese if hunger persists. (Fat and fiber seem to be the critical elements in sating hunger.)



Sound sleep and stable dieting

Realistic thinking



A light, high-protein snack such as a few chunks of tuna or a bulky high-fiber carbohydrate such as popcorn will usually help me get through the pangs and fall asleep, and I strongly suspect a great many dieters would benefit from the same treatment. (Mind you, with my present weight condition I'd probably be as well off eating a medium pizza every night for a few weeks.)

If this sort of snacking prevents needless cheating the next day due to fatigue, it seems to make any arguments against the extra calories appear rather pointless.

Diet insomnia: a temporary condition



There seems to be some evidence that this sleeplessness is a temporary condition and might be considered a withdrawal symptom. Many of those who report having had this experience say that in a matter of days, weeks, and occasionally months, the hunger pangs lessen and sleep is actually more refreshing as a result, but this is not a road everyone will want to take. If an after-dinner snack helps you stay on a gentler, less demanding diet and prevents the binge-and-fast yo-yo cycle of dieting which often stems from excessive and unrealistic discipline, I can't possibly see how it could be a bad thing.



The type of snack best suited to your needs probably depends upon your metabolism. If you have trouble falling asleep and no trouble staying asleep, anything to fill you up will probably do the job. Popcorn is one of the best high-bulk, low-calorie snacks for this purpose, and oatmeal is a good second choice. If you have trouble with premature awakening, a piece of meat or cheese might be more effective. The protein will keep blood sugar levels from falling too low and the fat will insure that the proteins are digested slowly throughout the night. These are just likely solutions and you may discover that the exact opposite type of food is what is actually needed.



Hypoglycemia: a "non-illness" contributing to poor sleep

- ? For some it's a tightrope walk
- ? Difficult to diagnose accurately
- ? Blood sugar burnout
- ? Proper management requires dietary change

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For some it's a tightrope walk

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;candy.bmp}Maintaining stable blood sugar levels is critical to the well-being of a great many people. There are few things more destructive to living than the drained feeling which accompanies low blood sugar. It was once believed that only diabetics suffered from this infuriatingly inconvenient syndrome, but specialists and holistic practitioners estimate that between 5% and 25% of the general population probably experience what's known as hypoglycemia.

In case you've been in Siberia since 1975, this non-illness, as doctors continue to describe it, is generally due to overreaction to sugars in the bloodstream. The pancreas pours out too much insulin too quickly, the sugars are burned off at an unnaturally rapid rate and the result is a range of symptoms which would fill a chapter by themselves., from fatigue to vertigo to nausea to emotional distress. Of course, insomnia and oversleep are on this list too. Low blood sugar can be triggered or worsened by many of the other problems I've described here, complicating the issue even further.



Difficult to diagnose accurately



The most frustrating aspect of hypoglycemia, both for sufferers and practitioners, is that it seems to be a purely subjective disorder. Standard laboratory tests involve challenging the patient with a high dose of sugar and measuring the reaction. The same patient can show violent shifts in blood sugar with no apparent symptoms on one day and on another become suicidal a few hours into the test. Others can show severe symptoms from only mild swings in blood sugar levels. The symptoms seem to define the condition, rather than the condition predicting the symptoms which seems to be the norm for disease treatment.

I believe the reason for this has a great deal to do with memory. What seems to be occurring is that shifts in blood sugar set up physical conditions similar to early traumas or past pain, and when this happens the sufferer may actually be re-experiencing past traumas as well as suffering true physical symptoms, which is why the disorder is so distressing to sufferers. The low blood sugar levels make the problem more baffling because this affects the brain's recall abilities. There may be a physical and emotional reaction to the memory but no mental connection with it. This may account for the severe emotional distress and panic which usually accompanies hypoglycemic attacks.



Blood sugar burnout

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;clock.bmp} Low or unstable blood sugar levels can interfere both with falling asleep and staying asleep. Most hypoglycemia symptoms have a detrimental effect on healthy relaxation, and many people who suffer from “mid-afternoon burnout” and recover quickly with a brief nap will find their nightly sleep impaired from time to time to make up for the extra sleep gotten in the daytime.

The best way to help insure that blood sugars do not fluctuate wildly is to take preventive action. This action usually involves finding the right balance between meal size, frequency, content, developing a keen awareness of how and when symptoms occur, and avoiding triggers until a means can be found to deal with the underlying cause of the disorder. Discovering appropriate meal sizes usually means reversing your eating pattern, so that breakfast becomes the largest meal of the day and dinner the smallest. Meal frequency is usually increased. The standard hypoglycemic diet is six small meals a day rather than three large ones to keep blood sugars more constant.



Proper management requires dietary change



Changing meal content usually means altering the nature of carbohydrate intake. Refined carbohydrates such as sugars, salty snacks and refined flours are quickly turned into energy and will often precipitate a blood sugar crash a couple of hours later. The preferred hypoglycemia diet consists of complex carbohydrates (starches and complex sugars), fiber, protein and reduced fat. An extra bit of protection can be gained from high-protein snacks or a balanced snack with food types suitable for hypoglycemics. Balanced snacks such as half a tuna sandwich on whole grain bread with little butter or margarine seem to keep blood sugar levels stable throughout the night, and provided that nothing else is interfering with healthy sleep, this should prevent premature awakening.

I suffer from hypoglycemia myself and I have often found that my inability to fall asleep is often due to a hunger pang I am too tired to recognize aggravated by stress. Once the hunger is satisfied the stress doesn't feel nearly as severe. I also use a fairly wide range of nutritional supplements to handle my hypoglycemia, and I'm sure this affects my sleep as well.



! Satisfying sex: assisting each other to better rest

Sweet dreams...and things before

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;heart.bmp} The soporific powers of sex are well-known, and the healing power of touch has been studied more and more frequently during recent years. Almost everyone knows the effect sex has on our ability to sleep, but few understand the reasoning behind this effect. Many of us have suspected that sebum, the waxes and oils on our bodies, also play a role in good health but the reasons have never been quite clear from a biological perspective.

Researchers have known for decades that orgasm produces a flush of histamine from certain sites in the body, and the resulting effect is one of relaxation. This is part of the reason why so many people tout sex as a sleep aid. But sexual activity is also highly stimulating, and without the release of orgasm it can result in irritability and actually detract from sound sleep. Strenuous, athletic lovemaking is just like exercise. Exercise stimulates the metabolism and the correct hormonal environment for healthy sleep is disturbed. Exercise close to bedtime is almost always prohibited by sleep specialists for this reason.

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Sexual dysfunction: more often a symptom than a cause



Certain types of sexual dysfunction can result in insomnia, but that's not a subject for this book. If you have such a problem and you believe it may be a factor in your insomnia, the help of a psychologist, a naturopath or nutritional counselor and a sex therapist should all be employed, but don't overlook the obvious. Simple chemical adjustments in your lifestyle may be all that is needed. Low-grade deficiencies and poor cardiovascular health are often at the root of sexual dysfunction, and whenever cardiovascular distress is suspected, **see your doctor**.

Couples will often have widely differing reactions to sex. One partner might find sex almost essential to good mental health while the other finds it disturbing to good sleep. In such a case a compromise solution needs to be discovered. You might choose to make love before or just after dinner, or at some other time in the day, and in a way that satisfies both partners' needs. One partner may need to achieve orgasm in order to sleep while the other may need to avoid it, depending on their particular metabolic situation.





Niacin tends to do the same thing when taken in doses of 50mg or more, but niacinamide does not seem to have that effect, and niacin taken in a multivitamin formulation doesn't appear to function nearly as dramatically, perhaps because the other vitamins tend to aid in the restoration of normal histamine levels. The antihistamine action of over-the-counter sleep aids, which contain the same ingredients as cold remedies, is at least partly responsible for their sleep-inducing effects. Diphenhydramine (DPH) is the most common OTC sleep aid, and I cannot recommend it due to the number and degree of side effects it produces. Like the ads say, if you must use it, remember that it is for *occasional* relief of insomnia.

Nature's own sleeping pill: a kiss goodnight

Sometimes the best solutions are the simplest

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;kidkiss.bmp} The metabolic changes which accompany sex are only part of the picture. The exchange of sebum through touch appears to be just as important. Sebum is concentrated on the face and scalp, and particularly on the lips, and the exchange of sebum through touch appears to have a powerful effect on hormone balance. I have not yet seen any research which points to the specific mechanism behind this, and it may be a while before we understand the phenomenon at any depth. Semiochemicals, the active components of sebum, are highly complex molecules which may even be unique to each individual.

So there really does seem to be something to the notion of a kiss goodnight sending you off to slumberland. Surprisingly, it doesn't matter who you kiss. It could be your mate, your mother or your mutt. The effect will be beneficial in any case.



Body clocks and sleep



Nature has its own rhythms, and we ignore those rhythms at our peril. While we may take some stock in biorhythms and lunar cycles, it's the rare individual who is more than passingly familiar with the effects body clocks have on our sleep.

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The rhythms of sleep and wakefulness



Most people are at least passingly familiar with biorhythms and the continuing controversy over whether or not they have value in predicting our personal behavior and performance. A great deal of press has been given to specific human cycles, particularly the menstrual cycle, with all the new advances in diagnosing, managing and treating the collection of symptoms commonly referred to as premenstrual syndrome (PMS). The circadian rhythms of human life have been discussed a great deal since Gay Gaer Luce first introduced us to the concept in his groundbreaking book *Body Time* nearly twenty years ago, but it is still little-known and little-understood by the helping professions, and most people still don't know what "circadian" means let alone how it relates to sleep and insomnia.

The circadian rhythm



Circadian comes from the Latin *circa*, meaning about or approximately; and *die*, meaning day. Circadian rhythms are, loosely speaking, the ebb and flow of our emotional tides in relation to the rotation of the earth, which takes "about a day". It appears that virtually every living organism of any complexity on this earth is affected by the planet's rotation and shows physical signs of responding to the daily cycle of cosmic movement.

Without going into depth on how we developed this link between the light and darkness of the sun and the rhythms of life, it is important to note that this rhythm is so deeply ingrained in our existence that even in space or buried deep in a cave an insulated from the passage of time, where one would expect the cycle to be distorted, the rhythms and metabolic processes continue to be tied closely to a 24-hour cycle.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;goldsun.bmp} This 24-hour metabolic cycle, which is most strongly affected by the action of the sun's rays, isn't as constant for some processes as it is for others. Research on Arctic and sub-Arctic residents exposed to weeks of continuous sunlight in summer and weeks of darkness in winter has shown that a regular sleep-waking cycle of 24 hours is the exception, not the rule, even though many other processes remain tied to a 24-hour rhythm. When people are isolated from clocks and sunlight for prolonged periods, most will opt for days that range in length from 22 to 27 hours.



More than just light and dark



Light is not the only type of radiation we receive from the sun, but it is the form of radiation most obvious to us. As our understanding of particle physics has improved, we have discovered everything from radio emissions to subatomic radiation all emanating from the heart of our solar system. The earth seems to act as a natural insulator against some types of radiation more than it does for others, which may help to account for why many rhythms remain constant in isolation from daily light-dark rhythms. It appears that the density of the earth causes rhythmic fluctuations in our exposure to many other types of solar radiation, and these fluctuations may be the reason why other rhythms aren't disrupted.

Highly individual responses



We seem to be affected by these rhythms based on our own individual sensitivities. Some are so highly sensitized to their internal cycle of sleep and waking and so out of synchronization with the 24-hour planetary clock that they feel very uncomfortable when not allowed to sleep on their own internal schedules.

“Larks”, the early risers who seem to be most productive in the morning, may be living according to a shortened personal day length. They may never be at their best in the evening because society forces them to stay up an hour or two past their biological bedtime and function according to cultural demands rather than their own needs.

“Owls”, on the other hand, rarely seem to want to get out of bed in the morning, perhaps because their longer internal day dictates to their metabolism that they need an extra hour or two of sleep. If you're an owl-type person, you can imagine how difficult it could be to work on a shift that moves back eight hours every two weeks. Larks have the same difficulty with advancing shifts.



Possible causes for lark/owl rhythms

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;owl.bmp} There are many possible causes for lark/owl rhythms. There could be a genetic component which predisposes people to run on an altered body clock, or there could be experiential components which relate to early experiences.

For example, sexual abuse victims often discover that the lingering fear of repeated abuse prevents them from falling asleep at night until the hour when they knew as children that the danger had passed. Those who may have been traumatized worst in the morning, perhaps by a parent who had violent hangovers, may adopt a lark pattern as a way of preparing themselves for the abuse and never discard it.

Other possible factors



Eating patterns could also result in an altered natural rhythm. Milk sugars create digestive disturbances in a large number of people whose heredity does not include the gene needed to digest milk, and a habit of milk with dinner could cause insomnia in someone resistant enough to the effects not to feel the physical symptoms except at a nervous level. Many, perhaps most people, are allergic to certain proteins. These can take anywhere from an hour or two to half a day to break down or connect up into the proteins which cause distress, and this delay could result in either owl or lark patterns if the offending food is a staple.

A deeply-established lark or owl pattern, perhaps dictated by genetics, is best discovered during a low-stress period in your life. At such a time, your natural inclination to early or late rising will indicate whether you have a deeply-established lark or owl pattern. I believe that these patterns can be altered or restored to normal even if they are laid down in the genes, although the more deeply rooted the pattern the trickier it will be to deal with. Life experiences are somewhat simpler to overcome, and habits based on ignorance simplest of all, although there appears to be some difficulty and stress tied to all attempts to rewrite this part of our software.

A pattern not always worth changing



I also believe that even birth defects can be corrected, but the question always comes down to whether the individual sees enough reward to merit enduring the difficulties involved in correcting such problems. Quite often the sacrifices simply appear to be too great to warrant the effort. I will focus here on many of the simpler techniques for restoring natural rhythms, as work involving altering genetic patterns and deeply-established daily rhythms is still considered experimental and in many circles looked upon as quackery. Even the “simple” solutions I offer here are not always easy to implement because they often fly in the face of societal norms and personal or family responsibilities.

If you're in good health and have no apparent emotional or physiological stressors in your life which could account for late-night lethargy or early-morning blahs, an out-of-sync body clock could be the culprit.



The importance of a regular daily rhythm



Establishing a regular daily rhythm could well mean the difference between life and death. In fact, disturbed schedules can literally take years off your life over the long haul.

Several years ago, air transport authorities around the world began to take notice of this hazard, and recently we've begun to see regulations established regarding pilot schedules to allow for recovery from jet lag.

Long-haul flying: a recipe for short-haul living?



Research has proven that pilots flying on transoceanic routes show signs of premature aging. Some body rhythms adapt quickly to changes in schedule while others seem to take much longer. The lack of phase balance between rhythms altered by drastic changes in time zones, the same drastic changes experienced by rotating shift workers, cause physical stress to the body which is also reflected in emotional and mental stress.

I don't know of any definitive studies which have listed and pinpointed all the adverse effects of long-term disturbance of body cycles, but I strongly suspect that such a study would show that rotating shiftworkers and airline workers on cross-country and transoceanic routes suffer the greatest degree of difficulty and show the highest incidence of illness related to stressed body rhythms.



Toxic time periods

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;med1mix.bmp} Here's another point to consider. Doses of drugs such as alcohol and barbiturates which are easily handled by the body at peak times of the day can be harmful, even fatal, if taken one to three hours before normal waking time when we are biologically at our weakest. This is at least part of the reason why so many accidental overdoses occur between 4:00 and 7:00am. Not coincidentally, heart attacks, suicides and even births tend to cluster around this time.

Always out of sync



We don't yet have a full picture of how specific metabolic cycles relate to vulnerability to stress, nor how quickly each of these cycles returns to normal after schedules are disrupted. Those on two-week rotating shifts don't appear to normalize at all. There always seems to be one or more identifiable metabolic cycle out of sync with the normal 24-hour clock, and the system involved in that cycle is at risk.

It's entirely possible that a shift worker who is normally an owl might have two or more critical digestive rhythms at low tide during a night out with the buddies, and a dose of alcohol that might normally be handled with ease could be highly toxic or even lethal. There can be no doubt that restoring as healthy a balance as possible to our daily rhythms is absolutely essential to our health and well-being.



Shift work: organizing your life to match your rhythm

Fall forward, spring back



If you work on a rotating shift and you're a lark, it might be best for your continued good health to work for a company that pushes its shifts backward instead of forward, although you may have difficulty finding such a firm. Those who developed the concept of forward rotation of shift work seem to have geared their creation to the needs of the owl. Larks tied to a forward-rotating shift can never truly be at their best on the job.

If you manage to find a firm with reverse-rotating shifts, or you can convince your personnel manager to restructure shifts to accommodate yourself and other larks, you may discover that pushing your bedtime back a half-hour every night will have a noticeable effect on your performance and general feeling of well-being.

The price of working a rotating shift



Unfortunately, whether you're a lark or an owl, you'll never be able to maintain peak rhythms because the shifts will never advance or reverse in quite the way that your body does. Even "normal" people tend to have rhythms which are "about" a day, meaning they could be anywhere from several minutes to a half-hour off of a perfect 24-hour cycle.

Fixed day shifts, on the other hand, are much more suited to larks than owls. They're designed to extract the maximum performance from people's peak hours, but instead they seem to catch owls at their worst. Afternoon shifts, from 4:00 to midnight in most cases, tend to suit owls more than larks because those hours tend to include an owl's best times.

Some people have fixed body clocks which operate fairly close to a 24-hour clock but seem to start at odd times of the day. Instead of hitting their biological lows at four in the morning they may occur at six in the evening. This situation virtually demands professional help for altering your internal body clock or finding work or a shift which won't compromise your health. Exertion during those low hours over the long term has detrimental effects on overall health, not just your sleeping patterns.



Flexitime: a better solution

Finding your peak time



Regardless of how you choose to approach a rhythmic imbalance in your job situation, keep in mind that your peak hours each day will be clustered around the first few hours after waking if you're a lark and probably ten to twelve hours later for owls. The ideal solution is probably to set your own hours, and many companies recognize that offering this option to their employees can produce much better results.

Flexitime works even better in this regard, and it's another growing trend. More and more firms are allowing employees to work at home or set their own hours, provided the job is done or the required number of hours is put in. However, this highly beneficial situation is not available in sectors where the job requires you to be in a certain place at a certain time or where the job revolves around expensive equipment which costs the company money if left idle. And as long as the wheels of commerce and industry rotate around banking hours and filling slots, a lot of us will continue to be at the mercy of the larks who run the business world and the owls who impose shiftwork on industry.

The trade-off between lifestyle and job demands



If your lifestyle provides you with a relatively high degree of protection from stress overload, you should be able to handle occasional changes in shifts and schedules without suffering serious side effects. But if your job or life responsibilities put you at risk and you do not take precautions to reduce the stress caused by imposing exertion on a body at a low point in its daily cycle, you need to know that you face health risks for as long as you continue in this harmful situation.



Dealing with jet lag



Jet lag, like diabetes, is known as an affliction of an affluent society. Like diabetes, jet lag is unavoidable in susceptible people, and treatable in virtually everyone with some common sense precautions. If you're prone to suffering from jet lag and have no way to avoid it, either due to your job or your leisure time passions, you can cushion your body against many of its effects by preparing for the changes in advance.

Modifying your body clock

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;clock.bmp} Experts in this area suggest altering your mealtimes to the times you'll be likely to eat at your destination beginning three days before your flight, avoiding all alcohol and drugs for three days before and after the flight, and taking a nap, if needed, eight hours after your normal awakening time.

Any sudden change in time zones of five hours or more is almost certain to result in some degree of impairment for at least a few days. The best prevention if you can get it is to allow yourself to remain on your old sleep schedule for as long as you like after you arrive at your destination, changing your schedule to "local time" only when you feel prepared to do so.



Menstrual cycles and insomnia

Those “loony” hormones



The menstrual cycle is another natural rhythm which frequently affects sleep. With all the hoopla recently about psychological disturbances and menstrual distress, it must be remembered that there are clear biological factors involved here. Hormone levels fluctuate wildly in some women around menstruation, and this fluctuation can impact people in many different areas of their lives. Men aren't immune to this fluctuation, as any observant police officer will tell you the day after a full moon.

It will probably help to avoid drugs and hormone treatments until you are left with no recourse. What you may discover if none of the ideas outlined in this book, including medical treatment, work for you, that there are deeply-rooted problems which will require a great deal of effort and struggle on your part to overcome, or which may require a radical change in lifestyle to reduce the severity of the symptoms if suitable help cannot be obtained.



Entire libraries are available on the subject of PMS-related symptoms, of which insomnia is only one, so I will not deal with this area here. Being male and relatively uninformed in this area, it would be irresponsible to say more on the subject.



Artificial light and seasonal depression

The easy life...it's tough on a body

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;floorImp.bmp} Altered metabolic rhythms can often precede, worsen or trigger severe psychological and physical problems. A wide range of environmental stressors have already been discussed which can contribute to this difficulty, but it pays not to overlook the obvious. Our biological sleep/waking cycle has historically been tied to the solar cycle of light/darkness. With the discovery and “domestication” of fire, we gained the tools to create our own light and our bodies respond to all forms of artificial light in ways which are not always beneficial.

The widespread use of artificial light to extend the day has impacted our hormonal balance and response to alertness in ways we still don't fully understand, and in sensitive people this can have unexpected and undesirable side effects. Many types of common industrial light have been found to promote aggression, apathy or reduced performance among workers who are exposed to it for long periods of time. We may have been affected as a culture by long-term exposure to incandescent light in ways we don't even understand yet, because we have no medical data from our oil lamp days to use for comparison.

Seasonal depression is usually treated with light therapy using full-spectrum fluorescent tubes to duplicate the spectrum of the sun's rays. This allows sufferers the full range of light benefits from the sun. Incandescent and white fluorescent lights don't offer the same spectrum in the same proportions, and as a consequence light-affected hormone systems are subject to imbalances. These imbalances can affect us in any number of ways. Sleep disturbances are only one possible effect.

Unexpected consequences of “natural” lighting



The most common light-related sleep problem is inability to fall asleep due to overstimulation of light-sensitive systems. The solution is obvious: reduce wattage or reduce the level of activity requiring light in the evening. This might have an unexpected consequence, however. You may discover that the extra activity was used as a means of exhausting yourself so the overstimulation wouldn't be felt as acutely. Reducing wattage and reducing activity may leave you with precisely the problem you had to begin with, unless you can find substitute activities which don't require light, such as nightly strolls, or discover a type of light which doesn't cause the same degree of stimulation.

The overall amount of light you receive in a day will also have an effect on sleep patterns. Depending on the person's makeup, sound sleep might be achieved more easily from exposure to a lot of sun or very little, and this is a matter which needs to be determined on an individual basis. High-strung, Type A personalities tend to sleep better with less exposure to the sun, while Type B's seem to need a lot of light to combat the effects of depression.



A possible geological link

Aligning yourself with the right forces

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;orient.bmp} Winston Churchill may well have been onto something with his compulsion about sleeping in beds aligned to magnetic north. Many of our bodily rhythms appear to be tied to the planet's electromagnetic field, and certain elements of jet lag can be a result of altering our position within this field, not just from the change in time zones.

There is no question that the human body responds in measurable ways to electromagnetic phenomena. The iron in our blood can be a natural magnet, resulting in a wide range of possible symptoms from electromagnetic disturbance. In most cases, only children and highly sensitive adults are noticeably affected by magnetic phenomena. The rest of us may be affected as well, but we may also have a defense against feeling those effects which allows us to function in spite of them.

EM radiation: an ever more common stressor



In sensitive people, sources of electromagnetic radiation can be a stressor which could impair sleep. Among these sources are stereo speaker magnets, electric transformers in any appliance from your clock radio to an electric razor, and even the electrical wires themselves have an electromagnetic "aura". Those knowledgeable about such effects strongly suggest that people not sleep within several feet of any active electrical wiring or appliance, and that includes alarm clocks, house wiring and plugged-in lamps.

Some even believe specific areas of the earth contain harmful electromagnetic patterns which almost seem to act as "curses" on people who live in them or near them. It may be that certain eddy currents and anomalies in the earth's electromagnetic field are harmful to normal human metabolism, and once we develop tools to measure these phenomena we'll be able to identify these areas and learn how to avoid them or make them less harmful. Water dowsers and other sensitives seem to have sharpened abilities to pick up on electromagnetic phenomena, and at this time this "magical" approach seems to be the best method we have of detecting whether a certain area might be electrically toxic. Naturally, those living in proximity to high-tension lines or other strong sources of electromagnetic radiation are at particular risk.

Scalar wave radiation

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;pc-bite.bmp} Another type of radiation currently getting a lot of exposure is called scalar wave radiation. The earth emits a "flat" wave, very difficult to produce by artificial means, which vibrates at 6.13 cycles per second. It appears that everything from TV sets to computer chips interferes with this natural radiation, and some fascinating studies of the effects of amplified scalar waves have been made. This too can cause nervous distress. More information on devices to counteract the effects of harmful scalar waves can be obtained by requesting information from [Essentia Communications Inc.](#)

A great many other subtle forms of pollution have been touted by various people as possible causes of nervous and psychic disturbance, which always translates into sleep disorders, but much of this still falls under the category of speculation at this time.

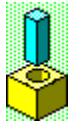




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5876).

No one's rhythms are perfect ...a small consolation

Fighting a losing battle



Regardless of the mechanisms and behind our bodily rhythms and ways in which they can be disrupted, it might be a small comfort to know that no one seems to have perfect rhythms. We all suffer from some degree of phase imbalance between rhythms. They are never all at their lowest at 4:00 a.m. or all at their peak when we need maximum performance in our lives.

The universe being what it is, perfection in this area simply doesn't appear possible. But on the whole, the body and its biological cycles seem to ebb and flow with a remarkably precise regularity, and after months or even years of trying to discover an ideal schedule for sleep and waking, it can be a relief to discover that perhaps the vast majority of the population suffers from a similar problem and that the ideal is something to be striven for, not something which can ever truly be achieved.



The best solution to maintaining healthy rhythms is to find your ideal sleep and waking pattern and try to structure your life in a way that gives you the maximum opportunity to stay with it. If you need extra sleep when you can't stay on your pattern, don't sleep in. Instead, try Technique Number 7.



Napping

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Siestas, power napping and three o'clock crash

Quaint cliché or body wisdom?

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;siesta.bmp} How quaint seems the idea of the siesta, the cliché'd Mexican and Spanish tradition we all remember so well from song, story and cartoon. How fine to be above all that, to be an efficient society where “manana” is a deadline and not an excuse. Mid-afternoon is supposed to be one of the most productive times of the day, not a period to be wasted in sleep. It's a time to tie up loose ends from the morning, put on one final spurt before quitting time, prepare for the evening or the next day's work, and make up for the points those disgusting larks scored earlier in the day.

I confess I was surprised to learn that the siesta, power nap or afternoon rest, however you choose to name it, is the rule and not the exception among humanity. That North Americans should see it as a sign of weakness appears cruel to many other peoples. It does have an equalizing effect, as I've demonstrated, because it allows the owls to “get even” with the larks, but it's not actually a fair trade when you get to the heart of it. Owls, after all, are at their best not in mid-afternoon, but in the evening.

Many owls suffer their own form of “three-o'clock crash”, possibly due to dips in blood sugar levels at about that time due to inappropriate eating habits. And as if things weren't already complicated, owls and larks have been found to experience peaks and valleys in their metabolic activity at about the same time in the day. There may be more complex reactions going on to create larks and owls than the body chemistry we already know about. And if this is true, then we need to look at the habit of napping itself and see what it might signify.



Napping: a vestigial behavior?

We may need to nap

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;dozer.bmp} I believe that napping may well be a vestigial behavior, just as the appendix is a vestigial organ. It is no longer essential for human health, but it still performs a function. Children tend to sleep when they feel like sleeping, and the regimented afternoon nap may not always be necessary or even desirable for a child. In fact, in many families it seems to be imposed on the child for the well-being of the parents as a means of keeping “negative” energies in the child in check.

The same appears to be true in the adult world. The effects of napping and deep relaxation techniques on adults are very similar to effects on children. Adults become more obedient, optimistic and generally seem happier. Many theorists have argued quite convincingly that this sort of culturally-sanctioned behavior is not necessarily beneficial for anything but the culture which sanctions it, and may in fact be harmful to the individual. Negative energies need an escape valve just as positive energies do. Few people mind an explosion of positivity on the job or in the tribe, but an explosion of negativity is seen as a threat that must be dealt with. The trouble with techniques such as deep relaxation or napping is that they control both positive and negative outbursts.

A habit for the majority

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;people.bmp}We are entering an age when respect of individualism is becoming one of our highest priorities, and part of that respect entails permitting a full range of expression. We appear to need control among the tribe less than in days past, and when we look at societies such as the Japanese where rigid control is institutionalized in a way that produces highly visible side effects and casualties, we begin to see that the time when this control was necessary seems to be long past. In the absence of need, control ceases to be an issue, and we live in a time when we can literally wipe out basic need among our own species.

But let's face facts. We live in a society which imposes rules of conduct upon us and rewards us for following those rules. Until we're ready to take on the responsibility of challenging those rules, and it is a massive and strenuous task not all of us are up for, we may as well do what we can to make things easier on ourselves, and napping could be one way to accomplish this.

I was also surprised to discover that whatever it is called, and however much the practice may be ill-spoken in North America, the majority of Canadians and Americans take naps. The effects are dramatic and predictable, and can be achieved for virtually a lifetime. These effects include normalizing of brain waves and metabolic activity whether they were low or high, increased sense of alertness and emotional stability.

Another effect is increased alpha rhythms in the brain which result in an increased susceptibility to suggestion. We are more easily controlled when we nap or meditate and less able to exert ourselves as individuals. Whether you see this as positive or negative depends on your orientation and beliefs. Personally, I am a supporter of individual freedom, and I don't argue with control provided it is self-selected and self-imposed, not demanded by outside forces.



Two types of napping

Siestas and sleep reclamation



This brings us to an interesting juncture, because a distinction needs to be made here between two different types of napping. The short, 20-minute siesta is usually a light sleep, and the interesting aspect of this type of napping is that it too has two different types. The most common is simply drifting off into stage 1 or 2 sleep for a short period, which for many people seems to recharge the batteries.

However, if an attempt is made to remain conscious during this period, through the use of deep relaxation or meditation techniques, an interesting effect occurs. Suggestibility is just as much increased by either type of rest, but when it's done consciously, using a mantra or focus so that there is always a link to consciousness, the individual appears to have a much greater degree of control over how he or she will respond to suggestions. This is an important point to keep in mind if you'd like to avoid having your nap habit used against you.

On the other hand, some people use napping as a means of making up for lost sleep. Naps taken early in the day tend to have a lot of REM dreams, but as the day progresses, deeper delta-wave sleep tends to consume a higher percentage of the time spent napping.



Reducing sleep need or impairing a night's rest?

The delicate balance between need and desire



Most sleep-replacement naps are taken in the late afternoon or early evening, meaning they'll be more heavily weighted with delta sleep. Either it is the only available time to nap, or it is the time when fatigue is felt most acutely. Either way, late-afternoon or evening naps can actually exaggerate a problem with difficulty falling asleep. For simply recharging the batteries, the 20-minute power nap or a meditation period will probably be more effective, but this too could impair some people's ability to fall asleep at bedtime.

On the other hand, the inability to fall asleep after a nap might not be a problem if it's viewed from a different angle. The fatigue might require no more than a little rest to "cure", and the sleep you get while resting may not be stealing sleep as it seems, but simply taking the place of some of the sleep needed. Many people use naps to reduce their nighttime sleep requirements, and if napping has been keeping you awake nights you may simply have failed to recognize the gift of extra time you've been given, or be unable due to a different type of fatigue to put that time to good use.

Dymaxion sleep: napping as a way of life



Many respected figures throughout history who claimed to get by on what seem to be unrealistically low amounts of sleep were actually nappers. Perhaps the best-known legendary napper is Buckminster Fuller, who developed a technique he called Dymaxion sleep (dymaxion = dynamic + maximum). He claimed to operate at peak efficiency on only four hours' sleep a day, gotten in half-hour naps every three hours. This side benefit of napping is not especially well-understood, but a great many meditators and other types of nappers discover that regular daily naps do reduce their perceived sleep need.



Dealing with a destructive napping pattern

Control and release...the eternal conflict

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;nap.bmp}You might find that an afternoon nap is unsatisfying and possibly even disturbing to you if it lasts less than an hour. If you don't want to lose your afternoon rest but would like to restore your routine to a more manageable state, try the techniques for achieving relaxation outlined in the section on dealing with insomnia and redirect your efforts toward control rather than release.

Techniques which require a specific mental focus will probably be most effective for this purpose, and you may need some modification of your environment in order to keep yourself conscious, such as napping in a chair or on a sofa, or with your clothes on or covers off. If your nap appears to be headed for deep slumber, wake yourself up somehow. You'll likely fail in your first few attempts at this, but eventually you should get the hang of it and be able to limit yourself to a refreshing break rather than a disruptive slumber.



Who can benefit from napping...and who can't

Benefits where you least expect them



Napping appears to be a useful addition to the day for anyone committed to a high-stress situation as a way of relieving the effects of that stress. Those who are unable to sleep as long as they'd like due to family or career demands will find their routines smoothed considerably by a daily nap.



Creative people who are not free to set their own schedules and who must create on demand as part of their jobs are also likely to benefit. People who can't or won't sleep on their bodies' optimum schedules will find napping an effective way of mediating the effects caused by disruption of their natural metabolic cycles.



Anyone taking mood-altering drugs, whether prescription or recreational, might find naps reduce the effects of hangovers and actually reduce the need for those drugs. And of course anyone who faces jet lag is a prime candidate for stress and could also benefit from naps as the body's clocks resynchronize themselves.



People doing therapy for childhood issues will likely find that napping helps clear the mind but interferes with emotional depth. The same is true with creative professionals who work on their own schedules and self-selected projects.

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;skullt.bmp}I do not believe in imposing naps on children unless the stress on the parent threatens to lead to mental, physical or emotional cruelty toward the child. Children usually have more finely-tuned body clocks and are more able to follow their own biological drives than adults, and interfering with this ability only leads to the same alienation from their bodies which most adults develop over time.



And anyone seeking clarity or insight into life and their own individuality will, I believe, find napping detrimental to their efforts. On the other hand, if mysticism is your cup of tea, naps should be an excellent aid to your efforts, particularly if they're undertaken from a meditative perspective.



Behavior modification



Lest anyone get the wrong idea, this chapter is specifically focused on behavior modification as a method for dealing with insomnia, not as a tool for altering responses in general. Due to the potential for unwanted and unexpected side effects I do not believe in behavior modification except as a method for use in extreme cases, where creating a new chain may be the only available means of breaking an old one.

- [? Pros and cons to behavior modification](#)
- [? Two techniques for behavior modification](#)
- [? Aversion therapy for insomnia](#)
- [? Positive mental imaging for insomnia](#)
- [?](#)

Pros and cons to behavior modification

The slippery slope of self-discipline



Behavioral psychology is, in my opinion, a rather brutal approach to take in dealing with insomnia, and it can be deceptively easy to use it to harm yourself rather than to effectively deal with a problem. For this reason I feel a need to qualify this section in regard to when and where the behavioral method may be appropriate. As a general rule, the less appealing the idea sounds to you, the more likely it will probably work for you. But the rule has exceptions. It probably depends as much on why it doesn't appeal to you as it does to your gut reaction to the idea itself.

Many of us were raised to accept self-punishing treatment as the only effective or loving treatment we can give ourselves. If you have an awareness of treating yourself this way throughout your life, behavior modification probably isn't for you. If, however, you enjoy discipline and respond well to it, behavior modification will work... unless or until you discover that your self-discipline has been a means of self-punishment. We often seek what's painful as a way of coming to grips with it, and that *can* be an effective means of self-discovery.



Unfortunately, it can also be suicidal. There are no hard and fast rules about what works and what doesn't, so I simply suggest exercising caution when using behavior modification techniques, and wherever possible to avoid hurting yourself if it appears that your efforts are having effects you didn't expect.



Two techniques for behavior modification



There are two types of techniques you can employ in your struggle with insomnia. Each has its benefits and each will work best for a different type of person.

Aversion therapy



Aversion therapy is a relatively gentle form of shock therapy, designed to alter behavior patterns by training the mind that if it does not abide by certain rules a punishment will be meted out. This type of behavior modification is believed to be relatively harmless, but I wonder about the ethics of training yourself to act out of fear rather than desire. It usually results in increased resistance to pain, which many see as a positive effect, and this increased resistance almost universally translates into greater resistance to treatment down the road.

However, if you find yourself unable to gain results from the second set of techniques, aversion therapy may work. It's not a pleasant prospect, but sometimes harsh measures need to be taken for short-term benefit.

Positive mental imaging (PMI)

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;videocam.bmp}Positive mental imaging (PMI) has pretty much the opposite effect as aversion therapy. It involves creating a vivid, positive image of the experience you would prefer to have as a way of training your mind to believe that such an experience is possible. This tends to grease the wheels for your conscious mind, helping to break down many of the barriers to having this positive experience. It may be no more or less effective than aversion therapy, but in a world seemingly dominated by negatives it makes much more sense to balance that negativity with a positive approach to problem-solving.

PMI has many of the same drawbacks as aversion therapy, in that it treats the symptom and not the root cause. There seems to be a natural principle that problems "solved" through the use of PMI leak out in other areas, usually without the conscious consent of the subject. Sometimes problems can be rerouted to areas where the damage will be less noticeable (but no less severe) or more socially acceptable, making the root problem perhaps easier to diagnose and treat.



Aversion therapy for insomnia

Developing a personalized approach



You can probably develop your own form of aversion therapy to treat your insomnia based on any activity you personally hate. One I've seen suggested which looks particularly effective is calisthenics. Stair climbing may be more suitable if you're not fit for calisthenics, but in either case check with your doctor to be sure the exercise won't harm you.

The idea seems to be if you can't get to sleep in fifteen minutes to get out of bed and do twenty-five, fifty or a hundred pushups or sit-ups, whichever amount is a heavy load for you, and march straight back to bed. If you're not asleep in another fifteen minutes, repeat the process. If your insomnia is particularly resistant you should find that you'll work out so much on the first few nights that you'll be quite stiff and sore the following day.

But eventually the message will sink in if you continue to force yourself, and before long you should find that you can almost sleep at the mere thought of pushups. Because of the nature of this treatment and the effects it can have on your responses to everyday situations, I suggest selecting a type of exercise or activity which you will be unlikely to repeat in the future or need in your daily life.



Lifting weights may be better than doing pushups if you think you might some day wish to take up a serious exercise program, because you may find if you do that you have to retrain yourself to stay awake.



Positive mental imaging for insomnia

The lighter approach often demands heavier discipline



Effective use of PMI requires the same discipline as aversion therapy. The technique itself is deceptively simple, deceptive because it packs so much power and simple because all you do is relax (the techniques in Chapter 3D should provide you with help in this regard if relaxation is difficult), close your eyes and imagine yourself in as great a detail as you can doing the thing you want to do.

In this case, the secret is to follow yourself through your bedtime routine as closely as you can to how you do it normally, but when you get to the point where you hit the bed, you imagine yourself settling in quickly, falling asleep easily and staying asleep through the night.

You can't fail with detail



The keys to effective PMI are detail and perspective. Put as much detail into the routine as possible. Taste the toothpaste and feel the brush on your gums, feel your skin as you remove your clothes, put on nightclothes and climb between the sheets. Hear the swooshing as you slide around under the sheets, see the darkness out the window, every detail you can add will intensify the power of the exercise.



Perspective is a point often overlooked in the teaching of PMI. You must see yourself in the first person going through this successful scenario. It is not enough to simply watch yourself in the fantasy; you must be in it. This is very difficult for some people to achieve, but it is a vital part of the process and if you cannot achieve this perspective your PMI exercises will have only a fraction of their effectiveness.

Other benefits of PMI



PMI has the additional advantage of producing results for a wide variety of problems. If your bedmate snores, you can use PMI to desensitize yourself to the noise or transform its meaning. To desensitize yourself, use the imaging exercise to imagine the snoring as ten times louder than it really is and yourself sleeping through this din. To transform its meaning, feel yourself going to bed in all kinds of moods, from happy to miserable to hateful, and imagine the snoring as a soothing sound that comforts you and lulls you to sleep. Imagining different moods this way seems to help the technique work more efficiently over the long term, because you may go to bed one night in a very different frame of mind from the one you were in when you did the exercises and find yourself frustratingly unable to relax.



The more effectively you use PMI, the faster it will work for you. Unfortunately, many people have had their imaginations stifled and as a result suffer from a great deal of difficulty putting the technique to work. This can mean a double workload, first getting the imagination in shape, which may be a difficult struggle by itself, and then training the imagination on the task at hand. But if you're not the type who benefits from aversion therapy, this might be the best way to proceed.

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When insomnia isn't insomnia



There are times when we suffer less from textbook symptoms than from our own lack of understanding about life passages, natural cycles and personal needs. Lack of ability to sleep often has less to do with disorder than an attempt by the body and mind to redefine what order is for us.



Sleeplessness might not be a problem



Life changes and insomnia



Aging and reduction in sleep need

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Sleeplessness might not be a problem



Sometimes insomnia isn't insomnia. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, a lot of insomniacs are actually sensitive people who can descend to a deep level of consciousness and still be aware of their thoughts. Studies have found many insomniacs so accustomed to their frustrations over sleeplessness that they can descend into stage 2 sleep, a deep level for meditators, and still stew about why they can't fall asleep. If you've been a chronic insomniac for years, you might just discover if you examine your thinking patterns that you have actually mastered a deep level of consciousness without even trying! If you decide to change them you may discover a facility for improving your life and your outlook which you never knew was in you.



Life changes and insomnia



Insomnia might have other causes. Many people undergoing life changes find that sleep is disturbed, often for long periods of time, and there's little that seems to help the problem. A priest or rabbi, or a psychologist experienced in life changes, may be able to help you get through these difficult periods. There seems to be little we can do during these times except relax as best we can and go with what's happening to us. Eventually it ends, because it seems to relate to old memories, feelings and ideas we haven't resolved which have come up in a relaxed period.

It's most common for something like this to occur at a time when your life is going particularly well. Insomnia may be one way for your body to signal to you that you have to relax and let go, regardless of how bad the feelings seem to be. Sometimes the more we resist changes happening within us, the sicker our body will make us feel as a way to slow us down.



These types of changes, which seem to happen according to internal cues more than anything, can be short-circuited with coping techniques at any time in your life, and these techniques can range from adopting a religion to addiction to a drug, but eventually they seem to reappear. This type of life transition is why I have stated so often that coping techniques might be more harmful than helpful over the long term.

Life changes accompanied by insomnia seem to occur throughout our lives, and

insomnia is a frequent feature of these personal crises. In some people, difficult times can trigger these changes prematurely, leading to distress. Millions of people suffer occasional insomnia and are fortunate enough to know that it accompanies positive changes in their lives. This allows them to flow with these changes. Unfortunately, most of us are not so fortunate as to grow up with this awareness.



Aging and reduction in sleep need



As we age, we tend to need less sleep. We also tend to fatigue more easily, which sets up a conflict with many people as they approach middle age. They can't continue the pace of activity to which they were accustomed in their youth, and they can't get the sleep they need to refresh themselves.

No one seems to quite know why yet, but studies have shown that sleep need usually starts to dip in our forties, but in some people sleep depth begins to decline as soon as the early thirties. One theory regarding reduction in sleep depth relates to human growth hormone (HGH), which is released by the pituitary gland shortly after the onset of sleep. The release of this hormone is constant throughout life, but the amount of HGH released declines with age.



Whether the reduction in sleep need corresponds with a reduction in the need for HGH isn't clear, and based on life extension research I question whether it is necessary that it ever reduces. Perhaps the capacity for learning or desire to learn, possibly associated with accumulated injury or build-up of toxins and deposits in the body and brain, might have more to do with reduced HGH than the reduction in sleep need. In other words, those who strive to remain forever young may disprove this theory. My personal belief at this time is that sleep need drops as we gain greater self-sufficiency and mastery of our waking life. The more stable and secure we are while awake, the less we need to process new experiences and recover from the trauma of excitement, fear, achievement and loss.

This matter of HGH shouldn't be overlooked, however. Other research indicates that concentrated carbohydrates close to bedtime block the release of HGH, an especially important fact for parents and young adults. This makes sweets and junky starches a poor choice for a bedtime snack probably for everyone, because HGH plays a critical role in maintaining overall health throughout life.

Age-related sleep reduction need not be a matter of concern, but it may be an indication of the need to adjust our lives to cope with our new situation. As we age, our priorities for conducting ourselves need to change to accommodate the demands and abilities of our bodies, and this extra time each day may be more valuable to us as time for reflection than as sleep.



Common sense



Keep in mind that “common sense” is only “common if you already have it. There’s nothing to be gained in criticizing yourself for not thinking of these things on your own...there are *always* reasons why the “obvious” escapes our view.



Self-denial: a common problem



Dealing with the present: the only realistic option



A few specific ideas



Body temperature



Beds and bedding



Mental conditioning



Self-denial: a common problem

What we don't know can hurt us



We're all guilty of failing to listen to our bodies from time to time, perhaps no more than in bed when things are quiet and peaceful and our body signals are loudest. Part of this sense of amplified sensitivity to body signals comes from fatigue, but part of it is simply due to the lack of other stimuli. All too often we ignore what's in front of us for the sake of momentary comfort and pay the price for this comfort at a later time. Deep inside we all know how counterproductive this attitude can be, but many of us don't know how to fight it.

Let's face it, we've all lived a lot of our lives in situations where we were told what to do and when and were denied the opportunity to say no or express our feelings about it. When we're tired our defenses drop and we tend to express whatever has been unexpressed for so long, and we'll actually rebel against our own bodies at a time like this when the real object of our rebellion has long since passed from our lives.

Misguided justice



Doing nothing when your body cries out for relief does not help the situation in the least. In fact, it exacts justice meant for your aggressor on yourself instead. The problem is that it is usually more difficult for us to acknowledge our bodies' needs and face the risk that these feelings or attitudes may leak out in other situations than it is to suffer in silence. The dilemma is that this energy is going to leak out regardless of what we do, and once we begin to take care of ourselves the problem will be to discover where these destructive energies want to go.

It may result in trying times with friends and family as we seek the real object of our dislike, but the alternative is taking it on the chin ourselves or putting it onto others who don't deserve it, which is something no one wants. There is a principle of responsibility involved here, and the real object of our dislike has, in effect, asked for your wrath by hurting or denying you in the first place. Usually the object of this wrath is one of our parents, which makes it all that much more difficult to return unwanted feelings to their source.



! Dealing with the present: the only realistic option

Lead into gold? Not yet...

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;wizard.bmp} We don't know how to turn lead into gold yet, and we haven't invented a way to transform hatred into love. It might be cheating a bit to call "responding to your body" a separate technique for dealing with insomnia, since most of the suggestions already mentioned are ways of doing just that. I decided to include it anyway because this technique is not about training, discipline or repair, but about dealing with the here and now from a standpoint of awareness and respect for yourself and others.

This requires courage, because once you realize that taking care of yourself is going to result in your destructive energy coming out in another way, it will be difficult to keep yourself from training it on the easiest, most vulnerable targets, and those targets will usually be your spouse and children who have may done little more than help you cope with your problem until now.

A tough choice



There is a real choice here, and there are no scorecards if you choose not to go at this stuff head-on. The fact is that many people feel an imperative to act on this repressed energy and wind up with a tiger on their hands which they don't know how to tame. If you have young children, you may voluntarily decide to endure a little suffering to protect them from outbursts they don't deserve, or you may see the risks as outweighing the benefits. All things in their time. But in the meantime, there may be difficulties facing you which you can deal with and the only risk you'll take is testing your own assertiveness. The best suggestion I can make is to try what feels right and if you don't like the results, don't continue.



A few specific ideas

Once again we enter into the realm of what may seem obvious to many, but sometimes we need permission to act on what we see or have it pointed out to us repeatedly before we see it.

Leg cramps and listlessness



Leg cramps are a fairly simple matter. If potassium is the culprit, a banana or a handful of raisins will go to work within just a few minutes. If it's magnesium, it might take an hour or more. If it's a vitamin deficiency, a balanced B supplement might work effectively too. This tends to work in a great many cases of listless irritability, where you may be too tired to get out of bed but too irritable to fall asleep.

Hangovers



Nighttime hangovers can often be made bearable with a vitamin supplement and a glass of juice to restore nutrients, minerals and blood sugar levels.

Hunger pangs



Hunger pangs may be the easiest symptom of all to deal with: get something to eat, and if necessary, have a spouse or family member help you with control if you have difficulty stopping at just enough food to quiet your appetite.

Simply put, when your body is showing signs of discomfort, do something about them. Discomfort equals distraction equals impaired sleep. As often as not you'll be better off biting the bullet, getting out of bed and doing something to help yourself than lying awake, hoping against hope to sleep in spite of the discomfort.



If all else fails and you still can't stop tossing and turning, check out this list of simple "handy hints" for fighting insomnia. One of them might be exactly what you need for an occasional sleepless night.

Body temperature

Some get cold feet when it comes to sleep...

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;elecblnk.bmp} If you have cold feet or hands in bed, circulatory problems may be impairing your sleep. Wear bed socks to help keep your feet warm.

Does your electric blanket throw off too little heat? Throw a sheet on top of it to hold more of the heat close to your body.

Wool blankets distribute heat more evenly than acrylic, although they are much less comfortable to the touch. Cotton blankets are not cheap but they may provide the best overall solution.

Is the heater on your waterbed set to the proper temperature? Check the owner's manual to see that it is adjusted properly for your mattress and comfort, and be sure to cover your waterbed with a comforter to prevent energy loss in the daytime.

...and some get downright hot-headed



A fan blowing across your head or feet in hot weather will keep your whole body cooler. A ceiling fan might be an excellent investment if you live in a warm climate where the nights can sometimes be perspiration festivals.



Beds and bedding

An old-country idea



Too much bedding seems to leave some people feeling smothered. This can be alleviated by “going European”. Try using an unzipped sleeping bag if the material isn’t too rough or noisy, or a European-style blanket bag. This is simply a comforter zipped into a fitted case made up of two bedsheets trimmed to a close fit. Only the sheets need to be washed, the comforter will last virtually for a lifetime when zipped into a blanket bag, and this combination reflects body heat without being excessively warm. It also tends to touch less of your skin than a sheet and blanket, which is a blessing for those with sensitive skin.

Oversensitive skin



Oversensitive skin may be due to residues left from laundry detergent. Liquid detergents and soaps tend to be much milder on sensitive skin, and sleeping naked will also help.

The art of sag...



If your mattress rests on wooden slats, changing the positions of the slats will affect the way your bed supports you. Women may need more sag under the hips while men may find extra sag at the shoulders provides more comfort. Make larger gaps in the slats where you need extra sag and use the discarded slats to add support in areas that may need it.

Sleeping on thick, fluffy pillows tends to distort your posture, and over time this will distort your neck bones.

...and the craft of hardness



A half-inch-thick sheet of plywood or chipboard placed between your mattress and box spring will add extra stiffness if you need it. Try to select used board for this purpose, as any new laminated wood product will emit fumes for several months after manufacture. These fumes will be particularly harmful if inhaled while sleeping, because your body will be less able to deal with the toxicity.

Take your new bed for a “test-rest”



Whenever you shop for a bed, see if you can get the opportunity to take a test-rest on it before buying. If you can’t do that, make sure it will be returnable within a few days if it doesn’t work out. You may feel great lying on it wide awake in the store; you might feel like hell the first morning after you get it home. A few minutes can’t give you all the facts you need to make a wise decision.

Stiff coil mattresses designed for chiropractic support and waterbeds, waveless or not, provide the most even distribution of body weight. In surveys about half of all people who tried them said they preferred a waterbed over a coil spring mattress.

All-wool mattress pads will help keep you cooler in summer and warmer in winter by providing an extra insulating layer of air between your body and the mattress.

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Mental conditioning

? Ban all fighting in the bedroom! It is not a good idea to carry reminiscences of your squabbles to bed with you if you can avoid it.

Don't lose sleep over a good idea



If ideas received while half-asleep send you scurrying out of bed for a pen and paper, or you let the ideas go rather than risk getting yourself out of bed to take them down, keep a small hand-held tape recorder on the nightstand. If you're really lazy, you can now buy voice-activated units you can plug into the wall for under \$50.00. Be aware that your garbled mutterings may be difficult to comprehend by morning, and you may have to learn how to understand your own "sleepy-talk".

When is a party like an athletic event?



Give yourself time to unwind after a party, whether you've been drinking or not. Social contact is a stimulant and you'll need to come down in order to get to a reasonable level of relaxation.



The longer you wait before going to bed for any drugs or alcohol in your system to wear off, the better you'll feel in the morning. Your metabolism slows once you fall asleep, giving the drug more time to do its dirty work.

Beware the demons inside

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;devil.bmp}Never, ever focus on negative thoughts about the past, present or future while half-asleep. Your mind is much more susceptible in this state and any stewing will have a powerful reinforcing effect on your negativity. If necessary, keep a tape player near your bed with classical or new age music to give your mind a soothing focus. If you cannot control these negative thoughts, seek professional help. Your self-esteem and well-being are at not merely risk if you don't...they're *already* in deep trouble, because these thoughts will be underpinning all your waking activities.

Don't fret over a nightlight



Don't be too concerned about disturbing your body rhythms with a nightlight or 20-watt incandescent light if you can't sleep in a dark room. The worst that's likely to happen is a few extra trips to the bathroom. Light affects urinary cycles.

? If anticipation of an exciting or frightening event is keeping you awake, stop concentrating on falling asleep and focus instead on mental relaxation. Sleep will probably come easily if your mind is at rest, and this relaxation will probably help you respond better to any frightening event you may be facing.


Think "log"

? Try to cultivate a "log attitude". Eventually you'll believe that nothing trivial can disturb you while you sleep, and minor annoyances simply won't bother you any more.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;isolatn.bmp} A lot of insomnia is triggered by fear and loneliness. We don't always have the resources to deal with that loneliness, but we're all entitled to our own coping mechanisms. If it's company you lack,

watch a talk show. Find one with guests you can enjoy or relate to as opposed to one which will bore you to sleep, because boredom may simply exaggerate fear.

Try a skin massage

 If it's contact you crave, give yourself a skin brush. Depending on your degree of skin sensitivity, you may find anything from a light dry toweling to a vigorous scrub with a loofa brush invigorates your skin and quiets frazzled nerves.



Learning and growth in sleep



Chances are good that you know about subliminal learning...sleep learning...autosuggestion...meditation...personal reprogramming...affirmations...all these opportunities, eight full hours' worth every night! You've imagined the possibilities: education, improved mental and physical health, consciousness expansion, self-actualization. Every so often we all seem to get a glimpse of the possibilities we have open to us in these "lost hours" that never seem to get realized.



An overview



Subliminal learning



Sleep learning



Personal cybernetics and affirmations



Using your sleeping mind for solving problems

Ruminations



Stewing could be more beneficial than we realize



Two types of ruminations, two ways to handle them



Sleep learning: an overview



Many of us would make use of them, if only we had some sense of what works, what doesn't and why, and what these opportunities could mean to us personally. Just as many of us see these as nothing more than hassles to add to our load, more work at the end of a tiring day and who needs it? And perhaps there are just as many of a third group, who already lose this time to insomnia or simply lack knowledge of the possibilities.



Defining sacred territory



Yet another cure-all that isn't



A brief summary: five areas of "sleepwork"

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Defining sacred territory



This chapter is for everyone...but perhaps not for now. Most people simply don't take well to sleep-related growth opportunities, and the reasons are varied and generally valid. But that's no reason to deny yourself the knowledge of their existence. There may come a time when you want to make use of those opportunities, and if you have neither the knowledge nor the tools at your disposal, the opportunities will be lost.

Those who take an active interest in improving their lives are bound to find something of interest here, and virtually everyone will discover a few facts about sleep and self-development which will be new to them. But it was originally my hope that this chapter reaches the anxious sleeper, because that person is ready for something new. Those in need are the ones who will benefit most, and who most need the benefits.



Yet another cure-all that isn't



But don't allow yourself to believe that taking advantage of sleep-related learning and growth opportunities will provide the solutions to all of your most pressing problems, because they most certainly won't. They can help you deal with many of them and cope with many more, but this is a relatively new field with little hard science on its side, and that poses risks and uncertainties for anyone venturing into this arena. We simply don't know how, why, or even if a lot of these things work. I can't give you more than partial answers, but I hope I can help demystify many of the processes behind these things, and help you make a more informed and enthusiastic choice about whether these things can be useful to you.



A brief summary: five areas of "sleepwork"



This chapter discusses five separate areas of "sleepwork". They include subliminal learning, sleep learning, affirmations and personal reprogramming, ruminations and problem-solving in sleep. I have heard and read as much positive about subliminal learning as I have negative. It

is a very tricky subject, and there's definitely something to it, although I'm not quite sure what.

Sleep learning seems to be a fad at some point in every decade, and I've made mention of it elsewhere in this book. Affirmations and personal reprogramming have been hot topics for a long time and their popularity isn't about to wane. They can be extremely effective in many cases, providing you are aware of potential side effects and limitations. Rumination is a light-duty version of personal reprogramming which many people might find useful as a starting point, a basis for experimentation.

I once believed they were of use only as a substitute for a more effective technique, but I have begun to see that they are all many of us can handle, and highly valuable if this is true. The use of sleep for problem-solving has been taught by success trainers, in cybernetics courses and in a new age context for many years.



Subliminal learning



Whether or not you choose to believe in the effectiveness of subliminal learning, there is no question that it is an extremely popular self-improvement technology with many believers.



[The theory behind subliminal learning](#)



[Identifying and dealing with potential side effects](#)



[Two techniques for sleep-related subliminal learning](#)



[Never underestimate the power of subliminals](#)



[About commercial subliminal learning materials](#)



! The theory behind subliminal learning

Subliminal suggestion does work



There is no question whatsoever that ideas planted in the mind at a level below our conscious awareness do register and have powerful effects on behavior. Some people are more susceptible to subliminal messages than others, and thus more vulnerable to negative messages. The difficulty arises when messages arrive at different levels, and there are many different levels of consciousness. A positive message received at a subconscious level may be perceived negatively and vice versa, apparently depending on how a person has been conditioned to react to such messages.

This leaves the practitioner in a delicate position, and I have a great deal of hesitancy about using subliminals because of this situation. If you have a natural aversion to subliminals, it could be because you've had them used against you, perhaps by parents who meant well but secretly despised giving you your freedom or telling you the truth.

As children we often walk around in the daytime in meditative or even trance states where we can pick up on facial expressions and even other people's gut feelings, and we sense hypocrisies and double meanings in people's words and actions which may be invisible to us in alert, beta consciousness.



Once we begin to work on reprogramming ourselves, we'll discover through the kinds of reactions we receive what may have occurred earlier in our lives. If there was serious trauma in our past which we do not know about, reprogramming techniques can be a Pandora's box leading to bizarre changes in our outer world as we try to change our inner beliefs.



Identifying and dealing with potential side effects

Supplementary resources



If you picked this book up from a shareware dealer, bulletin board or CD-ROM, look for an additional file entitled **NO_HELP.TXT** or an archive file called **REBOUND.ZIP**, which contains the **NO_HELP.TXT** file. This is a large essay written on the subject of why subliminal learning and other self-help techniques, and it goes into far more detail than I can include here. I strongly recommend reading this article before proceeding with any program of subliminal learning or reprogramming.

The best suggestion I can offer for using these techniques is to try to use them holistically. For example, if you're trying to build your self-esteem, focus on building it at all levels, not just subliminally. Give as much time and attention to meditation and conscious effort to improve your self-image as you do to sleep learning or subliminal suggestion. This will go a long way toward identifying and dealing with any unmanageable side effects of the work by allowing you more conscious awareness of what's going on. It will also tell you if perhaps you're attacking a problem too difficult for you to solve with the supports you have at the present time.



Two techniques for sleep-related subliminal learning

Sleep can help you with personal goals and problems in at least two ways. The two methods I'll discuss are direct suggestion and dream interpretation.

Direct suggestion



In the first case, subliminal messages such as those on quit-smoking tapes will register deep in your subconscious if you play the tapes as you fall asleep. Most of them are designed to be played in an alert state of consciousness, where they can get under normal alertness to first-stage subconscious awareness.

Played in a deeper state of awareness, they'll reach a deeper level of subconscious awareness. Your efforts at quitting your habit will be made at a conscious level, and you may use meditation or deep relaxation to teach yourself to quit at a deeper level. The tapes will provide a third level of protection by acting on your subconscious at a level you can't access consciously even with the help of a relaxation technique.



Please note that some of the most recent research indicates that substance addictions almost always relate back to very early experiences, and one researcher claims he has never seen a case where substance addiction could be traced to a later than the birth experience. This usually means that long-term success in achieving such a goal will require going back and reliving the birth experience in some fashion, which can be extremely distressing without the proper support. This is usually the last hurdle to conquering a problem permanently.

Dream interpretation



It may not be possible for you to conquer your problem given your current situation, and this is where dream interpretation is likely to come in handy. Very often conscious effort on changing your life will have effects on your thought patterns, sleep patterns and even dream content. I have discovered that we very often have dreams relating to certain difficulties in our lives which offer us ideas on how to cope with the problem as it stands rather than deal with it head on.

You could find in a quit-smoking dream that you're chewing on a long carrot or eating candy. This could be a signal from your subconscious that this is what it needs, since dream activities will often reflect lacks felt in our waking life. It could also be a metaphor for something else which is needed. The candy could represent sweetness, a need for more lightness and empathy from your environment and the people in it. The carrot could have sexual connotations for both men and women.

Some claim that these dream symbols represent something else to be overcome. The example often used is the alcoholic who dreams of drinking months after entering treatment. I tend to believe that this places an undue burden of responsibility on the subject. Yes, the desire to drink has been expressed at a deep subconscious level, and perhaps it isn't the most healthy or spiritually-developed thing a person could dream about. But it is not necessarily an imperative either. It may be a genuine cry from the subconscious for some measure of relief from stress, and if there is no way of dealing with it in waking life at the time, who is to say a temporary, or even permanent, substitute for alcohol, isn't less harmful than the pain and stress

endured?

Technically not a subliminal technique



Dream interpretation technically isn't a subliminal learning method, but it is a way of learning from your subliminal mind. Neither of these techniques are foolproof, and for the most satisfying results I suggest learning a workable technique and language from an author or teacher you trust, and adding to this knowledge your own subliminal language as you learn it.



If you continue with this technique for any length of time, you're bound to discover double messages which you interpret at a deep subconscious level, and these can cause real problems in a number of areas of your life if you don't come to grips with the cause of this language problem and either deal with it or learn a language less prone to misinterpretation.



Never underestimate the power of subliminals

A hoax? It might look that way

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}You have no doubt heard the debunkers who claim that subliminals are a hoax and are generally useless because the messages are transmitted at such a low level. That may be true for people with sophisticated defense mechanisms, but if you cry at romantic movies, get hungry at the sight of fast food ads, crave certain advertised products and have no conscious memory of craving them previously, or have any addictive tendencies, you are almost guaranteed to be powerfully affected by subliminals whether you want to be or not. It definitely pays to be wary of subliminal messages in *any* context.

So why do people appear not to be affected? Raw, brute strength. That strength is directed toward fighting the effects of the suggestion, which always results in failure, since that strength must be drawn from other areas of the person's life, thus reducing the overall *quality* of that person's life; and the suggestion is still in the subconscious regardless of how much the person fights, meaning it has to either surface or be dealt with by lifelong discipline to suppress it.

Do-it-yourself subliminals



I personally favor creating your own subliminal materials, or having them made for you by someone you trust such as a therapist or spouse. This allows you to choose the language, and since you're feeding yourself only messages about yourself, there is no danger of contaminating your mind or your behavior with material that does not belong to you. Psychic reactions are highly complex and too few of the people producing this material take their responsibility as seriously as our knowledge indicates they could.



Commercial subliminal learning materials

Addiction to subliminals



I confess a considerable prejudice against most of the subliminal learning resources I have seen and heard, and I've had the unfortunate experience of having this prejudice come back on me in the form of addiction to certain subliminal materials. I see a real danger in using pre-sleep subliminal tapes. A psychological phenomenon known as transference is highly likely.

Transference occurs when you pick up not just the message you want from the teacher, but messages you don't want as well, simply because you're open enough to be receptive to these messages. I've known of cases where people have used pre-sleep subliminals to deal with a certain problem only to discover that they have adopted a new set of behaviors that threatened to destroy their lives.

On close examination, they discovered that the voice patterns of the narrator were very much like those of a hated friend or relative from the past, and this person inadvertently picked up their behavior from the tape. This forced the subject into coming to terms with their feelings toward this person before they decided they were ready. And this is not easy or painless work, and definitely not something to be undertaken before you're ready.

Suggestions for reducing potential adverse side effects



If you intend to use commercial subliminals, there are ways to avoid, at least in part, some of the effects of transference. Many producers are using sophisticated processing techniques designed to actually turn the voice speaking the messages into part of the music, which eliminates a lot of potential transference effects. Stephen Halpern is one of the most popular producers using this method, but when you purchase a Halpern tape, you don't get to pick and choose which of his messages you'll hear. You have to accept the whole package, and I believe some of his choices are of questionable value.

You can also select tapes made by a role model rather than a stranger. If the voice speaking the messages is the voice of someone you want to emulate, you may actually welcome transference effects, although they will probably be only temporary. Another way to insure primarily positive effects is to work on a problem which is either not too severe or has no emotional baggage tied to it such as fear or lust.

Situational problems which you simply don't have time to deal with in your daily life, such as teaching yourself to remember to do your laundry or not lose keys and wallets or are probably ideal choices for sleep-related subliminal learning. Starting small is also a way to build confidence and keep your life simple. In my opinion, the ideal way to use subliminals at any time is to keep them tied to positives in your life.

If things are generally going well for you, problems can be solved from a standpoint of desire rather than desperation, and this attitude generally allows you to be much more gentle with yourself when you bog down and recognize and deal with a problem too difficult to solve alone. Desperation can often lead you to heroic efforts which do more harm than good.



Sleep learning

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How sleep learning works

Unexpected dynamics



Learning from an audible source while we sleep, as opposed to a subliminal source played while we fall asleep or relax in bed, has a different set of dynamics and a different set of uses from subliminal learning. In theory, this method of learning should be much more beneficial than using subliminals, but it doesn't often work out the way we had hoped.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;girlstud.bmp} A prime example are the sleep-learning language courses which were popular some years back. In preliminary studies they seemed surprisingly effective, but in practice with consumers they tended to be a dismal failure. I can't claim to know the exact reason why this occurred, but I can make a good guess. Sleep-learning tends to implant messages in our minds at several stages of consciousness.

What's interesting is that we only seem to have that information available to us when we're in that state of consciousness. We've all had the experience of having otherwise normal memories lost to us under stress. This seems to be due to the fact that we store things according to the state of mind in which we need them. If you learned German in a fearful or exciting atmosphere, you'll probably have it available to you "in your sleep" if you need it. But if you learned it in a state of relatively deep relaxation, chances are that you will not be able to access memories of the German you've learned unless you can relax to a state close to that in which you learned it. Fear and excitement act like a gate to our memories, putting us into animal mode, and when our mind is occupied with survival there aren't many circuits left for remembering who scored in overtime in last night's game.

Why is sleep learning so unpredictable?



So what happened between the study subjects and the consumer to account for the difference in response? In all likelihood, the study subjects didn't care whether they learned German or not. They were either paid for the course or simply curious about what it might accomplish for them. They had no emotional stake in learning. The consumers, on the other hand, had good money invested and a big emotional stake in the project. Chances are excellent that many of them were excited around the prospect of learning the language and trying out the sleep learning, and as I've mentioned, excitement is not a good state for recall.

I'd be willing to bet that those who "failed" with sleep learning would probably score excellent marks on the same material years later once the emotional drive has been quieted, simply because the information was only ready to come out in a deeply relaxed frame of mind.



Who can benefit from sleep learning

A few more caveats



The previous explanation should give you a good picture of what you can and cannot learn well using sleep learning techniques, and who should use them. Sleep learning seems to be an ideal way to master simple things that escape your mind under normal circumstances and are only likely to be needed in relaxed situations. For example, if you need to learn calculus for an exam, sleep learning is likely to be a big bust unless exams are not a stressor to you. But if you want to learn it to program a computer as part of a job or project where you're not under pressure to learn it, it should work well for you.

The ability to make effective use of sleep learning tapes also depends on your normal sleep habits. Sleep learning usually requires that the material to be learned is played at a barely audible level. This can be a major distraction if you have difficulty falling asleep. But if your sleep patterns are already fairly stable and comfortable, this added distraction might barely be noticeable.



If you have a history of substance addiction, which is almost always associated with disturbance of REM sleep, it will probably be wise to avoid sleep learning until you know you're well clear of the urge to use. The messages from the sleep learning tapes will almost certainly have an impact on your dreams at some point, and if you need your dreams to process the day's events and find yourself unstable when you don't get enough REM sleep, this type of learning could push you in a very subtle manner toward addiction again, because you will likely associate your REM disturbance with your addictive days.

Not a productive practice for all personality types

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;people.bmp}Certain personality types seem to benefit more from sleep learning than others. If you're a laid-back person to begin with, you might find this an effective tool for you. But most of us learn best not when we're relaxed, but when we're relaxed and attentive. It is impossible for most of us to pay attention to anything below the lightest stage of sleep, and anyone who has ever been labeled as high-strung is likely to be resistant to sleep learning. That pretty much narrows the field, doesn't it? Personally, I doubt that more than 20 percent of the population can truly benefit from sleep learning.

I don't apologize for shattering your hopes. If this information saves you \$100 on a sleep-learning program that wouldn't work for you anyway, it was worth it.



A second possibility for sleep learning

Sleep-onset learning: the diamond in the wreckage



There is an application of sleep learning that might be more effective for most people than the standard method of endless-loop taped messages. It could more accurately be termed sleep-onset learning. Rather than use a tape that repeats itself throughout the night, use a tape which plays once and turns itself off, and play it once a day at the least disturbing time in your sleep cycle. For some people this will be just before they fall asleep. Others may prefer to wake up a half-hour or so early and play the tape while they doze.

In theory, this method should allow you the benefits of receiving the messages in stage 1 or stage 2 sleep at a time when your body might be fairly wound up. This gives you the benefits of receiving the messages in a relaxed state, but also with a certain amount of attentiveness which adds impact and staying power.



If you'd like to use sleep learning for your job or for personal growth, give it a trial with something you select yourself for a week or two before deciding to invest in expensive courses. It will be a lot easier to swallow an inexpensive, short-term failure on something that isn't very important to you than to deal with a costly setback relating to a skill you really wanted to have.



Personal cybernetics and affirmations

- [? A glowing testimonial reconsidered](#)
- [? The real value of affirmations and cybernetics](#)
- [? A step-by-step reprogramming system: an introduction](#)
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A glowing testimonial reconsidered

The benefits of hindsight



I'm looking at the previous edition of this book, written in 1987. I'll quote the section as I wrote it:

“Affirmations are simply repeated ideas believed by the person making them. Cybernetics is a computer term, and in this context it means programming the mind to program itself or produce results on its own. The applications to be discussed here are not specifically sleep learning techniques, but actually pre-sleep learning techniques. They are not occult, coercive or faddish. They represent the ideas of the new vanguard of psychology, and are thought by many to be part of the most vital developments in psychology and human awareness in this century. I've used them myself with most satisfactory results and would not hesitate to recommend them to anyone.

“One word of warning. Anyone who comes across in such strong terms and acts as if they've found the Holy Grail, as I fear I have here, is to be taken with perhaps more than just a grain of salt. Humans are a vain and stupid species, and we tend to grab with both hands at whatever appears to be what we most need at the time. We can recklessly exploit our discoveries for our own ends with perhaps too little consideration of what we may be doing to others. Remember that there is a grain of truth in all things, but only a few people can divine the whole truth from any given seed of wisdom.”

Failed experiments



Six years ago I was a willing subject for a guru of personal cybernetics, and as it turns out, one of those who couldn't seem to make it work. In the past few years I have discovered why I couldn't make it work, and I am absolutely horrified by the answer. The first paragraph is nowhere near what I would write today. Instead, I would state that personal cybernetics and affirmations are most definitely occult, faddish and coercive, and they represent the preachings of the merchants of success, not the vanguard of psychological understanding. It's true that at the time I had used them with most satisfactory results, and I still believe they have their place. But since that writing my experience has resulted in something considerably less than satisfaction, and there are vast numbers of people whom I would now caution not to use the techniques at all.

The second paragraph above may well have been a message to myself. I wish I had had the depth of experience then that I have now. I am grateful that I was able to temper my enthusiasm with an appropriate caution, and that the book sold very few copies.



The real value of affirmations and cybernetics

Myths shattered a house specialty

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;brokhart.bmp} I direct you once again to the file **NO_HELP.TXT** described in the previous chapter; there is much more on this subject in that article than I could ever describe here. I can tell you that this is indeed a powerful tool for personal change at a deep level, and that when used with appropriate caution in appropriate areas it can literally change lives. But I am no longer prepared to admit that it will improve lives. In fact, the major benefit I can attribute to the technique is that it can help you cope with daily life better than you have been.

At the risk of being overcautious, I want to make it clear exactly how the technique works and what this means to the user. Personal cybernetics alters your brain's software. It does not heal wounds, although it can be used as a catalyst for healing if you know what you're doing. If you react to the sound of a bugle by bonking yourself on the head with a hammer, you can use the technique to redirect that energy toward bonking firewood with an axe instead. You cannot use it to redirect the energy toward keeping yourself healthier, not before other work has been done at a deeper level.

Lead-into-gold claims, dollar-for-dollar truth



The technique is not a magic vaccine against what ails you. It *is* highly effective for rerouting behaviors which cause you harm into other behaviors which either cause you less harm or assist you in your day-to-day life, but as I've stated before, it *won't* turn lead into gold. It may seem as though it does, but in fact it does not. I ought to know; I paid a heavy price for believing otherwise.

That said, the technique seems to be effective for improving your ability to cope when the means do not exist to help you deal with a problem, primarily by training you in new behaviors which are less harmful than the behaviors you currently use. It is not recommended to anyone with emotional or psychological disturbances without the assistance of a qualified mental health professional.



A step-by-step reprogramming system: an introduction

Decide upon a result



The first thing to decide is what you want to change about yourself. For our purposes, let's say you bite your nails when you're tense and you want to deal with that tension in a way that seems more constructive to you, perhaps by playing golf on the weekends. This technique is utilized by taking an affirmation, a simple statement about the new behavior you want to adopt and the old behavior you want to alter, and using this affirmation as the seed program for your new behavior.

Seeds need to be planted in the proper soil, at the right depth, and fed the right way in order to produce the desired crop. The right depth in this case means the right depth of consciousness, which will be taken care of by the steps outlined below. The right food means the proper attention and care. Without enough effort on your part, you won't achieve the change you want.



A corn plant needs to absorb enough energy over time to create a plant from the tiny seed, and in just the same way you'll need to expend enough energy and time working on a given behavior or feeling to alter it into the shape you desire. And it's especially important to plant the right seed for the crop you want to harvest. If all you need is just a little push to get you out on the links with friends on the weekend, the energy from your nailbiting habit might be all that's required.

But if you hate or fear golf, or exercise of any kind, you might succeed in dealing with your nailbiting but frustrate yourself with your inability to get yourself golfing. It might take a bigger problem, such as a video game or TV habit, to supply enough energy to deal with this situation. The key is to choose an outcome that fits the energy level of the problem you have currently, and that can often require a great deal of thought.

Allowing change to change itself



You don't need to choose such an outcome, and in fact I wonder if it isn't more respectful toward your own inner drives to let the energy find its own release. You may find that the energy comes out in keeping a cleaner house instead, or if you're a religious or spiritually-minded person, in greater awareness of the world around you.

The steps in the next section are only suggestions based on a variety of techniques described by many different authors. Virtually any guide to personal reprogramming will offer you the same steps, perhaps organized a little differently, but the underlying process tends to be the same in all cases. In order to maximize your chances of success when you begin using them, try to follow these steps as precisely as you can. As you become proficient in the technique, you'll discover your own natural adaptations of certain ideas which work better or feel more comfortable to you. You may already have a workable technique and not even know it. Some people discover when they read about personal cybernetics for the first time that they've

been using the technique all their lives and simply didn't know of its potential.



A basic system for personal cybernetics

- ? Step 1: inventory
- ? Step 2: select a target for change
- ? Step 3: select a proper counterbalancing target
- ? Step 4: create an affirmation
- ? Step 5: share the affirmation with one person
- ? Step 6: elaborate upon your affirmation
- ? Step 7: internalize every detail of what you want
- ? Step 8: deepen the effect
- ? Step 9: remind yourself of your objective
- ? Step 10: let the work incubate
- ? Step 11: sustained effort
- ? Step 12: keep records of your work
- ? Step 13: persist until you succeed
- ? Step 14: listen to your own rhythms

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Step 1: inventory

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The first thing you need to do is decide what you have to work with. This will require a brief self-analysis. It's not necessary to write it down, but putting these exercises on paper seems to provide future insurance against quitting prematurely by adding impetus to your efforts from the start. There is often a strong, sometimes overwhelming desire to quit just when you're on the verge of success, and this is a way to help reduce the stress of this crisis.

It can also be a good way to discover how you view yourself, because the list will be divided into two columns. On one side, it doesn't matter which, write down something you don't particularly like about yourself or your behavior. On the opposite side, write down something you are not but wish you were. If this is a distressing exercise for you, create a third column and list something you do like about yourself. It is critical for the sake of balance and your personal well-being that you stop the exercise if you begin to list more negative things than positives. Everyone has at least as many likeable aspects as unlikeable ones, but most of us see more of the unlikeable ones. This exercise needs to be balanced or it will start your program of change off on a negative note, and I do not believe it helps to try to make changes from a standpoint of desperation.

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Step 2: select a target for change

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Pinpoint one undesirable habit or personality trait which you feel is holding you back. It shouldn't be a serious problem with your first few attempts at this. Failing at a major project the first time out only reinforces failure programming, and your chances of success are improved by the selection of a relatively simple first effort. The ideal choice for a first experiment is

something you believe you could deal with on your own regardless of the techniques used, but which you think might be a little easier with the help of some deep-level reprogramming.



Step 3: select a proper counterbalancing target



Find a positive trait from your “wish list” which seems to you to be a good match for the negative you wish to eliminate. If you can’t seem to find a compatible pair, you may need to select something else to work on which seems to offer the proper energy balance. Exact opposites are not good matches. For example, a pessimistic outlook on life doesn’t have a proper match in optimism. Trying to channel one into the other is like trying to turn lead into gold. Self-assurance or self-confidence is a much better substitute for pessimism.



Step 4: create an affirmation



Create an affirmation based on the desired trait chosen from your wish list. Many people believe the best affirmations also contain a renunciation, and this does appear to logically set up the proper balance. An affirmation of optimism might read as follows:

“I no longer have a need for pessimism. I am now confident of my ability to succeed at anything I try and handle any setback which may be placed in my path.”

Effective affirmations need to be absolute statements in the present tense. The idea is to trick your mind into believing that what you affirm for yourself has already come to pass. If you had proof that you were confident and capable at a level you could access when you needed it, you wouldn’t need to use the affirmation. Most of us have memories of success at just about anything we affirm for ourselves, and using the language in this way seems to act as a reminder of past successes. We’ll actually remember previous successes and relive them in our minds, which can be an excellent way to create a buildup of memories needed to counterbalance a pattern of failure.

A present-tense statement is necessary because if you place a message of “tomorrow” in your subconscious mind, your subconscious does not have the logical tools of your conscious awareness. It does not know that tomorrow becomes today. Tomorrow is always tomorrow and once your subconscious gets it that you’ll succeed “tomorrow”, you can never succeed until you retrain your mind to believe “tomorrow” is “today”. If you do succeed, it may make you feel horrible because your subconscious may feel cheated out of its “tomorrow”.



Let’s look a little more closely at this point, because it is critical to the success of your efforts. The more accident-prone you are, the more accident-prone you’re likely to be in the future. It’s a simple law of human behavior, proven by the fact that your insurance rates rise after an accident rather than fall or stay the same. A mind trained to believe that you are accident-prone will actually place you in situations where you are likely to have accidents whether you like it or not, whether you consciously attempt to avoid them or not.



In fact, the harder you try not to have accidents, the worse the accidents are likely to be. It appears that the only way to effectively retrain the mind is to build up a large enough memory store of the opposite reaction that it exceeds the old reaction. It takes time and repetition, but it works.



Step 5: share the affirmation with one person



Confide your desire to only one other person, and make sure you select a person who can support you in your desire. It should preferably be someone who has already achieved what you seek. Changes often cause resistance to our efforts among those around us, and this can seriously impair our progress if we don't have the balancing effect of someone who supports and believes in what we're attempting to accomplish. Your faith may be strong enough that you can rely upon God's support rather than that of a person or professional guide. Most of us seem to need flesh and blood support in this area.



Step 6: elaborate upon your affirmation



Take this brief affirmation and expand upon it. Imagine how it would feel to be the way your affirmation suggests, what you would do with that ability. Once again it is important to achieve balance. We often expect our positive changes to provide us with more happiness or security than they actually do. If it feels right to do so, write down this expanded version of your affirmation.

Detail is important, and the more detail you can pack into your expanded affirmation the more effective it will be. Once again, keep the details balanced. Try to avoid adding positive details to your desired outcome which do not have a negative counterpart in the problem you wish to solve. You may want to review this piece of paper later to inspire yourself when the process gets difficult. Some people will take this written, expanded affirmation and read it every morning or every night in addition to their subliminal learning.



Step 7: internalize every detail of what you want



Memorize your affirmation at both levels, the expanded version and the single-statement version, until you can repeat it just about word for word at any time of day or night. This could take no more than a few minutes, but if you have something in your past or your genetic makeup which makes it difficult for you to make changes it could take several days or even weeks.

Unfortunately, you won't be ready to proceed with actual subliminal learning until you can do this, because the next step will be to reduce these statements to a single word which signifies the objective. For our pessimism example, the single word would probably be "self-assurance". This reduction to a single word is said to vastly increase the power of subliminal learning, because repeating this single word is like repeating everything in the detailed affirmation in a fraction of the time.

I don't personally believe this aspect of the technique. What I do believe is that memorizing all the details and reducing them to a single word is more like getting little bits of every detail in each repetition of the word.



Step 8: deepen the effect

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}You're now ready to put the affirmation to work at a deep level. The work you have already done will have helped you accomplish at least some reprogramming, but probably only at a conscious level. This step will take the process into the subconscious mind, adding considerable power to your efforts.

Using the relaxation techniques outlined in the section on dealing with insomnia, enter a deep state of relaxation and repeat your key word as a mantra or chant. Going back to our self-assurance example, you may want to speak it in your mind in time with your breath, speaking "self" as you inhale and "assurance" as you exhale. Many experts suggest that you go back to your detailed affirmation and re-experience every detail you listed while you're in this state of mind.

I believe it depends on your orientation which way will be more effective for you. Specifically, the last thing you usually remember before falling asleep will indicate how this will work best for you. If you tend to lapse into vivid images and experiences before falling asleep, by all means use your imagination to go over all the details of what you have affirmed for yourself. If you tend to remember talking to yourself or thinking about logical things as you doze off, reciting the whole affirmation will probably be best. Some tend to remember a single, lingering thought or idea in their mind as they drift off, and in this case the chant will be ideal.



You can also choose to record your message on a tape which you'll play as you fall asleep, once again remembering to keep in mind the way your mind behaves as you drift off. You might find it preferable to use a 20-minute recording of your own voice instead of a consciously-controlled exercise, particularly if you need to focus your attention on relaxing and falling asleep.

You may also find you drift through two or three states of consciousness before falling asleep. You may start out with a voice in your head, then proceed to a single repeating thought and then experience vivid dream images. If so, it will probably help you to structure your tape accordingly, repeating your sentence for several minutes, then repeating the key word for several minutes and finishing the tape by describing in detail the type of person you are when you have achieved your goal as a way of complementing each stage of consciousness.



You're likely to drift from what appears to be your usual pattern, and if you're dealing with a stubborn problem you might discover a need to change the tape every few weeks or so to accommodate changes in your conscious states.

The idea here is to avoid any conscious discipline, but instead to let the word, words or images drift across your mind at will with just an occasional reminder. Let the affirmation take the place of only your unwanted thoughts and images. As you drift off, the pictures will distort, and a repetition of "self-assurance" may become "sands furnace" or "sensible snooze". Don't worry about this. After all, you're going to sleep anyway. These changes will occur at their own pace as you're ready to drift off, and they usually indicate that your mind has absorbed all of the new information it can handle for one night.



Step 9: remind yourself of your objective



This step is optional, but it will help intensify and accelerate the process. It can also make the process considerably more distressing, so take care when applying it. All that's involved here is refreshing your memory about the affirmation in the daytime. This helps keep you on track with your work and in control of its progress, and many people prefer this sense of self-

determination. Others find this unnatural and unpleasant, and prefer to do the initial work and then see what their subconscious will accept. Sometimes there is deep resistance to change and we may discard a great deal of what we had originally sought because of the level of pain or stress involved. There's no shame in letting this occur. It's simply a matter of personal preference.



Step 10: let the work incubate



Wait. You may notice some small changes almost overnight because of the preliminary work you've done and the excitement you felt over achieving something new. But in most cases it will take time for results to appear, and that time could be weeks or even months. If you let the process happen for you rather than forcing it, you should find that the changes happen almost automatically and with what seems like little or no discomfort. Ideally, reprogramming can be a painless technique if actual growth isn't also expected.

Many people notice their habits or reactions changing almost unconsciously, indicating that we've learned at an unconscious level and our behavior is responding to that learning. It can literally scare the hell out of you to suddenly see yourself reacting to new programming without the conscious awareness of what caused it, and if you're particularly alert during the day you may forget that you even use your programming techniques until you get ready for bed at night.



Step 11: sustained effort



Keep up your efforts until the new pattern of behavior or personality trait is firmly established in your life and well tolerated by your conscious mind. A special warning needs to be given here, because regardless of how difficult or how easy the problem may be, there will come a crisis point. Reprogramming involves changing from an enforced behavior to a chosen behavior, and at the point when the two behaviors equalize, we tend to find ourselves in confusion. We often go from knowing we've been resisting change to a state of knowing we have a choice, and this can result in backsliding if we have some subconscious moral restriction against the thing we are trying to achieve.



It is critical that the support you rely upon at this crisis point be of a type that does not lure you into your new behavior, because the fact is that once you reach the place where you have balanced the energy levels between what you have and don't want and what you want and don't have, a third possibility opens up for you. You may decide you don't really want the goal you thought you wanted after all, that you want to take this energy in another direction. And that's entirely acceptable.

But if you're being pulled by a person or support group into taking this energy in a certain direction, you may lack the opportunity to make this third choice, and this third choice is usually more satisfying than either backsliding or moving onward to our goal. But once you've made the choice, there is usually no turning back. You will find it as difficult (or as easy) to redirect your efforts back toward your previously-selected goal as you found it to make the original change, perhaps even moreso since the ravages of age will tax you that much more.



Note that you have choice when you reach the place where the two energies balance each other, and you may decide that it will serve you better in the long run not to make a change at all, but to return to your old behavior. You may suddenly see risks or drawbacks to your desired goal which had not previously occurred to you. You may also feel like giving up from time to time.

This is perfectly natural and this need not discourage you or make you feel inadequate if you can keep in mind that all change is stressful and we all have limits. Sometimes we all need to stop and rest for a while, and sometimes we need to backslide as a way of reminding ourselves of what we're growing away from, or perhaps just as a means of saying a final farewell to something which may have served us better than we thought.



Step 12: keep records of your work



Once you feel you've gone as far as you can with your efforts, take all your tapes and papers relating to your efforts and put them in a file or some other safe place where you can access them later. You may need a refresher course in the future, or you may discover unwanted side effects to your efforts. Having a copy of your work on hand will allow you an opportunity to review your work for possible inflections, omissions, improper expectations or transferences which may crop up in the future. These can offer essential insights needed to diagnose a problem if you find your efforts having unexpected side effects.



Step 13: persist until you succeed



Don't quit until you've had at least one success, particularly if this is your first attempt at using subliminal learning. A first failure that leads you to quit leaves a powerful imprint on your mind which could have adverse effects on any future attempts at reprogramming or self-help. If you select a big project and find it doesn't work for you, shoot lower and try again, but don't quit until you have at least one success.

Once you master the principles, you have a tool for change which you can use for the rest of your life, almost any time you want it. Once you accept failure, your ability to choose change out of desire will be compromised, and you may be dooming yourself to choosing change only when faced with desperation.



Step 14: listen to your own rhythms



Allow the rhythm of change to dictate how you should proceed, rather than dictating the nature of the change you want to make. You'll often discover that your affirmation and renunciation aren't balanced, that you need two goals, or two negatives to eliminate, to balance one on the opposite side because of their individual energy levels. You might also discover that the exercise is better performed at a different time of day if you find it interfering with your sleep.

It is also common to discover halfway into the work that you're working on the wrong goal or the wrong problem. You might find that self-assurance is not what you need to deal with a pessimistic outlook, and that your social choices are closer to the heart of the problem. You may need to affirm loving, supportive relationships rather than self-confidence to overcome

the conflict, requiring a complete change of message.



Note that whenever you discover this need to change messages well into a cybernetics program, you are probably dealing with something rooted more deeply than you thought. Take care, and if necessary employ the help of a qualified professional if it becomes too difficult to complete the work on your own.



Using dreams for solving problems

Soft suggestion

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}I've already hinted at some of this material in previous discussions of cybernetics and I also discuss it in a chapter on dreaming. This isn't as "hard" a technique as personal cybernetics, because instead of piledriving a new concept or idea into the mind with subliminals or audible messages, this technique is designed to plumb the subconscious and let it produce its own answers to problems and questions.

The technique is very similar to the cybernetics technique outlined earlier in this chapter. Once again you create an affirmation at three different levels of detail, once again you implant it deeply into your subconscious, and once again this will often produce unexpected success at unusual times. But there are differences. If you don't get results with this technique, you don't force it. You stop instead, and this will often provide you with precisely the result you want. And you don't select an outcome. Instead, you let your subconscious select it for you.

It is also more difficult for compulsive people, and I count myself among that group, to make use of this technique because it requires patience and discipline of a sort compulsive people don't usually practice well. I can apply myself to a task, often no matter how unpleasant, to the point where I'm in great physical pain. But when it comes to leaving alone a situation in which I want something, I have a very low tolerance for discomfort. And that's precisely what this technique requires. Once the affirmations are done and the seed has been planted, it must be left alone to grow on its own. The harder you work at an answer, the more difficult it seems to be to receive it.

{ewc LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;day_nigh.bmp}

A step-by-step process for problem-solving in sleep



STEP 1: Select a problem you'd like to have answered. It could be as mundane as what colors of clothes best suit your personality rather than your skin type, or as complicated and serious as what career you should choose.



STEP 2: Write your three levels of description of the problem, just as you did before, except pose them in the form of questions you already have answered. Let's use choosing a new career as an example. Your short sentence might say:

"I am ready to give up my old career or lack of a career and move into a new job. I now know what job will make me happiest and most prosperous."

Your keyword might be "career".

Your long-form affirmation-renunciation might look in part like this:

"My old career has served me well. It no longer serves me as well as I would like. I now have a new career which suits my temperament and brings me the prosperity I desire. I have fond memories of my old life. I feel excited and hopeful (or happy and comfortable) as I start my new career. I see myself enjoying what I'm doing, more free of stress, aware of my world, and taking more enjoyment from my life than I did before. I feel

satisfied with the contribution I am making to the world with my new job.”

Of course, this is only a partial description. In a previous edition I recommended affirming a date and time when you would know the answer to the question, but I no longer see that as being beneficial. Laid-back Type B personalities might find this useful, but we Type A's have been stressing our subconscious minds for most of our lives, and we'll probably get better results if we lean back and let our subconscious decide for us when it will reveal the answer. If we've been particularly brutal with ourselves for a long time, it might make us wait weeks, months or even years for an answer while it catches up on the backlog of living we've left for it.



STEP 3: Do a thorough written, verbal, or meditative analysis of the problem. This need not be structured as an affirmation. Instead, it's away to bring to your conscious mind all the factors being weighed by your subconscious. It may help your patience to see precisely how much material your subconscious will need to process before offering an answer, and it may provide you with more solid evidence to accept what might seem, when you receive it, to be a strange or unacceptable answer. If you've been living in the executive fast lane for ten years, you might feel insulted if the answer your subconscious sends back is "Sell suits at a men's store in the mall". But if you have a written analysis of your situation, demonstrating the love you have for clothing, the effects executive stress have had on your health and your life, and the difficulties you've gotten into as a result of the paper chase and the rat race, selling suits might look positively wonderful to you.

This analysis will often result in answers seeming to pop up out of nowhere, and you might not think you have any more work to do. This can often be a false first impression, so sleep on the idea and see if you feel as right about the answer in 24 hours. Sometimes you will, but sometimes your sleeping mind needed to process that answer before discarding it.



STEP 4: As you fall asleep, spend a little time each night reminding yourself of the question, and if you're compulsive, reminding yourself to wait patiently for an answer. If you're an early riser, you might try to teach yourself to spend time considering the question early in the morning. Very often you'll fall back to sleep and have an early-morning dream which will give the answer to you.



STEP 5: Eventually you'll feel frustrated or tired of doing this exercise. That's the time to quit. It's usually an indication that your subconscious has absorbed all the information it can handle and needs some free "processing time" before spitting out its answer. The key now is patience, because the more you want the answer and the harder you try to get it, the more likely your subconscious will refuse to cooperate. This is a very common phenomenon, but I also tend toward the belief that it is a conditioned response, not something that naturally happens with all of us. A good psychiatrist or hypnotherapist may be able to help you conquer this belief so that you can virtually train your subconscious to sit up, roll over and come when you call. If you ever do succeed in acquiring this skill, be sure to treat it as a well-loved dog or it will eventually turn on its master. Our conscious mind isn't the only part of us that enjoys freedom; our subconscious mind likes it too.



Eventually your answer will come, and it may come in any number of ways as I've already hinted. It might be received in a dream or as a flash insight at awakening, sleep onset or in the

middle of the night. The more emotionally attached you are to the answer, the longer it will probably take for your subconscious to emerge with its answer, so take care and have patience if the wait seems to be excruciating. You may have selected a tougher problem than you first thought!



Stewing could be more beneficial than we realize

A digestive process?

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;cowbird.bmp}Ruminant animals are those which regurgitate their food after swallowing it and chew on it later. Ruminations in the context of sleep are regurgitated thoughts. They are said by many to be a bane to good sleep, and in fact in the previous edition of this book I described them as essentially unhealthy and unnecessary. But let's not forget why ruminant animals chew their cud. It is a way of breaking down fibrous food so that nutrients can be absorbed from it. Rumination prior to sleep may perform exactly the same function.

Many of us spend from several minutes to an hour or more frenetically rehashing the day's events in our minds, making sure everything's just so. And things are seldom "just so". The anticipation of a date or a deadline the next day can destroy our ability to fall asleep. Memories of difficult experiences can cause us to twitch and shudder, our hearts to race and our bodies to feel like a bundle of raw nerves. Everyone ruminates, and "normal" rumination consists of nothing more than gently drifting thoughts, feelings and mental experiences. Some of us experience pain in this process which we can't adequately cope with, turning bedtime into a chamber of horrors.

If you happen to suffer occasional or chronic sleep loss due to rumination over the events of the day past, or even of a year long past, you're normal. It's a very common problem made worse in part by the stress of our lives today. If it were possible to absorb every experience fully and without stress, we'd all fall asleep quickly and easily.

Limited human capacity



But we can't and we don't. Most of us are bombarded with more energy, more demands and more stress in an average day than we can truly cope with. We actually need quiet time with our own thoughts and feelings to digest what has occurred in our lives or stress accumulates to crisis levels. Some of us have learned to pass that leftover experience on to our dreams, where we can sift and sort the information at a deep level, but many of us sabotage our dream life through too little sleep or drugs which interfere in normal sleep.

Sometimes we'll reach a particularly difficult point such as a painful or confusing memory that won't go away. We'll often spend weeks or months of reliving this event every night, or cope with it by piling up so much stress during the day that we'll exhaust ourselves to sleep and never get a chance to properly deal with this memory until the backlog of stress is removed.



Two types of ruminations, two ways to handle them

Drifting streams and raging rapids

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;surf.bmp} There appears to be two different types of ruminations. One type is the normal, drifting thought which I described earlier, and the other is the jagged, jarring thought which interferes with our rest. There appears to be two types of stress-related rumination as well. One type involves our creative processes and the other involves stewing over old stuff.

I don't believe either type of rumination benefits from conscious intervention unless the problem is so severe that the only workable alternative is to try to stamp out the thought processes with a stronger stimulus. This might be needed if your ruminations are causing serious disruptions in your daily life. The best way to combat the problem seems to be to overwhelm the ruminating with a strong experience.

If you keep having fearful fantasies or memories, watching a horror movie before bed might be a way to *overwhelm* the fear. If loneliness is your culprit, a love story or romance might be more suitable for you. You might find that this only worsens the situation, and in such a case your only recourse might be to exhaust yourself, mentally and physically, to shut down the disturbing feelings and thoughts until you can find appropriate professional help.

Distraction isn't always the best treatment...and might be the worst



Sometimes even creative ruminations can be a bother, and if so, engaging in a demanding activity such as playing a computer game or a musical instrument might help to shut out the jarring insights.

This won't make the problem go away. Eventually it will come back once your stress level drops. The real key to dealing with these phenomena is to let them be. If you're a creative person in the first place or simply subject to creative outbursts in bed, keep a tape recorder at your bedside to record your insights. I can almost guarantee that the harder you work at keeping track of them, the sooner they'll quiet down or go away.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;goldnote.bmp} I spent several years trying to develop a career as a musician and songwriter, and some of my best ideas were received in a semi-conscious state between sleep and waking, but as soon as I started putting them into song forms and preparing them for market in anticipation of a sale, the bloom was very quickly off the rose. The dreamy songs dried up.

Since I stopped playing music, they come back to me from time to time, and they seem to be better than ever. It's deceptively easy to fall in love with our sleepy creations and I feel more comfortable simply letting these things be, making use of them only as I find time and room in my life. When I failed to succeed commercially with these dream-songs, I occasionally felt as if I had been let down by my own dreams, which not only wasn't true, it was an insult to my subconscious.

Dealing with disturbing memories



Emotionally disturbing memories and images can be more difficult to deal with, but the same rules seem to apply. I have turned a lot of this material into creative material in my waking life, but I have never been completely comfortable doing so. It seems the best way to deal with this type of rumination is to try to allow the emotions to come through you at whatever depth is necessary.

You may cringe at having said something to someone which you later rejected, and feel that cringe every time the memory recurs. If you take note of it and let your body be, allowing the cringe to be felt as shame or hurt, you may think you've actually made things worse, and temporarily at least, you have. Underneath that hurt is probably another memory which explains why you did what you did, and also tells you in no uncertain terms that it wasn't as bad as it seems and perhaps wasn't even your fault, but instead was only experienced that way because you lacked the tools to understand the situation.

Once you've let the grief and pain from that experience come through you, the ruminations will stop, forever, unless you only managed to deal with a part of the problem. This is a demanding, difficult approach for many people and with particularly compulsive or uncontrollable responses you may need the help and support of a qualified mental health professional. Don't feel bad for having these problems, though. Many people have them and spend their lives frantically burying them in activity or stimulation and never get to the heart of the difficulty.



Techniques for sleep reduction



You might find this the most valuable part of the whole book. This chapter could offer you something you always wished for but never believed was possible: a way to put more hours in the day...painlessly.



More hours in a day



Sleep reduction isn't for everyone



Two techniques for sleep reduction



A matter of adaptation



Cautions for experimenters



Reduced sleep need may be a joy in itself



Reducing sleep need through body chemistry



Acetylcholine and sleep reduction



Tryptophan and sleep reduction



Nor-adrenaline and sleep reduction



A few final words



More hours in a day

How much sleep do we really need?



Until recently, it was widely accepted that humans required a specific amount of sleep to function at peak. Studies have shown that as little as 10 percent less sleep over the long term can produce symptoms of stress and fatigue. But other, more limited studies seem to show that careful reduction in sleep over a period of a few months can actually reduce total sleep need by conditioning the brain to adapt to the reduced sleep time.

The implications are exciting. Many people find the physical demand of eight hours daily in bed detracts from their life. Those of us whose schedules are crammed from sunup to sundown may see the possibility of an extra hour or two in the day as a gift from heaven. But it should be pointed out that studies relating to sleep reduction have not been undertaken on as wide a scale as those relating to sleep need, and the full physical and psychological effects of reducing sleep need simply aren't known.



Sleep reduction isn't for everyone

The range of individual sleep need



We do know that sleep need varies from person to person. Many people seem to get by quite well on as little as five hours' sleep a night, while others cannot be at their best on less than nine. We also know that biofeedback can help patients with many illnesses not normally considered controllable through willpower or conscious effort. Sleep need reduction may work the same way as biofeedback. But I do believe there is a downside to this practice.

There doesn't seem to be a free lunch here. Reducing sleep time may stress other systems in subtle ways which are not apparent to the subject and which don't produce symptoms for months or even years. If so, this could be Russian roulette for people with a history of emotional instability or mental disorders. It might also be undesirable as a goal. Sleep provides precious time to ourselves which many people wouldn't trade away for anything.

My personal belief is that anyone with a history of drug abuse or sleep disturbance should be very cautious about using any sleep reduction program. The side effects don't appear to be severe when a slow, careful approach is taken which also reduces stresses that contribute to sleep need, but side effects are side effects and they may be unacceptable to you.

Not for everyone



Other conditions also need to be factored in. Any program of gradual or assisted sleep reduction should be undertaken during a period when normal sleep patterns will not be disrupted. Young parents, for example, can often benefit from sleep reduction because of the extra time it gives them with their children, but it will be difficult to accomplish with long-term success because the stress triggered by a young child will add to sleep need at precisely the time when sleep reduction is attempted. Shift workers and others with high job-related stress levels may also be unable to achieve long-term success, because as I'll discuss later, part of the success of such a program demands that you reduce the overall stress level in your life.

Perhaps it would be better to talk about who *can* undertake such a program. All indications given by those who have succeeded with it point to a need for a good state of physical health and general fitness. Freedom from emotional illnesses, particularly depression, is another plus. People who are single, have a partner who already has a reduced sleep need, or a partner willing to attempt sleep reduction have a better chance of success.

As I've already said, stress should be at a minimum in your life and you must have a reasonable expectation that you can maintain this low stress level for a period of at least several months. If this isn't possible, you'll need to have some way of reducing the existing stress or support for handling expected stress. Finally, a well-established pre-sleep routine will help reinforce new sleep patterns.

An important caution



WARNING: If any unusual or distressing mental or physical symptoms appear at any time during a sleep reduction program see a doctor immediately and discontinue the program.

Resume normal sleep patterns to help insure continued good health.



Two techniques for sleep reduction

Cold turkey vs. gradual withdrawal



There are two different methods for reducing your sleep need, each with its own benefits and drawbacks. Which one will work best for you probably depends upon which you find most comfortable. These two methods are the cold turkey method and the gradual withdrawal method, and the one you decide to use probably depends on which type of discipline has worked best for you in the past.

If you were only able to quit smoking by permitting yourself a slow, gradual withdrawal and always slipped back into the habit when you tried cold turkey, the gradual method will seem more natural and comfortable. If you've found that only cold turkey seems to work for you, it will probably work best for sleep reduction as well.



I am not personally in favor of the cold turkey method. It essentially involves abruptly cutting your sleep back by one or two hours a night and holding fast to the new sleep pattern for as long as it takes to become comfortable. This can be a rough ride for some people, too rough for those with emotional problems.

A kinder, gentler withdrawal



Fortunately there is a gentler method. In an experiment involving six people, total nightly sleep time was reduced from 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 hours a night by carefully reducing sleep time by 1/2 hour a night every two weeks. Such a gradual reduction will probably not result in impaired physical or mental function in healthy -- as opposed to normal -- adults, and it seems to allow the body enough time to adapt to the reduced sleep and find appropriate means of reducing stress. I am almost positive that the program will have profound effects on brain chemistry which will probably last as long as the new sleep patterns, but these effects will not result in distressing symptoms in healthy people.



Once again, I state that healthy and normal are not the same thing. No side effects were noted in the small group participating in the study, and the participants, who were allowed to sleep as long as they wanted once the experiment had ended, reported long-term success in maintaining reduced sleep times. In fact, the person who gained a 2-1/2-hour reduction did so by his own choice after the 1-1/2-hour reduction seemed to come so easily.



A matter of adaptation

How the change becomes permanent



It appears that the change becomes permanent through an adaptation process which results not in decreased sleep *need*, but increased sleep *efficiency*. If you remember our earlier discussion on sleep basics, we usually have four or five sleep cycles per night. When sleep need is reduced, the reduction seems to occur in 90-minute increments corresponding to the regular sleep cycle. The last sleep cycle or two are the ones eliminated completely.

Dream time is also reduced, although dream intensity may increase. Reduced dream time without increased dream intensity would be a sure-fire recipe for failure or eventual emotional problems. This phenomenon of increased dream intensity is seen over the short-term in recovering addicts and alcoholics who seem to make up for lost time in their first few nights off their drug of choice. In sleep reduction, this increased intensity seems to be permanent.

An end to dozing



The sharpest reductions are seen in the amounts of stage 1 and 2 sleep. These are the least necessary, and reduced daily stress allows for a lot of safe “light trance” consciousness during the day which may be where the lost stage 1 and 2 come out.

But regardless of how compressed the sleep becomes in a short sleeper, no reduction program can extend beyond the person’s limits of endurance, and the amount of deep delta sleep never declines. This is the most vital part of sleep for the body’s restorative processes, and no reduction program will succeed in lowering delta sleep time without eventually harming the sleeper. It is likely that any healthy sleeper will naturally increase their sleep time rather than tolerate lost delta sleep.



Cautions for experimenters

Increased fatigue



If you intend to try this method, be watchful for any signs of increased fatigue, especially if they persist for more than two weeks after the most recent half-hour sleep reduction. If the fatigue is mild, extend this period of the program an extra week or two to allow the body time to adapt. In fact, the safest way to approach sleep reduction will probably be to reduce sleep time by only a half-hour at a time and do not attempt the next reduction until you have had at least several days free of fatigue or other symptoms. If you've reduced sleep time by more than 90 minutes already, allow for at least a full week fatigue-free before the next reduction.

Don't reduce total sleep time by more than 1/3



Regardless of how you approach sleep reduction, it appears unwise to reduce total sleep time by more than 1/3 of your normal nightly sleep. If you usually sleep eight hours, the maximum reduction should be 2-1/2 hours and if you sleep six, the maximum should be only two hours. There may be detrimental long-term effects in some people which may occur at permanently low sleep times.

Be wary of euphoria



Once you complete your program and are reasonably sure you are suffering no ill effects, be wary of euphoria. You may start to feel better than you deserve based on your health and lifestyle. This might be a temporary effect, a release of hormones or an emotional sigh of relief at being allowed more life, but it could also be a preview of impending nervous exhaustion.

Keep a diary in case complications arise



Because of the risk of neurological effects (which, to my knowledge, no one has actually proven or disproven yet), it might be a good idea to keep a diary throughout the program, noting any symptoms and in particular the way you feel and react toward your life before and after the program.

If neurological symptoms result in a form of amnesia about your life before sleep reduction, this may be the only before/after record you have for diagnosing symptoms. You may also find that the changes in your brain chemistry result in different fatigue symptoms from those you are used to. If so, a diary may be a way to gauge changes in your overall lifestyle and behavior for adverse or positive effects.



! Reduced sleep need may be a joy in itself

The difference between joy and “getting high”

Euphoria experienced after a sleep reduction program may not be euphoria at all, but simply an increased sense of well-being. From records of those who have successfully reduced their sleep need and sleep length, those who sleep less seem to be generally happier people. Unfortunately I don't have anything more than anecdotal evidence to back this up, but it makes sense.

Those who cannot maintain a reduced sleep time will go back to a former sleep time out of sheer need, and those who don't tend to remain short sleepers because they enjoy the extra time. As long as reduced sleep need is not forced upon a person but is instead selected by choice, it may indicate an existing capacity to enjoy life more fully which simply hasn't been realized yet.

Thomas Edison and Buckminster Fuller both claimed to get by on what amounted to cat-naps. Fuller eventually wrote about his technique and gave it to the world as “dymaxion sleep”. Edison appeared to notice that sleep need drops when you're happily absorbed in a project you love or generally enjoying your life.



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Reducing sleep need through body chemistry



Reduced sleep need may not work in even healthy people who are good prospects for success in sleep reduction if brain hormone levels are sub-par for any reason. There are at least three substances critical to alertness and rest which, if not sufficient, may require you to sleep longer than you would if these substances were at normal levels. These three substances are acetylcholine, serotonin and nor-adrenaline (also called nor-epinephrine). Serotonin is the hormone most commonly associated with sleep and restfulness, nor-adrenaline with alertness and wakefulness, and acetylcholine with nerve balance and memory.

- [? Acetylcholine and sleep reduction](#)
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Acetylcholine and sleep reduction

Interesting side effects

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;lab.bmp}Interestingly, many practitioners and subjects who have tried boosting levels of these substances through artificial means have also discovered that their sleep need has dropped. Increased levels of any of these can be obtained with readily-available supplements, not necessarily the popular L-tryptophan, L-dopa or L-phenylalanine which were once used. (None of these three substances is available today without a prescription, although all are found in common protein foods.)

Acetylcholine levels can be increased with two common supplements: lecithin or choline. Several grams of lecithin a day seems to do more than help with cholesterol levels. Because of its high choline levels, it converts quite easily into acetylcholine. We usually get plenty from our diets and we can even make our own choline from other substances, but supplements of one to three grams per day, usually near the upper end of that scale, can reduce sleep need by an hour or more per night within a week or two in a large percentage of the population.

This effect should be accompanied by a noticeable increase in memory capacity and alertness, unless you already have enough acetylcholine for the job. If you have memories of a painful childhood or things you'd prefer to forget, sleep reduction might not be for you. It appears that virtually all forms of sleep reduction are accompanied by increased memory capacity and alertness.



Tryptophan and sleep reduction

Energizing the psyche



Tryptophan was discussed earlier in the section on insomnia. It is an amino acid or simple protein which, when taken by itself, is highly effective against occasional insomnia. Several years ago a meganutrient researcher discovered that when tryptophan was combined with vitamin B-6 in amounts of approximately 100mg of B-6 to every gram of tryptophan, it turned into what is known to pharmacologists as a psychic energizer, or an artificial sleep reducer. It probably has this effect by increasing serotonin levels and increasing sleep efficiency rather than increasing metabolism.

Some people experienced automatic reductions of two hours' sleep a night with no apparent side effects up to several months on this regimen. The tragedies relating to tryptophan use which led to its removal from the marketplace several years ago may have only been the first water from the floodgates. Another side effect of tryptophan is that improper metabolism of this amino acid results into it turning into a carcinogen. Interestingly, B-6 is known to be an effective detoxifying agent for this carcinogen.

An effective treatment for depression



Synthetic psychic energizers are used commonly in the treatment of depression, and we know them by the term antidepressants.



Virtually all of them have side effects, and I have little doubt that even the "natural" energizing effects of tryptophan and B-6 have side effects, but the question is whether the results are worth the risk. Both tryptophan and B-6 when consumed in high amounts, whether in pills or a modified diet, for the purpose of combatting depression or decreasing sleep need, are said by many new age practitioners to block normal growth processes. The question seems to be where your faith stops and what you choose to do to take care of your own needs and desires.

B-6 can be purchased in any health food store or pharmacy in tablets up to 500mg, and it must be taken with caution in high doses. The food source for tryptophan most often recommended is cheese due to its high concentration in milk proteins. Cottage cheese is probably a better source than commercial cheese because the fat in commercial cheeses will slow absorption.

A possible problem to watch for



Commercial cheeses also contain large amounts of another amino acid called tyrosine which converts to nor-adrenaline when not needed for energy or building tissues. This poses a possible problem, particularly with those who have had past difficulty staying asleep. The tryptophan may put you to sleep, but two hours later the extra tyrosine may have finished converting itself to nor-adrenaline and you may be wide awake for the rest of the night. B-6 will actually assist the conversion of tyrosine to nor-adrenaline. This could be beneficial for some people on a sleep reduction program but disastrous for people with an early waking pattern in their past.



Nor-adrenaline and sleep reduction

Speed in your sweetener

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;runner.bmp}The third substance, nor-adrenaline, is synthesized from phenylalanine in a long, complex chain of reactions which involve two other amino acids found in foods, tyrosine and tyramine, as intermediate stages in the process. The only food source of phenylalanine of which I am aware is the commercial sweetener aspartame, known by its trade name NutraSweet.

It seems to be effective in producing natural painkillers and quieting hunger as well as promoting sleep efficiency and has frequently been used to treat moderate depression. Longevity researcher Sandie Shaw found it useful in treating “morning blahs” when taken at bedtime. Six to eight hours after taking it, it finally completes its conversion to nor-adrenaline. This makes it a disastrous supplement when used in the evening.

Choosing the right bedtime snack



Any bedtime snack containing high amounts of protein should also contain high amounts of phenylalanine. Proteins taken at bedtime don't tend to be used for tissue repair as much as proteins eaten in the day, leaving a lot more material for boosting hormone levels.



NutraSweet is not recommended as a source of phenylalanine, first because of the prohibitive cost (it would take twenty packets to produce the equivalent of one 500mg l-phenylalanine tablet, the standard dose) and second because of potential side effects from the aspartame itself.



When aspartame breaks down into aspartic acid and phenylalanine, it leaves behind a methanol fragment. Methanol is wood alcohol, the same stuff that causes blindness. Even at a dosage of twenty packets daily it probably won't cause much harm, but if your metabolism is low, you lack detoxifying agents in your bloodstream such as vitamin C, and the breakdown occurs close to a nerve site, you could be putting yourself at risk.



A few final words

Supplements and forced sleep reduction may not mix



If you decide to go the “easy” route and choose a supplement or dietary program for sleep reduction, it may not be advisable to combine this program with a forced sleep reduction program, even a half-hour at a time. The supplements may reduce your sleep need all by themselves, negating any immediate need for a self-directed disciplinary program. Even if nothing happens with your supplement program, it is probably advisable to wait a month before attempting any other program just to be sure that any side effects which may occur from the supplements have a chance to emerge.



If you have undertake both programs at once and undesirable side effects occur, you may not be able to trace their source if you have two programs going at once. And because of the potential serious nature of side effects, the ability to trace their source is crucial.

Regardless of how you go about any sleep reduction program, keep in mind that sleep requirements change with your stress level. Even “normal” sleep requirements can vary by as much as an hour a night from one week to the next, or even one night to the next. Let your body and sense of well-being be your guide, and find a sleep length which provides you the optimum sense of well-being.



Sleep abnormalities



This chapter could literally be viewed as a nightmare gallery of sleep horrors. It's the stuff of Stephen King and Edgar Allan Poe novels, of the most frightening and grotesque experiences the human mind can imagine. Sleep is the one cradle we can all take with us from infancy to death. It's a safe place to retreat when the world around us is going to hell on a rocket sled. It can also turn into a hell of its own. Hopefully you don't suffer from any of the problems described here, but we all seem to have an attraction to the macabre and grotesque. And as long as we're going to discuss the grotesque, let's begin with perhaps the most bizarre sleep-related phenomenon known today.

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The truth about "nightmare death"

A myth that isn't



Every year the tabloids pump out another story or two about a Thai gent who was killed by his own nightmare...literally. This has been the stuff of legends and horror stories, and the popularity of the "A Nightmare on Elm Street" movie series proves how deeply rooted this fear is in the human psyche. But does this deep fear really surface so violently that people die from their own nightmares? Does Freddie Krueger actually have a real-life counterpart?

We may never know whether there is some sort of dream lord a-la Freddie at the heart of the phenomenon, but we do know that the tabloids don't make these stories up. They may embellish the details somewhat, but it does appear that people actually do die from their own nightmares. It's a relatively rare syndrome and it is only known to occur in men of certain Oriental clans, so unless you have the right genes you're probably safe. Psychology seems to play a part in the syndrome, because many victims seem to "know" in advance what will happen to them. One night they'll have a nightmare which kills them and it won't be just a dream.

The victims tend to be in reasonably good health when the syndrome appears. One of the first symptoms is a powerful aversion to sleep, an actual terror of falling asleep, and these men are driven to extreme lengths to keep themselves awake.



On the fatal night when the victims do succumb, they enter a state which appears to the onlooker as if they are experiencing extreme terror, and death follows. It may be some time before we fully understand the syndrome because of its rarity and the difficulty in getting actual data from victims. Can you imagine knowing that you'll die the next time you fall asleep and being asked by some researcher to have wires attached to you while you expire?

Dream death: not at all the same animal

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;skullt.bmp}Dream death doesn't appear to have the same meaning among other peoples. I have died many times in dreams and I surely live to tell the tale. According to many psychologists, dream death appears to be linked to psychological growth, not necessarily psychic distress. It may be symbolic of a part of our lives coming to an end or a way to express feelings of loss and ending which we're not aware of while awake. With more and more people taking an interest in mythology and archetypal symbols, it's likely that millions of North Americans have or will die in their dreams at least once in their lives.



Sleep death: a common phenomenon

Peaceful only in the psychological sense

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;rip.bmp}Sleep death, on the other hand, is a very common phenomenon. Millions of people die in their sleep every year, and many of us wish, secretly or not, that when our time comes we'll be able to leave this easy, painless way. Sleep death is so common, in fact, that hospitals often look upon 4:00 to 7:00am as "rush hour" for cardiac arrest, stroke and overdose. An especially stressful dream might accompany a fatal heart attack at this time, but chances are that it was prior stress released during this REM period and not the dream itself which is responsible for the fatality.



The reason so many deaths -- and births -- are clustered this time is because this is the time of day when our body rhythms reach their lowest point. This is the time when drugs and alcohol have the most intense effects on us, when we're most vulnerable to stress and, naturally, least able to cope with its effects. It is also the time when REM sleep periods start to lengthen, and REM sleep stretches our systems to extremes we don't often experience in the daytime. Brain waves reach fever pitch in REM. Pulse rate, blood pressure and respiration also rise, just as our immune systems are at our weakest. Obviously, a cardiac patient already at risk is in double jeopardy in REM sleep early in the morning.



Sleep terrors

Not your garden-variety nightmare



This is no nightmare. Sleep terror is a very different animal, and a lot of people will take nightmares over sleep terror any day of the week. If you've experienced this, you'll know what I mean and if you haven't, count yourself lucky. It can be one of the most horrifying experiences we can have without the aid of outside influence. A nightmare can leave you shaky, feeling like you've had a good scare and glad to know it's over. Sleep terror can often leave you feeling like you've just had a brush with death that could recur the moment you fall back to sleep.

It usually begins with a sensation of being awake and feeling an urge to move or get up, but because of the neurological activity in this stage of sleep the sleeper will be utterly paralyzed. Most sufferers report a feeling of suffocation which accompanies this paralysis, perhaps due to a brief period of sleep apnea, which is an interruption of breathing usually found in snorers. Some find this feeling of suffocation so intense that it feels as though there is a creature sitting on their chest.

The dreamer often has a vague awareness of the room around them, although the details of the room may have dreamlike distortions. Some sense a horrifying presence close by, and I've actually seen shadows of some entity in my room. There is often a feeling of impending death, and a frantic effort to move, breathe, or if the sleeper is aware of being asleep, to regain consciousness. Clearly not a fun time, but I haven't seen any indication that these terrors are particularly harmful to the sleeper except for the distress caused by fright. In fact, there is a man in New York, almost a legend among sleep researchers, who experiences sleep terror every night, often repeatedly.

Technically not a dream

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;monster.bmp} Sleep terror does not occur in REM sleep, which is why technically it does not qualify as a dream experience. For lack of a better explanation, researchers say it occurs in a fifth stage of sleep, a no-man's land which lies somewhere between REM and delta sleep. It might be triggered by a rapid change from one stage of sleep to the other which disorients the dreamer. I've heard of sleep triggers being triggered by drugs such as heroin and other opiates. I've experienced sleep terror this way. An ex-roommate had sleep terrors every time he ate NutraSweet, leading me to wonder if the phenylalanine fragment and the nor-adrenaline conversion process might play a role in the effect.

Interestingly, many people have the same experience, the same paralysis and sense of suffocation, and feel almost no distress from it at all. Considering the dynamics of the situation and remembering my own experience and the descriptions of others, I believe the experience itself is probably triggered by a metabolic abnormality which may be due to diet or some other stressor which peaks nor-adrenaline levels in the brain. Adrenaline is the hormone most often associated with anger; nor-adrenaline is the fear hormone.

There is no reason why the experience should lead to a perception of terror unless an actual terrifying event had occurred in the sleeper's past. If no such event had occurred, it would be felt as a body reaction and not much more. In my case, there seems to be some evidence that I came close to death at some time as a young child, and this memory could be called up by my dreaming mind as the body reactions occur as a way to make sense of the physical sensations.

Subjective differences

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;pacifier.bmp} Other people seem to have much more severe sleep terror, leading me to wonder if perhaps an even earlier experience is being attached to the reaction. My guess is that the suffocation could be linked to a possible close brush with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, resulting in infantile terror. It could even be traceable back to birth if it was particularly traumatic to the child, to those first moments out of the room when the air was felt on the skin and the first breath was preceded by a blow many times harder than we have ever experienced.

Sleep terror can be managed, and I'm living proof of that. I haven't experienced it for many years, but when I did I was matter-of-factly told by my practitioner that it was nothing serious and that if I resisted my urge to force myself awake, the episode would pass without harm or distress. It took a few tries to accomplish it, but eventually I was able to train myself to relax with the experience, and I discovered that this "nether state" was an excellent jumping-off place for lucid dreams. Unfortunately, I seemed to be crippled, blind or otherwise handicapped during these dreams.



Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is an often fatal lapse in respiration during sleep. For reasons which are not entirely clear, many infants simply stop breathing in their sleep for long periods of time. Some come close to death and some never start breathing again.

False awakening

This subject is dealt with in greater depth in the chapter on lucid dreaming, but I chose to include it here because it fits neatly with the previous subject.

A challenge to reality



False awakening is the experience of waking up in your sleep, of literally becoming conscious and aware while you're still asleep. Depending on your makeup it can be a confusing, delightful or downright terrifying experience. I believe that sleep terror actually qualifies as a form of false awakening. The key to false awakening is its dreamlike character, and this is what separates it from actual awakening. In a false awakening what actually occurs is that you awaken and sense yourself in your own bedroom.

But true to dream logic, there is always something inconsistent about the room in which you awaken. It could be a room you lived in before, the window might be on the wrong side, or you might be sleeping with your head to the north rather than to the south. Some people fail to take notice of these inconsistencies. Others spot them right away and realize that they're actually dreaming.

False awakenings seem to happen in bunches. I have awakened with memories of three, five, sometimes seven consecutive false awakenings. In every case I'll get out of bed and start my morning routine as I usually do, and something will happen to jar me into realizing I'm dreaming or frighten me. When I get frightened, I usually experience another false awakening in which I remember the previous nightmare. Each successive false awakening seems to become more vivid and more difficult to distinguish from actual reality.

Signs of a mental or emotional storm



There appears to be an aspect of subconscious conflict involved in sequential false awakenings, as if the mind is trying to present some piece of information in a strange, dreamlike fashion. Series of consecutive false awakenings may be a psychological defense mechanism designed to take us away from the unwelcome information. The next awakening becomes more vivid as a way of telling ourselves that the last event was just a dream, but each time it seems that the subconscious finds a way to get across its plea for attention until we either awaken for real or reach a level of consciousness where we can shut out this deep message. They tend to cluster around early morning for most people who experience them, perhaps providing a safety valve, but they can often happen early after sleep onset. I've noticed that painkillers in particular can cause this to happen with me.

How to deal with false awakenings



There is a way to deal with false awakenings, but it takes discipline and trust. The trick is to train the mind to realize that these false awakenings are signals to become aware of the unusual aspects of what you are experiencing and try to go along with whatever chain of events occurs next. All too often it is an unpleasant experience, but that too is life. Many people prefer to take control of the situation and turn experiences of false awakening into lucid dreams.



Narcolepsy

A crippling problem



The narcoleptic is an emotional cripple, forced to be that way by a body which will not permit strong feelings. Any strong emotion, from anger to laughter to fear, could plunge the narcoleptic into sleep in an instant. Narcoleptics constantly walks an emotional tightrope, never allowing themselves the luxury of normal human feelings. Balance isn't merely important to a narcoleptic...it can mean the difference between life and accidental death.

Narcolepsy is an illness characterized by sleep seizures. These seizures are similar in many respects to epileptic seizures, but instead of convulsing or entering a convulsive neurological state, the narcoleptic enters a sleep state, almost the exact opposite of the epileptic. Just as there are varying degrees of epilepsy, narcoleptics could experience anything from a brief lapse of consciousness which no one notices to a "waking sleep" in which the narcoleptic suddenly seems to freeze in time and become unresponsive to external stimuli, to severe seizures in which the sufferer collapses in a split-second into deep delta sleep.

The exact cause of narcolepsy is not known, but I believe we'll discover it has many parallels to epilepsy. One writer put forth the theory several years back that underachievers who seem to be worn out by challenges and those who consciously avoid stress for no apparent reason maybe suffering from a mild form of narcolepsy. This writer also suggested that it could be dealt with through behavior modification, but I believe a great deal more research is needed before we begin to routinely subject narcoleptics to this form of treatment.

Awake in a dreamstate



As with epilepsy, there are measurable disturbances in the brainwave patterns of the narcoleptic. Even while the person is awake, their brainwaves resemble those of a person who is deep in REM sleep. The sleep rhythms of narcoleptics often resemble those of an infant, with a great deal of time spent in REM. Narcoleptic episodes often follow a timetable, occurring at regular intervals during the day or over the course of a week or month. The condition could be present as early as birth, but it doesn't usually begin to appear until adolescence or early adulthood. Brain injuries can also result in narcolepsy.

Once again, there may be a psychological or psychosomatic component to narcolepsy. It could result from early childhood trauma or even "normal" trauma occurring in a susceptible individual. This poses the possibility that narcolepsy can be treated through regression therapy, but this particular form of treatment is still haphazard and fraught with risks of its own.



Sleep deprivation

How long before performance suffers?



How long can you go without sleep before performance suffers? Most people answer that question base upon their personal experience. We can often confuse a drop in performance with exhaustion. I've seen this question asked of young people in a classroom and the answers ranged from eight hours to 48. Most people don't realize until later in life that measurable performance levels begin to suffer in the average person after just 16 consecutive waking hours, precisely the length of the average day.

Whether chosen or imposed by external circumstances, sleep deprivation is exquisite torture. It leaves no physical scars and it can break even the toughest mental, physical and emotional conditioning, as any fan of spy thrillers and war films is already aware. Deprive yourself of sleep long enough and your ability to distinguish between dreams and reality becomes blurred. Eventually you lapse into microsleeps, split-seconds of unconsciousness, and vivid daydreams as a way to make up for lost sleep time. As more time passes dreams begin to filter up to conscious thought in the form of hallucinations which resemble schizophrenia.

The most famous sleep deprivation experiment



The most famous experiment involving sleep deprivation involved a disk jockey named Peter Tripp who went without sleep for more than a week as part of a publicity stunt. He was monitored closely by both a physician and a researcher throughout the ordeal. Several have duplicated or exceeded his feat since then. The differences between the experiences of people who underwent forced sleep deprivation led to several observations about how we respond.



Common factors in sleep deprivation

What happens to us when we're forcibly deprived of sleep?



The first observation concerns vulnerability. It seems we are likely to suffer more seriously from sleep deprivation as we age. Peter Tripp suffered flashbacks like those of an LSD tripper or psychotic for years after his experience. Younger adventurers who exceeded Tripp's efforts have rebounded quickly.

The second observation is surprising, and seems to say a great deal about human adaptability. It appears possible to carry on routine tasks at the peak of the day without a great deal of impairment even after several days without sleep, while at other times function may be so impaired that we are utterly helpless. Tripp never missed a shift on the air, but as the experiment wore on he would experience periods of deep despair and lethargy at other times of the day.

The third observation should be of particular note. Those with a history of psychological upset could be severely harmed by sleep deprivation. As I've already shown repeatedly, there is a strong link between sleep patterns and mental/emotional health. Trauma is trauma, and any shock as violent as forced sleep deprivation is likely to have a serious impact on someone at risk for psychological upset.

No physical evidence of reaction

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;info_ico.bmp}The final observation is curious in the extreme. There doesn't appear to be any *measurable* physical reaction to sleep deprivation. This raises some interesting questions about the need for sleep in the first place. It could be that the yogis and mystics are right, that sleep is yet another chain of existence to be overcome by humanity when the time is right. We may discover that consciousness isn't at all what we thought it was, that sleep is simply an escape from reality which is dictated by our genes, just as the use of alcohol was for so long dictated by our culture.

I have difficulty even writing this, because I almost wonder to myself if I shouldn't be attempting to overcome my own need for sleep. The question really is how hard I want to work, how far I want to go in my own life and in what directions. I doubt at this time that I'll overcome sleep need in my lifetime, but with the tools we're developing to overcome difficulties in many genetically-determined conditions previously though unconquerable by science, we may see people in the next half-century who have been able to completely conquer all need for sleep. Some claim to have eliminated the need already.



The possibility of zero sleep need

Sleepless in Indiana



There were reports of a man in the midwestern states who stopped sleeping at some time as an adult and spent the nighttime hours alone with his thoughts. This man was never studied, and because of the nature of phenomena at that level I believe we would have found that the man had not conquered sleep, or may have started sleeping in the laboratory after going for years without the need.

The degree of disbelief in this possibility is so high in our society that it may not be possible for people to truly conquer sleep need until a critical level of desire and belief is reached in our species, a “hundredth monkey” phenomenon, which allows us to get through this barrier. Our children may be able to attend sleep-reduction or sleep-elimination training centers in the future to accomplish this feat, just as athletes now routinely break the once-impossible four-minute mile.

The best researchers have done so far is to discover a very small group of people who appear to be able to function on very small amounts of sleep, perhaps as little as fifteen minutes a day, just as we know there are people who function on very small amounts of food. Most of us simply don't have this capability and won't develop it without a great deal of effort and tools which are rare in our world today.



Sleep deprivation as a tool

Gaining access to “mystical realms”



Self-imposed sleep deprivation has been used through the ages as a means of gaining access to mystical realms and freeing creative energies. It almost appears to be a status ploy in some circles, particularly among writers. When the Stallone's sat down to flesh out the script to the first “Rocky” movie, they worked nonstop for three days, slapping each other to keep from falling asleep. Many students cram for exams by depriving themselves of sleep, although this doesn't appear to work very well. Reasoning seems to deteriorate with sleep loss.

Writers and artists, myself included, often use sleep deprivation as a means of breaking writer's block or enhancing creativity. I have found that much of my most creative work has emerged in the wee hours of the morning when my body was at ebb tide and my mind open enough to allow access to deep subconscious realms. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be a way to permanently achieve this effect without considerable discipline over a period of time. Students cramming for exams discover that they can get through a mountain of material in a short time with sufficient effort, but less is retained and it takes longer to learn what is retained.



The undesirable effects of sleep loss are compounded by stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine which are more harmful to the body at biological ebb-tide hours. This effect can be partially compensated by the consumption of extra protein, but the vital release of human growth hormone (HGH) will not occur without sleep and this hormone has an impact on our ability to metabolize the protein we do ingest.



What's the worst that can happen from sleep loss?

A condition the body fights with uncommon vigor

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;skullt.bmp}Sleep deprivation has been used as a tool of torture for centuries. According to reports, it can result in brain damage, madness and even death, but many physicians have denied that these effects are possible. They say that the brain compensates for sleep deprivation by forcing sleep out through gaps in waking consciousness and by making up for lost time when sleep is finally restored.

Sleep can be deprived by force, provided the person doing the depriving is constantly watching the person and using extreme forms of torture. Death will ultimately result, but it's not sure why this occurs. This is exceedingly rare, even if torture is used, because the brain finds ways to sleep if it is not permitted to do so. There is no record of anyone ever committing suicide by depriving themselves of sleep, and death from sleep deprivation in the general population is extremely rare. The only case of which I am personally aware occurred with an Italian gentlemen a few years back, and while there must surely be more cases like it, it's probably a one in a hundred-million shot.

Why don't we die of sleep deprivation?



The reason we don't die of sleep deprivation, even when we will ourselves to stay awake, is because the brain adapts by taking "microsleeps". We nod off for anywhere from a split-second to several seconds at a time, and we could do this while we think we're fully conscious. Young parents often have the experience after a few sleepless nights of "going away" for a few seconds and realizing when they regain consciousness that they had gone right on with their activities while they "microslept".

Except for the impairment resulting from fatigue, mild insomnia is quite harmless. Severe insomnia occasionally results in psychotic behavior, but this usually disappears after a good night's sleep. It takes years of sleep loss or disruption to bring a person to a psychotic state, and it seems that those who abuse drugs or alcohol or have a history of mental instability are most vulnerable to this difficulty.

That's not to say that death from sleep loss isn't possible. Several such cases have been recorded in brain-injured patients who have damaged the areas of their brains regulating consciousness and sleep.



Enuresis (bedwetting)



Enuresis is simply a fancy medical term for bedwetting, and many people find it much less distressing to be an enuretic than a bedwetter. This condition ranks with incontinence as one of the most embarrassing problems adults can face. Admitting you are a bedwetter is akin to admitting you are a child who is unable to control body functions which pose no problem for the general adult population.

 **A more common problem than most realize**

 **Vitamin treatment for enuresis**

 **Potential side effects of metabolic treatments**

 **Psychological self-treatment for enuresis**

 **Two goals of treatment**

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A more common problem than most realize

It was estimated that one adult in fifty suffers from enuresis, and that figure may be much higher since studies may not have been accurate in the past. Now that the condition is gaining in public awareness and support, many enuretics and incontinent adults have come out of the closet. The condition may be much more common than we once believed.



Vitamin treatment for enuresis



Enuresis is not a problem confined to adults or young children. In fact, it seems to be fairly common among all age groups, although it is more likely to occur among children and the elderly. Children can often be treated effectively by the removal of a food or environmental stressor to which they are sensitive. Doses of vitamin B-6 also appear to work well, perhaps because they contribute to the formation of adrenal hormones. Artificial adrenal hormones are the universal antidote to allergens and food sensitivities.



Adults also seem to respond well to treatment with vitamin B-6, but there are cautions here. First of all, enuresis will often be found in people with other types of physical problems. Anyone with pre-existing medical conditions should be wary of using B-6 supplements unless they are contained in a balanced B complex supplement because of the risks involved. B-6 could affect the potency of other drugs, either increasing or decreasing their effects. There are also medical conditions which will be worsened with the use of B-6, particularly if it is taken to excess.



Potential side effects of metabolic treatments



One common side effect of B-6 supplementation for enuresis is increased sensitivity to awakening from REM periods. You may find this just the ticket, particularly if muscle tone is the

culprit here. You'll be more likely to notice bladder urges in light stages of sleep, which will prompt you to awaken and urinate where you may previously have remained asleep and emptied your bladder as you slept.

If diet and toning exercises don't seem to do the job for you, you may wish to take your problem to another physician. You may discover that your enuresis coincides with other medical treatments you may be receiving. Elderly sufferers in particular often discover that overmedication is behind their problem. Some drugs, especially alcohol, can induce enuresis in those who do not ordinarily experience the problem.

There are a number of new or rediscovered techniques for diagnosing food and environmental sensitivities, from kinesiology to Vega testing to acupressure, most of which are unproven or unaccepted by the medical establishment. Many people discover that these tests reveal possible sensitivities, and if the offending substances or stressors are eliminated from the environment the enuresis seems to disappear on its own. Naturally this is not something I can recommend as a layman, but if it seems worth a try, you may wish to check it out for yourself.



Psychological self-treatment for enuresis

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}It may also be possible to use subliminal learning, sleep learning or autosuggestion techniques to deal with the problem. When the bladder becomes full to the point of pressure during sleep, many people incorporate the need to urinate into their dreams. I have had many early morning dreams in which I felt the need to urinate. The reprogramming techniques outlined elsewhere in this book might provide an excellent way of incorporating suggestions to become more sensitive to this sensation and awaken yourself when it is felt.

Even if you don't remember your dreams, a program of deep-level conditioning can help you become more sensitive to bladder urge in sleep. It is likely to be a difficult process if it's not undertaken with the help of a professional or the support of family or friends, because at the heart of much enuresis are painful past experiences which need to be resolved before the problem is permanently dealt with.

Not all enuresis occurs in the same place in the sleep cycle, but if yours occurs either just before or just after a REM period, programming techniques should help, and B-6 will assist the process by keeping you closer to awakening while you're in REM sleep. Enuretics tend to be deeper sleepers than the general population and are often very difficult to awaken. In any case, this is often a much safer, less stressful method of dealing with enuresis than the use of imipramine, an antidepressant, which is the treatment of choice for many physicians. It has the same effect on sleep depth as B-6 because of the way it affects brain hormones, but among the side effects of imipramine are dry mouth, irritability, risks of stroke and blood pressure crises when combined with certain common foods or drugs.



Two goals of treatment



In any case, the ultimate goal of treatment should either be increased control and muscle tone or reduction of sleep depth. It seems that the key is to reduce not just REM depth, but delta or stage 4 sleep depth as well, because it appears that this is where most bedwetting incidents occur. **It is rare to dream of urinating and awaken in a wet bed.** These benefits must be weighed against the possible side effects of delta sleep deprivation, and psychological help in dealing with the root experience behind the problem seems to be advisable. Potty training may

not be the culprit, but it often involves experiences prior to age four, and four-year-old emotions in an adult body can be intensely difficult to handle.



Sleepwalking

Another non-obvious phenomenon



Somnambulism (sleepwalking) and sleep talking both spring from the same stage of sleep as enuresis, so it seems that what's good for one problem should be good for the other. It is also curious that among the general population, sleepwalkers and enuretics are found in just about equal numbers and concentrate among the same age groups. I don't know what percentage of sleepwalkers are also enuretics, but my guess is that these are two different expressions of a similar root problem and that the likelihood of being both a sleepwalker and an enuretic is probably low.

Sleepwalking and sleep talking appear to be related to dreaming, but only in the same fashion as enuresis. The observer sees the sleeper behaving in a way that indicates dreaming and response to some sort of internal stimulus, but on awakening from a somnambulistic episode the sleeper almost never has recollection of a dream. In addition, brainwave patterns of sleepwalkers seem to resemble delta sleep more than REM. We have been able to induce animals to act out their dreams by disconnecting certain nerves, but in humans this is an extremely rare occurrence.

An uncommon vulnerability



We can often induce normal people to wet the bed using the old hand-in-the-water trick. Sleepwalking, on the other hand, cannot be induced by setting someone on their feet unless the person is already a sleepwalker. This problem tends to be most common among children, although many adults also suffer from it. Every year there are stories of sleepwalkers found wandering on freeways or engaging in bizarre behaviors. Children seem to outgrow the condition, but I wonder how many children have their sleepwalking recur in old age as incontinence or enuresis.

Researchers have discovered unusual brainwave patterns among sleepwalkers, so B-6 or imipramine may not be the best solution to the problem. Because of the risks involved, it is often dangerous to wake a sleepwalker. Restraining devices or shock-inducing techniques are probably inadvisable. Sleepwalkers suddenly awakened from their sleep usually collapse to the ground, which may result in injury if the person waking the sleepwalker does not have a firm hold on the person. In addition, many sleepwalkers experience mild shock on being awakened far from their beds. If somnambulists already exhibit abnormal brainwaves, this additional shock experienced on a regular basis may trigger or worsen a latent psychological condition.

How to deal with a sleepwalker



One possible way to deal with a sleepwalker is to rig an alarm system to the sleeper's door which will alert a parent or bedmate to the sleeper's activities. Sleepwalkers can't always be stopped, and most sleepwalking is harmless. But many people can be guided safely back to bed by loving, gentle words and handholding. Any touching of a sleepwalker must be done gradually and gently to avoid the risk of waking the sleeper prematurely.

To the best of my knowledge, we do not yet know the cause of sleepwalking, although there appears to be elements of an unmet need being expressed from deep in the

subconscious. I began to sleepwalk in puberty, sleep-eat to be precise, and this preceded a period when I now know that I exhibited signs of malnutrition. The sleep-eating may have stemmed from an unfelt biological craving for a certain food or nutrient. Whether this is the case with most sleepwalkers isn't known, and I have only met two other sleep-eaters.



Sleep talking

Private nonsense



Sleep talking is less of a hazard or an embarrassment as it is an annoyance to those around the sleeper and a curiosity among sleep researchers. It is a very common phenomenon which was once believed to be associated with a sleep disorder or brain disturbance. Studies of sleep talkers have failed to turn up abnormalities, so it could be no more than a slight anomaly so common as to be considered normal by the medical community.

Not a lot of data on the subject is available through the popular press, but it does appear that sleep talking is related to enuresis and sleepwalking. Just as a sleepwalker can be guided gently back to bed, a sleep talker can be silenced by loving words or a gentle suggestion. I have lived with sleep talkers on more than one occasion and discovered that telling them to shut up does not seem to work nearly as well as something such as “it’s okay, (person’s name), you don’t need to talk now.” Sleep talkers also tend to lack any recollection of a dream when awakened from an episode.

Dealing with a sleep talker



Many sleep talking episodes are brief, but some can continue for several minutes uninterrupted. The listener will likely be unable to make any sense of the chatter, and when it becomes particularly annoying the only solution may be to awaken the sleeper. Because the sleeper is already in familiar surroundings, this appears to be no more stressful than awakening the person from a deep slumber. Many sleep talkers when awakened as a means of quieting them will report that they have no memory of having been awakened. Perhaps all that is needed is to nudge the sleeper into a slightly lighter stage of sleep.



Using sleep abnormalities to diagnose illness

A ray of hope in a very dark domain

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;stormend.bmp} This chapter ends on a positive note. More than a quarter-century ago we discovered that a wide range of disorders with symptoms most apparent in waking life could be diagnosed through the detection of sleep abnormalities. Disturbances in sleep brainwave traces can alert psychiatrists to mental symptoms which may not have appeared yet. Cardiologists can use the same traces to spot abnormalities in cardiac rhythms and function.

Sleep disorders are one of the first symptoms of mental illness, and the use of sleeping electroencephalogram (EEG) traces in sleep may be one of the best methods we have of making early diagnoses of schizophrenic or psychotic episodes or any of a host of other neurological and psychiatric disorders. The cost of this type of diagnosis is still relatively high, but with miniaturization reducing the price of EEG machines it may soon be possible for people to take sleep EEG's at home and present the traces to a diagnostic technician or even have the computer suggest its own diagnosis.

We don't have cures for most forms of mental illness, but this application of technology holds great promise for reducing the suffering of people with a wide range of disorders, from sleep apnea to epilepsy.



Snoring

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;people.bmp}This sleep abnormality is so widespread that I chose to devote an entire chapter to it. This is because more is known about snoring than practically all the other problems described here combined, and also because snoring is a serious health problem. Snoring is not something to be taken lightly by either the snorer or those who love him. Many simple techniques exist for reducing the severity of the problem and treatment is available for more serious cases.

- [!\[\]\(36f8637baaa56c4be44b454435949289_img.jpg\) **More than an annoying behavior**](#)
- [!\[\]\(b556e0ef1e10ccfc32976edb6416074f_img.jpg\) **Sleep apnea: the real problem with most snorers**](#)
- [!\[\]\(cf1529ba638f0498d7e334e7a79dd058_img.jpg\) **Levels of risk in snorers**](#)
- [!\[\]\(2c071b2b285393c82ac6838d54fa5656_img.jpg\) **First-stage treatment of snoring**](#)
- [!\[\]\(bda2070c29c668b13a0cf5b37bc9c21e_img.jpg\) **Tricks for training snorers**](#)
- [!\[\]\(4dc7f5c797d7cb1aa70e6a60bb01318c_img.jpg\) **Extreme solutions for extreme snoring problems**](#)
- [!\[\]\(8c14435c4129a2a291714ff8aa0140d6_img.jpg\)](#)

More than an annoying behavior

The ten-percent intrusion



It is estimated that more than ten percent of the population snores on a nightly basis, and the vast majority of snorers are male, which is why I refer to snorers in the masculine gender here. The most common link to snoring is obesity, and considerably more than half of all snorers are well above their ideal body weight.

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;dozer.bmp} Snoring seems to be caused by relaxation of the tongue. This muscle actually extends well back into the throat, and when it relaxes it tends to contract, growing fatter around its base. The most critical contraction for snorers seems to occur near the windpipe. Breathing creates air currents, and when the tongue is contracted the windpipe is actually smaller than normal. These currents pull the flesh of the tongue and the throat together using the same lift effect that causes planes to fly.

The strength of these currents actually causes the tongue and throat to touch, temporarily blocking all air from passing into the lungs. A fraction of a second later, when the currents and lift effect have stopped, the throat and tongue separate and more air is passed through. This cycle is repeated rapidly, several times with each breath by the snorer, creating sound waves we hear as snoring. Snoring can begin as soon as sleep onset occurs, but curiously it doesn't appear in REM sleep, perhaps because the increased muscle tone and adrenal hormone levels act as a temporary decongestant.



! Sleep apnea: the real problem with most snorers

Snoring may be harmless; its side effects are not



Although snoring itself doesn't affect health, it is often accompanied by a condition known as sleep apnea, particularly when the snorer has been drinking. Sleep apnea is a condition where the sleeper stops breathing, often for frighteningly long periods of time. According to some experts, sleep apnea causes more than 2,000 deaths a year. Other experts claim that this is only a small fraction of the number of deaths in which sleep apnea is a contributing cause.

Apnea can also contribute to chronic fatigue due to decreased oxygen consumption in sleep, not to mention straining relationships. It is not uncommon for the wives of snorers to spend terror-filled minutes in bed every night for long periods of time as their husbands stop breathing, sometimes for a minute or more at a time.

Mechanisms behind sleep apnea



The mechanisms behind apnea are a little more mysterious than those with snoring. It appears to result from a combination of factors, among them the reduced oxygen level in the blood of the snorer which results in fatigue and ultimately this fatigue seems to affect involuntary systems such as respiration. Eventually an emergency kick-start center in the brain triggers the nerves to start breathing again as a response to danger.

This center is probably the same center which triggers breathing to start in all newborn mammals. The increased carbon dioxide levels in the blood which accompany reduced breath rates also seem to play a role in the length of each episode of apnea, because the higher these levels the more this emergency kick-start center is suppressed and the longer the snorer will go without breathing before the brain gives things a push.



Levels of risk in snorers

The biggest risk might be the wrath of others



Snoring by itself usually isn't an immediate threat unless you're in the company of people who are disturbed by your snoring. Particularly loud snorers serving time in prison are often targets of assault to get them moved out of the general population and murder if that doesn't work. It can be a problem in the snorer's waking life because the snoring contributes to fatigue because of the effects of oxygen deprivation on overall sleep quality.



Reduced oxygen levels always have an effect on brain function. Over the long term, snoring and the resulting oxygen deprivation can strain the heart muscle, worsen existing conditions anywhere in the body, and generally result in a lower quality of life. Loss of sex drive is particularly common among snorers.



A snorer can go for long periods of time without displaying symptoms. Sleep apnea, on the other hand, shouldn't be trifled with. It may appear harmless in many people, but when the effects of oxygen deprivation and repeated triggering of primitive survival mechanisms are considered, the possibility of long-term damage or even death is very real. Sleep apnea is precisely what causes most deaths in sudden infant death syndrome.

If you sleep with someone who simply stops breathing at frequent intervals during the night, get them to see a doctor. It could be a matter of life and death.



First-stage treatment of snoring

The simplest solution could also be the most difficult



The first thing to do about a snoring problem is to get back into good physical condition: lose weight and stop drinking and smoking. These are almost always the first recommendations of a physician or sleep specialist treating the disorder. In many cases these two changes will completely eliminate the snoring, but many snorers find these exceptionally difficult treatments.

The most common “cure” for snoring is to sleep on your side, another obvious solution considering the mechanics of snoring. A snorer who sleeps on his side will not have their tongue slide back into their throat. I have actually heard myself snore while sleeping on my back, but I have it on good authority that I never snore while lying on my side.

This is often easier said than done, however, because many snorers who retrain themselves to sleep on their side find that their snoring does not stop. Some roll onto their backs within moments of falling asleep. And some snore even while lying on their sides.



Tricks for training snorers

Cruel treatment may be vital



Many snorers can be trained to sleep on their sides using devices and behavior modification. The best known snore prevention device might be the “snore ball”. It’s a homemade device consisting of a child’s sponge rubber ball cut in half and sewn into the back of pajama tops behind and below the heart. In theory, if the snorer rolls onto his back, the ball will nudge him into a lighter stage of sleep and he’ll naturally shift onto his opposite side or some other comfortable position where the ball cannot be felt. This may be a lifetime crutch, since the sleeper is likely to learn soon after the ball is removed that lying on the back no longer causes discomfort, and any training that may have been done will be wasted.

Several other ingenious tricks have been tried with varying degrees of success. Among the devices you can purchase for snore prevention are electrical devices which shock the sleeper’s back when he rolls over or when a certain noise level is reached, a headband with a prickly surface designed to cause discomfort when the sleeper rolls over, and a modified cervical collar of the type used in neck injuries which has an abrasive clip under the chin.

This latter device works by training the sleeper to keep their mouth closed, but this is only of benefit to the snorer’s bedmate because all this will do is reduce the noise level. Perhaps the best devices for retraining snorers are the full-grip pillows which cradle the head and neck securely so the sleeper cannot turn easily, and waterbeds which tend to prevent tossing and turning in sleep.



Extreme solutions for extreme snoring problems

Forcing the snorer to breathe



More serious problems require more serious solutions. Continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) systems are used to help in severe cases of apnea by forcing air into the lungs at a regular rate. The snorer wears a mask which supplies higher than normal air pressure at a continuous rate which helps keep the tongue and throat from coming together.

Tongue retention devices (TRDs) are among the most uncomfortable solutions, but they do work. TRDs prevent snoring by holding the tongue in a forward position. If it doesn't slide back in the throat, the snorer can't snore.

If no other solution exists and the snorer is at risk due to sleep apnea or another serious condition, surgery may be required. Many people snore because of poor air flow through the nasal passages, perhaps due to a deviated septum. This could have been a birth defect or caused by a broken nose which did not set properly. Some people are born with or develop flanges of extra tissue on the backs of their tongues or narrow airways. Removing these flanges of tissue or reducing the tongue's volume near the back will often provide a permanent cure provided the snorer remains fit and sober.



An introduction to dreaming

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;painting.bmp}No aspect of sleep is more mysterious than dreaming. It is a place our science has not been able to penetrate to any great depth, and I believe it is because our science simply hasn't had the tools to do it. Dreams have always been the area of sleep research reserved for "space cadets" and "flakes", and the amount of hard data on dreaming is small because dreams are not hard experiences. Dreams may be our most personal, most intimate, and most *free* experiences.

- [? The biggest mystery of sleep](#)
- [? A few facts about dreams and dreaming](#)
- [? Why we dream](#)
- [? Dreams as a key to higher consciousness](#)
- [? Lucid dreaming: a gateway to ecstasy](#)
- [? Out-of-body experience](#)
- [? Shared dreams](#)
- [?](#)

! The biggest mystery of sleep

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;me-small.bmp} Dreaming occurs in the realm of the subconscious, and often the conscious as well, and the lack of logic associated with dreams seems to point to how foolish it is to apply logical techniques to their study. Freud and Jung both made a big deal out of dreams, but Freud's work was confined to seeking out logical connections between dreams and waking reality. Jung's work is more widely accepted today, perhaps because he accepted dreams on their own terms, broke with traditional logic and allowed dreams to reveal their meanings to him as much as he assigned meaning to them.

Sense from nonsense



This non-logical analysis appears to be the only way we will truly come to grips with this mystery, and we now have scientific data which indicates that this is precisely how dreams need to be approached. Quantum physics, a favorite subject of mine, has caused a large number of hard scientists to question their methods because of the strange phenomena they are discovering at the level of quantum particles. They are finding that quantum particles, ultra-tiny particle, some of which compare in size to electrons the way our moon might compare to the size of the sun, show every sign of being real.

But some of them can't even be proven to exist using our old scientific tools, because at the time we measure them, they could be either matter or energy. They do not sit still for us to take their picture but instead change in nature between a solid state of matter and a non-solid state of energy. And even more confusing for traditional researchers, they offer the additional impudence of behaving differently depending upon who does the measurements, as though they respond to our expectations or measuring instruments and cannot be taken as completely separate from us.

Temporary reality



Dreams display the same characteristics. Objects in dreams have every characteristic of being real and solid, yet they disappear when we open our eyes. Dreams are like life but not like life. They respond to us as observers, as those who can achieve consciousness in their dreams will testify. And they can't be proven scientifically to exist, because there's always a chance that everyone who ever said they had a dream either lied or imagined it. No one has been able to film or send an independent observation team into someone's dream to prove it actually exists.

As we improve our technology in regard to understanding quantum particles and their behavior, this knowledge is bound to translate into an explosion of new technology for coming to grips with previously unexplainable phenomena such as dreams.



A few facts about dreams and dreaming



There are many things we *do* know and *have* determined about dreams, or at least studied thoroughly enough to be able to call them normal or common. Here are a few of them.

- [? **We all dream...and we all dream a lot**](#)
- [? **Brain centers controlling dreams**](#)
- [? **Dream time and real time**](#)
- [? **Everyone dreams in color**](#)
- [? **Dream consciousness**](#)
- [? **Sex and dreaming**](#)
- [? **Can dreams be eliminated from sleep?**](#)
- [? **Unpleasant dreams are normal**](#)
- [? **Two different types of dreams**](#)

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We all dream...and we all dream a lot



It might come as a shock to anyone who can't remember the last time they had a dream that the average person will spend four to six years of their life dreaming. The memories may not remain, but the dreams are there. Every ninety minutes during sleep we enter a state where subjects almost universally recall dreams if awakened. Brain activity during this period is at least as intense as it is during our waking life, perhaps even more so. During this time the brain consumes more energy than at any other time of the day.

These REM periods tend to be longer toward the end of the night, and dreams tend to be more vibrant and recalled more vividly later in the sleep period. The phenomenon of people who never remember their dreams may be a result of shock and sleep patterns, not lack of dreaming. People who have a pattern of disturbing dreams or who lack belief in their importance can train themselves not to awaken unless they are well clear of the REM state, or to forget their dreams almost instantly after waking up. Memory traces from the dream state are fragile, and any strong stimuli can block the average person from retaining a memory of their dreams.



Brain centers controlling dreams



The brain circuits involved in REM are related to the hypothalamus, the primitive part of our brains, which actually becomes inflamed in REM. The hypothalamus regulates base urges and emotions including sex drive. This inflammation appears to be normal and necessary, because when REM is deprived the genital stimulation which marks hypothalamic inflammation appears in other areas of sleep.

Researchers have spent thousands of hours in dream labs, following the sleep of their

subjects to the point where polygraph traces of dreamers can be read with some precision. A trained technician can examine a polygraph trace and determine where in the dream the sleeper was using their logical mind and where the creative mind kicked in. This science has become so precise that polygraph traces can even reveal what color the dreamer was looking at in the dream.



Dream time and real time



It was long thought that dreamtime was condensed, that dreams occurred in a split-second. In fact, researchers discovered that time in dreams generally seems to correspond with our waking perceptions of time. Dreams that seem to take hours or days are actually “edited” by the mind and may consist of a series of rapid-fire events spliced together like TV news footage.

Many people may have difficulty accepting that the mind has this facility and may imagine their dreams taking much longer than they actually do. We also experience distortions of time while awake, such as the shrinking of time when we’re enjoying ourselves and the stretching of time we experience when we’re watching an accident in progress which we’re powerless to stop.



Everyone dreams in color



Virtually all dreams are in color. It was long thought that only a fraction of the population dreamed in color, and these people were said by many to represent the more creative of our population. This appears to have been an erroneous conclusion. Virtually all dreams contain elements of color when the dreamer is pressed for recall of the images, although many dreams take place in a dim half-light such as we normally experience under starlight or moonlight, particularly early in the night. These dreams are as devoid of color as our waking experience in similar lighting conditions.

Newborn babies spend about half of their total sleep time in REM sleep, and it is believed that the fetus spends its entire existence in REM. If true, this could go a long way to explaining the dreamlike character of many pre-birth experiences reported by subjects of hypnotic regression as well as many other phenomena believed to be associated with pre-birth memory.

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;runner.bmp}Our daily activity has a profound effect on our sleep patterns. Physical exertion tends to increase the amount of deep delta sleep while mental exertion enhances REM. Light exertion seems to reduce sleep need in all areas at least temporarily.



Dream consciousness



Dream consciousness is not only possible, but a serious discipline in many cultures. Some Buddhist sects seek to gain complete mastery over the dream state, and dream life is considered an extension of waking life by aboriginal cultures all over the world.

Many new age groups and students of alternative psychology have begun to reacquaint themselves with dream study with the objective of integrating the concepts of these less civilized

societies with our high-tech, high-stress world. A whole section of this program has been devoted to the subject of dream consciousness.



Sex and dreaming



REM sleep is accompanied by genital stimulation in both males and females from birth to death. Men have erections and women have a similar engorgement. If no such stimulation is observed, the dream is probably one with an emotional tone of anxiety.

This genital stimulation appears to be related more to eroticism than adult sexuality, because only about one percent of our dreams have sexual content. This may not be a fixed figure, as lucid dreaming expert Patricia Garfield reports that more than half of her dreams are sexual. The degree of sexual activity in dreams may have more to do with the dreamer's orientation, desires and dream symbology than any quota for normal sexual activity.



Can dreams be eliminated from sleep?

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;labstudy.bmp}Some studies have been attempted to determine whether dreams can be completely eliminated from sleep. No matter how hard the researchers tried to eliminate REM from subjects' sleep, they still reported dreaming. It appears that this aspect of our lives is so vital that it will leak out in other stages of sleep if not permitted in the REM state.

Children up to the age of five or six generally believe that what they dream is real. We don't seem to be able to make the distinction between our bedroom and our dream world until this age. What research has been done into this, and I haven't seen much, seems to suggest that other mammals don't make this distinction at all and perhaps never remember their dreams.

I tend to believe that this is only true for animals in the wild. It seems logical that domesticated animals are likely to have at least occasional dream recall due to the reduced stress levels of domesticated living. Wild animals need to be fully alert as quickly as possible after awakening. Domestic animals have no such need.



Unpleasant dreams are normal

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;devil.bmp}Studies have shown that unpleasant dreams outnumber pleasant ones by almost two to one in the general population. Young adults in particular are prone to anxious or aggressive dreams. If dreams are in fact mirrors of the subconscious mind, this finding says a great deal about the overall mental health of our population...not much of it good, I'm sorry to say.



Two distinct types of dreams



Researchers generally divide dreams into two categories for study. The first type of dream is the typical REM dream which occurs every ninety minutes in sleep. The second type occurs in light, stage 1 sleep, and researchers refer to these as dreamlets. This second type of dream tends to be more common and more vivid among introverted personalities and those with lower anxiety levels.

The dreams we tend to remember best are the most vivid ones, the dreams occurring early in the morning. But these action and color-packed extravaganzas are actually the minority. When researchers began waking subjects up at all hours they discovered that most dreams are quite ordinary, not at all the extreme fantasy of Little Nemo in Slumberland or Fantasia.

Early night dreams tend to be very mundane, with dreamers reporting talking to someone about an ordinary subject, washing the dishes or hailing a cab when awakened from their first dream at night. Researchers have found that dream activities tend to focus more around our leisure time pursuits and recreational than our jobs, although this may not be true for those whose work is also their recreation. It is possible that in these people, dreams tend to involve more fantastic and mystical elements. That's no reason to envy this group, because they are just as prone to the two-to-one positive to negative ratio.



Why we dream

The controversy rages on...



There is no clear-cut answer to this question at this time which satisfies everyone. The answer seems just as elusive as our tiny quantum particle which can't -- or won't -- decide whether it's matter or energy. There are some interesting theories, however, and they may hold seeds of truth which will ultimately lead us to a satisfactory explanation of this great mystery.

A number of researchers have suggested that dreams are needed to help bring our waking experiences into focus and assist the subconscious in making sense of them. All of our experiences are stored in duplicate on both sides of the brain, and it is believed that some sort of haphazard transfer of images crosses the bridge of nerve fibers between the two hemispheres, and what we are watching in our dreams is the process of this transfer taking place.

Much more than meets the eye

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;yingold.bmp} There may be much more to this than meets the eye. A great deal of recent psychological research has recently concerned levels of consciousness and the balance of awareness between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. It appears we all have a degree of imbalance between the two, and most of us live our lives not fully present, but instead with some degree of deficiency of awareness in either our thinking brain and our emotional/feeling brain.

Since time immemorial, sages and shamans alike have been telling us that the object of life is to eternally seek balance between these two parts of ourselves. Everything we choose to do seems to satisfy the needs of one-half of our being, and part of this processing could be a way to give expression or consciousness to any part of us which was not fully acknowledged by our consciousness at the time we had the original experience. This seems to be supported by evidence that people who live mundane lives tend to have mundane dreams, while wild, uninhibited people have wild, uninhibited dreams.

But that doesn't explain why so many of us find our dream lives a mirror image of our waking existence. When I have dull days, my dreams tend to be vivid and adventurous. Hectic days seem to be followed by peaceful dreams. There seems to be a definite link between our experiences of the day and our nightly dreams in regards to needs and unmet desires.

A means of fulfilling unmet needs



Dreams seem to be a way of meeting needs unmet during our day's activity. It may be that we're "all there" when things are overstressed or understressed, but the level of stress itself is what needs balancing at night, thus accounting for the reversal in the level of action and activity. All of this balancing seems to help us function in society by allowing us greater control over our will, and thus better functioning within cultural rules which place severe restrictions on our individuality.

William Dement, one of the grand old men of sleep research, suggested that dreaming may at least in part be a means of preparing for the future. We all try on different modes of behavior in our dreams, experience all kinds of different results, and according to Dement, this experience allows us to make more "informed" choices in our waking life when confronted with

situations with similar meanings, whether the meanings are real or symbolic to us. Dement admits it is nothing more than wild speculation, but I tend to believe that he is partly correct. I believe dreaming involves everything I've suggested here and probably a great deal more.



Dreams as a key to higher consciousness

A gateway to timeless mysteries



Anyone who has given their dreams more than a passing thought is aware that the experiences available to us through our dreams is infinite. But few ever discover the hidden worlds lurking no more than an “Aha!” from your dreaming mind. We’ve already learned about dreamlets, REM dreams, anxiety dreams, false awakenings and sleep terrors, the usual palette from which we choose our nightly escapes from reality. But there is another realm available through dreaming, what many refer to as a higher realm, in which there are no limits and we truly have the opportunity to choose our own destinies.

Animals are capable of four kinds of action. They include reflexive action, ruled by raw nervous impulses; instinctive action, developed through the experience of the species; habitual action, learned through life experience; and intentional action, learned through observing the world around us and recognizing that we can be part of it or separate from it.

Homo sapiens is the only species known to be capable of the fourth type of action, although other species may have the ability in a form we don’t yet recognize. Garden-variety dreams involve only the first three types of action. The “higher” dreamworld is opened up by intentional action. There are few more difficult concepts to grasp, and few more exciting possibilities, than the notion that we can deliberately alter the course of our own dreams, and not just the dreams we dream while awake.



I have experienced this other world, and I have found it infinitely more interesting and satisfying than that offered by, if you’ll pardon the expression, less evolved dreaming. Tens of thousands of people have discovered this ability within themselves thanks to the pioneering work of lucid dream researchers, and it may be possible for anyone who wishes it to enter this world, gain consciousness in their dreams and take an active role in deciding their plot, outcome and content.



! Lucid dreaming: a gateway to ecstasy

Magic at our command



The unusual state of being conscious in one's dreams is known as lucid dreaming (lucid meaning clear in this context) because while we're in this state we tend to be surprisingly clear of mind and sense. Depending on how proficient the dreamer becomes at functioning in this state, lucid dreams can give rise to another kind of dream often referred to as the transcendent or ecstatic dream. These dreams tend to involve a feeling of security and identity so strong that such a dream can literally transform a person's approach to living.

Normal dreams also offer a sense of identity, but in them we usually identify ourselves as either the central actor in the drama or as an observer of the action. In our more balanced waking moments we identify with ourselves both as actor and observer, and we experience the same unity of identity in lucid dreams. But we still feel a distinction between the two. We may not be able to draw it on a map, but we know that a difference exists between ourselves and the world around us.

In ecstatic dreams, just as with ecstatic experiences in our waking life, these two perspectives fuse into one, and there is no felt sense of division between ourselves and our surroundings. It is an illuminating, highly spiritual experience known to ordinary people and mystics alike.



Out-of-body experience

An even greater possibility...or an unreachable dream?



Movies and new age spokespeople have helped to foster a renewed faith among millions of people in the existence of a soul, a core part of ourselves which does not need a body to exist. Astral travel, or out-of-body experience (OOBE), is said to result when our soul detaches from our sleeping body and travels at will through this world and perhaps other dimensions as well.

This concept doesn't hold up well in the laboratory, mainly because it seems to be prone to the same deficits in our science as dream research and quantum physics. However, many researchers have reported astonishing successes which, while they are seldom repeated and apparently never consistent, are worth note even if they only happened once due to the odds against them occurring.

A tool for healing...a weapon of war



OOBE is studied in several developed countries for a variety of purposes. If it is a skill which can be learned, it would naturally be an awesome weapon of espionage. If it demonstrates new principles of science, the technology which could result would be worth billions. And of course everyone wants to know if there is life after death. But regardless of why it is studied, there are some interesting parallels with sleep and dreaming.

Many "adepts" claim that lucid dreaming is only the first step on the mystical journey. In lucid dreams, our surroundings are largely the constructs of our subconscious mind. In OOBE's, our surroundings are real and the demands and responsibilities on the dreamer proportionately greater. I am not sure if the two aren't on the same continuum. OOBE's and lucid dreams may be identical phenomena, except that lucid dreams are simply easier for the average person to accept as reality.

I have queried students of mystical arts who claim to have experienced both, and none of those who responded said that there was a qualitative difference between their lucid dreams and their OOBE's, although I have heard such claims from sources I consider less reliable. It seems that the only difference between the two may be whether you wish to explore the outside world or the inside. This is a very appealing idea for me, and it seems to make perfect sense that adepts would speak of OOBE as more spiritually advanced, since that explanation sets them up as more advanced than a lucid dreamer rather than someone who has developed their skills in a different way.



Shared dreams

Speculation or opportunity?

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;people.bmp}Although this is another inconsistent and scientifically difficult idea, it does appear that shared dreams do exist. Shared dreams are dreams in which two or more people seem to have the same plot in their dreams, witness each other in their dreams and even interact with each other. These seem to suggest some form of psychic activity, but it may not be as complicated as that. It is not as if these two people share the same mind, because the details of their dreams can differ. One person could remember a room with white curtains while the other remembers an open field, but that wouldn't diminish for one second the fact that they both reported saying and hearing the same things and participating in the same actions.

I believe that once we delve deeper into quantum physics we'll discover that our bodies put off a lot more than just a heat field which affects others or the Kirlian electromagnetic field. I believe these fields can have many different depths and ultimately affect the fields of others, perhaps to the point where neither party knows who instituted a given action. If you have ever watched twins several meters apart scratch their noses at the exact same instant, you'll understand how difficult it can be to determine which twin actually had the itch.



Enhancing your dream life



As if dreams weren't rewarding enough in and of themselves, there are ways to actually improve their quality and meaning in your life. Here are some better and lesser-known ideas you can put to work to enhance your own dream life. And these are just a *taste* of what could lie ahead for those with a yen for adventure.



[How to improve dream recall](#)



[Making and keeping a dream diary](#)



[Dream induction: how to master your dreaming mind](#)



How to improve dream recall



Not everyone remembers what went on in their lives at age five. Some people have hundreds of childhood memories, pleasant and unpleasant. Some people have only a very few dim memories of this period of their lives. Some people draw a complete blank. Dreams have a similar dynamic. Most of us know that we dream, but a substantial portion of the population has no dream memory of any kind. Here's help with enhancing your ability to remember your dreams.



[Distinguishing dreams from reality](#)



[Biochemical support for dream recall](#)



[Techniques for kick-starting your memory](#)



[Improving your dream memory](#)



[Detective work for increased detail](#)



Distinguishing dreams from reality

A learned skill



Dream recall is a learned skill. With a little practice and a few simple tricks this skill can be vastly improved in just about everyone. But like childhood memory, it can be difficult and painful to maintain your increased awareness. It seems that anyone can obtain at least a short-term increase in dream recall, but to maintain this increase requires a desire that many may not be able to sustain. Some people scorn their own dreams as psychotic, insane, undesirable, as evidence of sin or as a part of themselves gone dangerously out of control. Obviously this attitude is not conducive to improving your recall abilities.

A program of dream recall enhancement can be approached for specific results or in a general sense. Some people can't seem to distinguish between a mundane dream and reality. In sleep laboratories, when these people were awakened they often claimed not to have been dreaming at all. They believed they were actually engaged in the activity they were dreaming, which may have been fixing a cup of coffee or opening the mail.

In some cases, dreams can be so mundane that we simply dream we are lying in bed thinking about things. In this case, improving general recall seems to start with learning the difference between dreams and reality. This is not an embarrassing problem or a sign of mental illness, because if you recall our quantum particle which can't decide whether it's matter or energy, the dividing line between dreaming and waking reality is flexible and changeable. Children don't know the difference between dreams and reality often as late as age seven or eight. All adults slip into childlike states from time to time, and when we're in this state we truly don't have our adult perceptions.

Reality checking

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;info_ico.bmp}One technique which has been quite effective for people who have difficulty making this distinction or who have no dream recall at all is the practice of regular reality checks. Ask yourself several times a day "is this reality or is this a dream?" and look for unnatural or illogical signs in the world around you. This has a powerful effect on consciousness. It helps to gear the mind more toward seeing what is hidden and unreal, and even if we don't instantly recognize truth or fantasy when they present themselves, we'll often gain the appropriate insights after the fact.

This simple exercise improves dream recall ability in all kinds of dreamers. At least one dream expert has suggested hanging signs around your home, particularly in the washroom and bedroom, to remind you to ask yourself whether what you are currently experiencing is waking reality.



Biochemical support for dream recall

Balance is the key



Properly balanced body chemistry is just as essential to dream recall as proper mental preparation. After all, sleep is as much a biological process as a psychological one. Stress can interfere with memory in a number of ways, not just through dream amnesia, although this is likely to be the first place where it suffers. Reducing stress to increase dream recall first and foremost involves avoidance of drugs which affect REM dreaming. These drugs include caffeine, cocoa or chocolate, alcohol, diet aids and stimulants, barbiturates, tranquilizers, cannabis, and for some people, nicotine. The less REM time you get, the less you'll have to remember, and the worse you'll feel in the morning, further reducing the likelihood that you'll be able to recall your dreams.

If you're not using artificial stimulants or depressants, vitamin B-6 might assist you in restoring balance to your brain hormone level. Many drugs and environmental stressors, birth control pills in particular, block the formation of neurotransmitter chemicals essential to alertness and memory.

Vitamins as an aid to triggering recall

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;rx.bmp}You might wish to try 100mg vitamin B-6 supplement for a short while at dinnertime or early in the evening if your sleep is generally deep and dreamless, but be alert for side effects. It has been suggested that if 100mg doesn't induce dream recall within five days, the amount should be increased by 100mg every five days until the desired effect has been achieved or a dose of 500mg has been reached. If a dose this high still does not induce dream recall, you may be suffering from undiagnosed clinical depression or some other neurological or physical condition, and it would probably be wise to see a doctor. Do not extend the dosage level beyond 500mg per day unless this has been approved by a physician.



One technique for enhancing dream memory was suggested by Pearson and Shaw in "Life Extension", but this is not recommended for regular use. It seems that vitamin B-12 also has a potent effect on dream memory. High doses of B-12, on the order of 1,000mcg (1mg, or several hundred times the Recommended Daily Allowance) apparently result in extremely vivid and colorful dreams when this dosage is taken near bedtime. I cannot see the benefit of using this aid for anything other than a single experiment. This is a very high dosage of this vitamin, which in its artificial form leaves a harmful cyanide residue during digestion. Tolerance to the effect builds rapidly, making repeated experiments less worthwhile.

Narcotics as an aid to triggering dream recall



Canadians can purchase over-the-counter codeine tablets, and codeine is known as a "dream drug". What it actually does is accentuate dreamlets, our early-sleep hypnogogic hallucinations. Many people have used single doses of codeine ranging from 32mg and up to accentuate their dream lives and increase opportunities for lucid dreaming, but this is a highly addictive drug and must be handled with great care.



Over-the-counter doses of 32mg or more contain enough ASA to cause pain or bleeding in people with sensitive digestion, and acetaminophen is toxic to the liver and kidneys. Acetaminophen preparations this powerful should be accompanied by appropriate doses of detoxifying agents such as vitamin C and avoided completely with liver or kidney dysfunction or drug sensitivity.



Kick-starting your memory

Dream amnesia need never be permanent



Sometimes we simply need a kick-start to orient our memory toward dream recall again. A number of simple tricks can be tried, any of which might start the process of recall if you've been amnesiac for years or improve your memory if it has been dim.

? **Pay attention!**

? **Deliberate interruption: another kick-starting technique**

? **Dreamlet recall may be possible when REM is inaccessible**

? **Programming dream recall with cybernetics**

? **The easiest technique of all**

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Pay attention!



Poor recall can often be improved simply by paying attention to dream memories when they surface, spending more time with them, making them important in your life. Some people who start their day with no dream memory at all discover that memories surface at odd moments during the day.

If these memories are from mundane dreams, the person may have difficulty knowing for certain whether the memories are of actual events or not. This problem can often be helped with regular reality checks. Once these memories are identified as dream material, paying special attention to them will increase their depth and frequency, at least temporarily.



Deliberate interruption: another kick-starting technique



Another kick-starting technique is to deliberately interrupt your dreams. This can be done on your own but it is much more effective with the help of a partner. The idea is to wake yourself during or just after a REM period to maximize your chances of having fresh dream experiences to recall. If you have a bedmate or spouse, have them watch you for signs of dreaming, particularly early in the morning. The most obvious sign is movement of the eyes under the eyelids.

When your partner notices this, they are to wait two or three minutes or until the movement seems to be subsiding and wake you gently. Immediately they are to ask you what you were dreaming about. If trust is lacking in this person or the relationship is stressed it may be difficult to recall dream images, but in most cases this will have quick and dramatic results. Within a week or two the sleeper should be able to remember their own dreams.

The alarm clock method is more brutal and somewhat less effective. The idea here is to wake yourself at precisely the time when you're dreaming, which is hit-or-miss if you don't have an observer. I believe the most effective way to do it is to set your alarm for 90 minutes earlier than your normal awakening. Place a sign near your alarm clock, beside your bed, on your

ceiling or somewhere where you can see it which says "What did you dream?" This will prompt you for memory if the alarm clock doesn't.



Ninety minutes before awakening your dreams are becoming much more intense and longer-lasting, and you're more likely to "strike gold" by awakening from REM at this time. If it doesn't work you can set the alarm for a half-hour later and go back to sleep, and then another half-hour later if that doesn't work. Eventually you will hit a REM period, and if you can recall your dreams you will do so at that point. The drawback to the alarm clock method is its violence. It will certainly jar you out of a REM period, but gentle awakenings are much more effective for stimulating recall.



Dreamlet recall may be possible when REM is inaccessible

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}Many people are simply too cut off from their subconscious to recall their dreams, but they can still remember stage 2 dreamlets with a little work. These are almost never as vivid as REM dreams but they do provide a great deal of interesting subconscious material.

Ann Faraday, a well-known psychiatrist who specializes in dreamwork, suggests falling asleep with an arm extended about six inches out from your side and the forearm straight up in the air. When you fall asleep your muscle tone will drop, you will lose control of your arm muscles and your hand will fall across your chest or stomach, waking you up. You should have memory of your dreamlets at some point in this process.



Programming dream recall with cybernetics



Personal cybernetics techniques can be used to restore recall, often with dramatic results. Using the techniques outlined in the previous chapter, create a continuous-loop tape with your own voice repeating this message: "When I wake up, I will have a clear memory of this dream." A continuous-loop tape such as an answering machine tape is needed for this because the programming needs to reach your mind in a REM state more than at any other. This tape needs to be played at a level where you can barely make out the words if you stop breathing and lie very still.

This will often have a profound effect on dream recall, and you may find yourself waking up every ninety minutes with vivid recall of your previous dream. You might also find yourself speaking the message in the dream itself or hearing the dream from some source at ear-splitting volume.



The easiest technique of all



The easiest method I know for inducing dream recall is simply to make room for your dreams in your life. The best way to do that is to dedicate a few Saturdays to the task and sleep in as late as it takes until you awaken from a dream. Sometimes this will happen on the first try, but if you have some problem with this such as viewing late sleeping as laziness or an inability to fall back asleep in the morning, it might take some work. If you stay with it long enough, this will almost always work the first day or two you try it. It might not result in any long-term

improvement in dream memory, but it will increase your appreciation and awareness of your dreams.



Improving your dream memory

Thunder in the silence

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;painting.bmp}There is an axiom in psychology which may or may not be true that says the detail you leave out of your experience or your description of your experience is always more important than the details you remember. Whether this is true or not, many people enjoy having greater recall of the dreams they do have. A stronger ability to remember one's dreams has been linked by many to improved mental health. Non-recallers are generally found to be more inhibited and less secure as individuals, and they even show fewer eye movements in REM sleep which may indicate a low tolerance for stress even in their dreams.



Perhaps the greatest impediment to improved dream recall is fear. The emotional intensity of a dream is related to how well you remember it, and if you have highly-charged dreams involving material you're not yet ready to acknowledge, you might very easily block the dream from your memory altogether. This fear must be balanced with enough motivation to make dream recall worth your while, and this motivation can be difficult, even painful, to acquire. The prospect of being able to use your dreams for much more than just psychoanalysis is motivation enough for many, but some people have such highly-charged dreams that this isn't nearly enough. Support in the way of counseling or therapy may be required before you can truly grow to appreciate and welcome your dreams.



Mnemonics techniques from any book on improving your memory will also assist you in improving dream memory. Detective techniques have been particularly effective for me. When I awaken from a dream with the object of remembering as much of it as possible, I use tracing techniques to see how far back I can go. Dream memories don't always come to you in sequence from A to Z. Very often you'll get memories of the most vivid memories first, whether they occurred at the beginning, middle or end, and you'll need to piece the images together in sequence later like a patchwork quilt.



Detective work for increased detail

Sleuthing your memory

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;holmes.bmp} The easiest way to do your own detective work is to begin with what's important to you. Lie awake in bed, in a different posture from your normal sleep position so you don't fall asleep, but with your eyes closed so you don't lose the memory trace. With a tape recorder next to you, or a bedmate to take down your memories (this is often a difficult favor to ask which you'll need to return at some point), start rhyming off all the details you can think of in any order in which they come to you. Pick out every detail you can, from sights and sounds to the tones of people's voices to the way they walked, the feelings you had, the colors and textures of as much as you can remember. You don't need to write these details down or record them for posterity to improve your recall, although the act of doing so will reinforce this new behavior and help improve future dream recall.

If you already have a relatively rich dream life, you might find this exercise a little like chasing your tail, since the details will be so many and so strong that keeping track of them all would be impossible for more than one or two dreams at a time. Most people find that they run out of detail relatively quickly, but that's not a problem. Once you've dictated as much as possible, shift positions in bed. This oxygenates different parts of your body and brain and triggers recall of more dream memories, perhaps because of nerve stimulation or muscle memory.

Starting the day right



As you rise to start your day, keep any dream images you feel like carrying with you sharp in your mind. This signals the subconscious that you're paying attention and you'll often be rewarded with enhanced dream recall. If you fall asleep at this point, you'll have the dream images recorded but this probably won't enhance recall unless you devote more attention to them. There seems to be a principle involved here which says that the more importance you give to your dream memories and the more time and energy you expend on them, the more they will reward you in return.

The best time to focus on improving your dream recall is during a particularly dull period in your life. Low-stress is not the same as dull, and a dull period is one in which you feel bored or frustrated at times. This will usually translate into a more exciting dream life, and exciting events are better remembered. Anxiety is another trigger for improving dream recall. Good recallers are known to be anxiety-prone, but this may also be associated with a greater openness to opportunities for growth, and growth opportunities are usually stressful experiences.



Overwork at dream recall can result in "dream hangover". A nightmare might leave you with a residue of terror which persists through the next day, or an ecstatic dream may give you a long-lasting feeling of peace or joy. Even the negative experiences can be welcome to those who feel a lack of aliveness, but if these experiences become distressing, discontinue or cut back your dream work or seek counseling or therapy to help you through the rough spots. You'll often need help in overcoming negative emotions which spring from "dream hangover" and you'll probably have to accept that these experiences will occur from time to time.

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! Making and keeping a dream diary



Improved recall, or the mere existence of recall where you have had none in the past, may be enough to satisfy you for quite a while. But if dream interpretation or deeper levels of dreamwork (or dream play) ever interest you, a dream diary will go a long way toward helping you make sense of your dreams, build a dictionary of dream symbols and spot patterns among these symbols.



An easy task with many rewards



Subconscious resistance to dream diaries



Keeping dream records



Triggering of past memories



An easy task with many rewards

The importance of being earnest



In order to develop any degree of accuracy and consistency in interpreting dreams, inducing dreams and enhancing your dream life in other ways, it helps to have a collection of dream records from which you can derive a set of personal symbols and trace recurring themes and images. Most dream experts now believe that while there are many dream symbols common to specific groups, all the dream interpretation books put together will pale in value to a personal map of your own dreams developed through your own experience and observations. No book can account for the unique individual experiences which make up your life, and thus your dream life.

A few tools for the task



Many authors go into great detail on the subtleties of keeping a dream diary. I'll offer just a few guidelines here. It doesn't need to be any more difficult or complicated than taking the principles discussed in the previous section and applying them to the printed page or to your computer. All you need is a good tape recorder or a "light pen" and the motivation to transcribe your dream ramblings onto paper or into a database.

A light pen is a ball-point pen with a small flashlight built into the barrel. They're available at many novelty and gift shops. A useable tape recorder for recording dreams could be any ordinary cassette recorder. If your dream memory is especially fragile, you may wish to invest in a voice-activated recorder with an AC adapter. These units will remain on all night and begin recording without being touched when a certain sound level has been reached.



This type of recorder usually costs an extra \$10 to \$15 over the price of a hand-held recorder and it won't be useful to snorers or sleep talkers. However, they could be of value in providing proof of a snoring problem you may not have known about previously, or material for entertainment or therapy if you're a particularly vocal sleep talker. In any case, a small hand-held recorder mounted over your head, or with a microphone over the headboard, is recommended. A tape recorder set on the nightstand won't pick up your voice very well when you roll over to try to get at more memories, where a microphone over your head will pick up sound from your back or both sides.

Hard copy

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;notebook.bmp} When you awaken from a dream, follow the same techniques described for enhancing dream recall. But instead of taking mental note of the details, take verbal and written notes instead. This is a difficult skill for many people to develop. Coordination is not at its best mere moments after we awaken, and some concentration is required to properly enunciate dream memories into a tape recorder so that they're understandable later, or to scribble notes in the semi-darkness which will be legible later. Some people become so skilled that they can write legibly, and without doubling lines of text, on a clipboard on their stomach lying in bed with their eyes closed. Don't worry about the quality, quantity or sequence of your dream notes. Your impressions can always be expanded, condensed, reorganized, categorized or shuffled in any way you like

at a later time.



Subconscious resistance to dream diaries

The psychological factor



If you have a lot of difficult, unresolved material in your past, you may find that the commitment to keeping a dream diary has exactly the opposite result expected. Dream memory might actually *disappear* on you.

There are several possible reasons for this. Your dreams may already be charged with difficult material and your subconscious may be trying to protect you from delving more deeply into these issues than you are capable at the time. In this case you'll need to give your subconscious time to reorient itself and shuffle the way it handles dream images.

Eventually you will find a happy medium between what your subconscious is prepared to reveal to you and the depth you want from your subconscious. You might also be going into this project with preconceived notions about what you're going to discover, notions your subconscious is resistant to accepting. In this case, you'll have to decide whether you're going to train your subconscious or let it train you. If you decide to take control, read books on dream symbology to feed your subconscious a language with which it can communicate.

Commit to a symbolism...your dreams will follow



Commit to making your dream interpretations fit these catalogues at least for the time being, and this will give your subconscious structure and limits. If you choose instead to let your subconscious train you, you must be prepared to allow yourself to openly accept what comes out of your dreams without judgment, something which can be exceedingly difficult for many people due to the judgments they may attach to themselves or their world as a result of these images.

A third possibility is that you may be forcing the issue, literally trying too hard to remember. The only workable solution for this problem is persistence. You may have to be content with no dream memory as long as you're anticipating and working hard to achieve it. It may only come when you relax and quit trying. This problem often comes and goes repeatedly, with each exciting development in your dream life accompanied by another rush of excitement and another bout of dream amnesia.



Keeping dream records



When I began to research dream recall techniques, I discovered a fairly common pattern among most of the books and articles I came across. Details vary from author to author, but here is the general outline.



Commit to the secretarial work



Title your dreams like good stories



Leave room for personal notes



Keep records in the present tense



Consider your annotations with care and purpose

{ewc LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;day_nigh.bmp}



Commit to the secretarial work

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;notebook.bmp} First of all, commit to transcribing your verbal or written notes into written or computerized form early on the same morning after your dreams. This allows you the opportunity to create your permanent record while the dream is fresh in your mind. If you choose to write rather than record your dreams, your scribbled notes may be all you want to keep, but in most cases these notes will need transcription and more detail before they are a useful permanent record. This may mean making a few extra minutes in the morning for the task.



Title your dreams like good stories



Because dreams have story-like qualities to them, it is suggested that you give titles to your dreams based on the image that stands out most for you on the morning you had the dream. At a later date you may discover that a different image seems to take on more meaning for you, but the most immediately powerful image seems to be the best for the title. For example, I once dreamed of a woman whose face grew ugly and whose nose grew long as I got close to her, so I titled this dream description "The Pinocchio Witch". This was only a single image in a very complicated plot, but it was the one which had the most power for me at the time and the title itself would recall other images for me.



Leave room for personal notes



When creating your dream record on paper, write or type double-spaced. This leaves room on the paper to fill in details you may have missed. This isn't a problem when entering your dream records on computer. It can be important for some types of interpretation to get the sequence right, and this is the time to take the scribbled notes and structure them in the proper time sequence. Details of the dream are likely to occur to you as you write, and by all means add these as you recall them. The simple act of entering the information in a word processor or text editor, or writing them on paper, is likely to trigger more detail for you.



Keep records in the present tense



Keep all your records in the present tense unless your dream self was focusing on or thinking about the past. For “Pinocchio Witch” I would write “I look at this woman and her face transforms and becomes ugly” rather than “I looked at this woman and her face transformed and became ugly”. The present tense description is much more accurate when describing dreams because in our dreams we are “all there” with the action going on around us. We’ll rarely get stuck in old memories or prejudices in dreams.

Unless we’re conscious of the fact that we’re dreaming, we’ll react instantly and without considering the consequences of our actions. It could be said that even after we awaken, our subconscious, dreaming mind is “still there” with the dream, still present, and not really in the past at all. Reflecting this level of presence in your dream diary helps reinforce rapport and empathy with your subconscious. It might feel a little bit stilted at first, because your waking mind know it is past material, but if you stay with it, it should become second nature to you in a very short time.



Consider your annotations with care and purpose



Once you have the dream’s contents recorded, anything else you add depends on what use you want to make of your dreams. Some people are content to leave the description as is, while others make anywhere from a few to several pages of notes on the images and connections.

Among the types of notes you may wish to take, depending on what you seek from your dream life, are ratings of the dream’s intensity, emotions or color level, the overriding emotion or sense you got from the dream, aftereffects you may still be feeling, what you wish could have happened instead, connections you make between characters or objects and events or people in your waking life or your part, any messages you may believe you have been given, the ease or difficulty associated with assimilating or accepting the dream’s contents, recurring themes which seem to be trying to tell you something, hunches about certain aspects of the dream, the list goes on and on. Hard-core dream journaling can easily result in several pages’ worth of material per dream.



Triggering of past memories

Unexpected nostalgia



A common phenomenon among dream diarists is the spontaneous occurrence of memories of past events and past dreams. I find during times when I pay more attention to my dreams that memories of childhood often occur to me seemingly out of the blue as I'm entering a dream record or at different times of the day. Sometimes I'll have memories of dreams I had years ago which I had completely forgotten about.



It may be important to keep these spontaneous memories in a journal alongside dream records for the days these events occurred, because there may be a strong link between the two which is not readily apparent. It may take time and effort to reach the appropriate conclusion, and by then the link between these memories and the dreams which accompanied them may be forgotten.



It is just as important to take special note of images or themes which seem to be occurring for the first time in your dreams. These could indicate a period of growth for you or they could be themes you later discover have been there for years but never reached your consciousness before, and this too indicates a period of growth. Many people can become disoriented, frustrated and even panicky when they enter a period of change without conscious awareness of what is happening to them.



Dream induction: mastering your dreaming mind



Belief in some of the more esoteric aspects of sleep and dreaming tends to divide people along lines of their ideologies. Conservatives tend to deny them, liberals tend to believe them. Interestingly, I've discovered that the level of belief in this particular aspect of dreaming doesn't seem to fit that profile...there's a fairly equal level of disbelief at both ends of the spectrum.



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Teaching yourself to dream on demand

“This just isn’t possible!”



It sounds like a pipe dream. It looks about as sensible as a sponge rubber submarine. It’s not supposed to be possible to dictate what we dream, when and how. But the fact remains that dreaming on demand is a very real phenomenon enjoyed by millions of people. It’s a fun experiment for those who simply want to see if it works (and surprisingly easy to accomplish when approached from this perspective) and a potentially powerful source of growth and self-understanding for those who truly wish to harness the power of their sleeping mind.

Dream induction is the perfect “training camp” for those who are interested in the more complex dream realities of lucid dreaming and out-of-body experience but haven’t been able to develop these abilities. The techniques for inducing specific dream experiences, symbols or situations are the same techniques taught by lucid dreaming experts. Out-of-body experience seems to require a different set of skills which stem from proficiency at lucid dreaming, but it’s a step up the ladder if this area of dream experience interests you.

An achievable skill



If training yourself to dream on demand seems illogical to you, perhaps you don’t understand some of the aspects of dreaming which fit consensus logic. For example, most people are aware of how snippets from the previous day’s experiences seem to show up in the night’s dreams, or perhaps the following night. Some have observed how their last waking thoughts at night seem to dictate the tone of their first, or curiously, often their last dream of the night.

Study after study has demonstrated how suggestible the dreaming mind is to waking suggestions, whether self-induced or environmentally triggered, and many of the techniques already described in this book take advantage of this suggestibility. This principle can extend beyond what we think about while we sleep to include the actual content of our dreams.

I’ll even offer a challenge to skeptics by inducing a dream right now.



Teaching yourself to dream on demand

Some time...

(having wonderful time)

in the next seven days...

(having wonderful time)

you will dream about...

(wish I was here)

\$aTuRN

This doesn't always work, but there's a good chance it will.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;wizard.bmp} It's only fair to tell you that some tricks have been used to accomplish the goal, such as increasing your suggestibility by changing the way in which I communicate with you (not all of them are as obvious as they appear), but this isn't intended as harmful in any way and it almost always works. Some time within the next seven days, you'll experience a dream image including a Saturn automobile, a Saturn 5 moon rocket, the ringed planet, the Roman god or some other image which you associate with the word Saturn. Even if you never try dream induction, at least you'll know it's possible.



Although it is recommended that you *not* do this until you have at least given this experiment a try, you can click here to see what the subliminal micro-text says. If you want to return here later for this purpose, bookmark this topic using the **Bookmark** menu.



The micro-text messages are:
(having wonderful time)
(having wonderful time)
(wish I was here)

Reasons for inducing dreams

You need a reason



The method of dream induction I just used is a little sneaky, because it is designed specifically to induce a dream in someone resistant to the idea in the first place. In most cases forced induction is not merely unsuccessful, but downright detrimental to your normal dream memory. If you were to attempt to induce a dream in yourself using this kind of force, you might succeed, but you might also succeed in frightening your subconscious with a show of power and stifling normal dream recall.

You need a clearly defined purpose for inducing dreams and patience with your subconscious in having it appear for you. Dream induction is generally undertaken for three main reasons: to have experiences unattainable to you in your waking life, to solve creative problems and overcome blocks, or to resolve conflict and achieve personal growth. We'll examine the dynamics behind each of these three types of induced dreams.



! Inducing dreams for pleasure

An exciting therapeutic possibility



To my mind, this is one of the most promising techniques for psychological self-care available today. Imagine what it could mean to a paraplegic to induce dreams of full functioning, of climbing mountains or driving a car. Or to an elderly person to induce dreams of youthful activity or joys which the body no longer permits. We've all yearned to fly under our own power. Most of us have had sexual fantasies we couldn't hope to live out in the real world. Virtually everyone carries within them a list of dreams unfulfilled due to responsibilities or limitations, and to a certain extent every one of these experiences is available to us in our dreams, where they can feel as vivid and real, and leave memories as rich and cherished, as if they had happened for us in real life.

There is a trick to this, though, and it's a Catch-22 a lot of people won't like. The trick is that in order to induce dreams about these things we must first believe we can dream them, next that we are entitled to these dreams, and finally that we do not need these dreams to be okay as human beings. It sounds difficult and for many it is, but there are reasons for these restrictions.

Our faith defines our freedom



If we don't believe we can have these dreams, the only way our subconscious will present these dreams to us is if there is a part of our conscious mind that knows we really can have these dreams, and that the part that denies it is "full of it". Otherwise the subconscious won't help out at all. The principle here is the same as the principle behind psychic phenomena. Non-believers tend to suppress positive results. Who cares if the results of your dream are hallucinations as long as they feel real?

The second matter, entitlement, is difficult for many people who, through experience, training or societal pressures, believe that such experiences are frivolous, beneath a mature human being, or worthy only of gods and are sinful or an undeserved pleasure for mere mortals. Sometimes this message is buried deep in the subconscious where it can be very difficult to overcome, not to mention extremely confusing. I know what it's like to believe consciously that I am worthy of something and watch as it slips through my grasp or never comes to me...and for no apparent reason.

Yet another paradox



The third matter, lack of need, is the trickiest of all, especially for people who can't tell the difference between a simple desire for something and raw need. For a long time during a celibate period in my life I tried to induce sexual dreams without success. What I missed was the fact that I could have had this in my waking life as well. It wasn't something I needed. I've also tried to induce dreams regarding possible job or career options at a time when I was physically unfit for full-time work.

It's no wonder my subconscious wasn't cooperating because I wasn't taking care of the tools I would need to make use of its answers. Sometimes the subconscious will respond to our need when it involves our health. Many recovering alcoholics have "drunk dreams" which seem to take the place of drinking in real life, but in the most case if it is compulsive or addictive

need which dictates the type of dream we're trying to induce, our subconscious will balk more often than it cooperates.



Inducing creative dreams

The paradox of desire

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;triangle.bmp}The paradox of “the more you want it, the less likely you’ll get it” seems to apply even more rigidly to induced creative dreams more than dreams of lust or desire. I’ve tried inducing dreams to unblock my writing, but this only worked when I finally gave up on the writing altogether. There were other desires tied to the creative urge, including money, prestige and power, which by themselves aren’t bad but my subconscious simply hasn’t responded well to these desires in the past. Once those extraneous desires were cleared and it came down to just me and my desire to write, the idea I needed to unblock myself came easily.

This is only one type of creative dream, and it was specifically directed at an objective in my waking life. Another use of dream induction for creativity is creation itself.

Documented dream gifts

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;artist.bmp} The biggest Police hit ever, “Every Breath You Take”, owes at least part of its success to its dreamlike quality. It came to Sting during a dream. Many artists have dreamed paintings, songs, short stories, even whole books and symphonies...or as much as the artist could remember. Some artists come to rely on their subconscious for all of their best ideas. I have yet to see literature which describes a means of inducing creative dreams. I doubt that one exists which could produce more than occasional results or superficial works.

All dreams are creative, and any dream in the hands of an imaginative artist is a complex, intricately-detailed sculpture to be simplified into something which can be shared with others. But it seems to me that inducing creative dreams is like being a born and bred Englishman teaching Russian to Russians. Dreaming is a creative function. It seems absurd to tell our dreaming mind how to perform its role. But then all attempts at dream induction amount to the same absurdity, so perhaps it is possible to induce creative dreams. If so, it probably requires the same paradoxical approach as inducing an unblocking dream...the worse you want it, the more your subconscious is likely to resist.



Inducing problem-solving dreams

A widely-used tool for self-improvement



This is the best documented area of dream induction. Everyone from sales and management trainers to new agers to mathematicians have been introduced to this concept, and a specific plan has been formulated to assist dreamers. This plan is no more than a formality, but for those with little experience with dreamwork and little faith in its value, the use of a structured plan of attack can help build trust. After all, it worked for the person who wrote the plan. Here are the four steps to successful induction of problem-solving dreams:



Information gathering



Incubation



Illumination



Insistence upon action

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Information gathering

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;toc.bmp}The first phase is information gathering. This is feeding time for the subconscious as we absorb information and allow the mind to work in the background, putting it together and building its own database from which to work. Whenever you have a specific problem requiring a specific answer, the experts suggest feeding your mind all the information you can find relating to that question. This isn't school. You're not graded on how well you retain the information, what you remember or what you do with the information at the time you receive it. It's all meant for a future feast to be served by the subconscious when it is ready to present its answer.



Incubation

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;dali.bmp}The second phase is incubation. This is the waiting period, the time when patience is needed while the information settles and shifts. The subconscious tries out combinations and permutations of the information it has been fed, adds in information from your past to see how the sum total presents itself, and much more. This process takes place usually without your conscious awareness, but some of the shuffling of ideas takes place in your dreams and daydreams. Your only task at this time is to give your subconscious mind directions on how you would prefer to receive the answer. You may prefer it at a conscious level, as a flash insight some time during the day, but since this is a book on sleep and dreaming I'll assume you want to receive your answer in a dream.



Illumination



The third phase is literally called illumination. In its own way it is similar to illumination or enlightenment experiences described by mystics, but it is a lot less intense than a true mystical

experience...unless of course mystical knowledge is what you've been seeking. This seems to be cut and dried. Some night when you least expect it, a dream comes to you and you awaken, knowing you've received your answer. But it's not always that simple. You could simply have been witnessing a part of your mind playing with a few ideas, and mistaken a few images relating to what's been happening in your life with the answer you've been seeking.

The key is to hold out for the answer that truly satisfies you, not one which leaves you with lingering doubt. This can result in waiting through many false alarms over weeks or even months. This is an imperfect process, and virtually everyone stops short of the answer they've really been seeking, but there's nothing wrong with that. We're human, entitled to our impatience and also entitled to reap rewards at whatever we choose. Not all of us could survive The Ultimate and Final Cosmic Answer to our question without dying of a heart attack in the process! Eventually an answer will come that feels right at a deep enough level and for a long enough time that we accept it as the answer we have been seeking.



Insistence upon action



That should be enough, but in most cases it isn't. We have, in effect, put a certain faith in our subconscious to come through for us with an answer. There seems to be some principle at work which shuts our contact with our subconscious off if we do not act on the answer we get. It's as if a part of us begs for proof that the answer really is right and wants to see it tested in waking life. This is actually where the illumination process completes itself, because if we have in fact settled upon a solution we can live with and we have the courage to try it in real life, we seem to integrate both our conscious and subconscious mind. This has a clearing effect on the channels between the two and usually results in much clearer communication in the future.

We don't always get the results we think we want, but there seems to be some need to test those results against reality. And even if the result seems bizarre somehow, or unworkable in the real world, what we often discover when we put these solutions to work is that they seem to work in spite of themselves. Part of the reason for this is because the subconscious is working with information which isn't always visible to us. Our subconscious may know of factors which work in our favor which our conscious minds can't see and therefore could not consider as important.





The average time required to induce a specified dream in controlled experiments is about five weeks. Interestingly, this period also corresponds with the emotional biorhythmic cycle, which is about five weeks in length. The length of time you'll need to wait for a specified dream probably depends on your orientation. Physically-oriented people will probably get their answers most quickly, followed by those who are mind-oriented, with the emotionally-centered coming in third. Psychically or spiritually-centered people seem to have to wait longest of all, although this has never been demonstrated in studies.

An example of inducing a problem-solving dream

How it all happens



Let's say you wish to invent a new type of clothes hanger. The first step is to compile all kinds of information on the subject. You might look in library books at how today's hanger came into being. You could examine unusual products available today. You might contemplate how clothing is made and how it seems to want to be hung. This might lead to a few ideas, but if you can't come up with the idea which you know is right.

If you're a compulsive person, you could make yourself half crazy looking for the answer. But let's assume instead that you decide to not bother looking, that you choose to simply let the answer come as it wants to come while you leave the project alone and go on with your life. This might take patience and conscious discipline.

Over the next few weeks you begin to notice strange things about clothes and hangers you never noticed before, a common phenomenon in the problem-solving process. But you consider these things without passing judgment on them and let the subconscious do its work for you.

"AHA!"



Then, one night when you least expect it, you find yourself on an airplane, an old-style circus wing-walker out for an afternoon show. Suddenly you lose your balance, but it doesn't worry you because you know you have a restraining harness. You get back on the wing and reset the restraining harness, but when you look at it you realize that it is not just a harness...it's the new clothes hanger you've been looking for!

Worried that you might forget about this once you wake up? It *could* happen, but it's unlikely. This type of insight is rare for most people. It's not often that such an insight goes unnoticed. But many creative people get so many ideas in their dreams that three-quarters of them are forgotten by the time they get around to writing them down. You're not likely to get a lot of these insights until you begin to develop a trusting relationship with your subconscious. But once you do develop this relationship, it seems critical to honor every idea that pours out of it to the best of your abilities. Reducing your attention and trust tends to choke the channels of

communication and in some people it is difficult to restore those channels once they have been shut down.



Inducing dreams for personal insight and growth



These are probably the most difficult and painful dreams to induce of all. The reason these dreams are difficult is because they are deeply personal and tend to affect us at many levels.



The paradoxical battleground of our own subconscious



When it's a last resort, results become doubly elusive



The evolution of the subconscious



The difference between conscious and unconscious truth

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The paradoxical battleground of our own subconscious

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;knotred.bmp} If you're already reasonably well-off and inventing a new hanger will make for a neat hobby or sideline, the dream solution will probably come easily. But we live in a culture which does not believe in the value of anything that comes easily, a culture which believes that anything of value must come with pain. Truth and freedom always come with struggle, at least for humans, but this struggle does not have to involve pain in terms of suffering. Anyone who has ever been in love and loved being in love knows that pain can have a beauty all its own.

Using dreams to solve personal problems is nothing more or less than being your own therapist, or letting your subconscious be your therapist for you. Therapy can have two objectives. They include modifying the way you live, in relation either to yourself or the world around you; and clearing up old business, allowing you to make conscious, informed choices about how you wish to live.

The progression and technique are identical to problem-solving dreams, but in this case you're dealing with a problem which is generally tougher to solve, or solutions which are more difficult to implement than those involving creativity and problem-solving. There are ways to ease this process, the most common being the adoption of some form of higher power, God or spiritual anchor as a means of reducing the intensity of the problem.



When it's a last resort, results become doubly elusive



Most people choose dream induction for personal problem-solving only when the problem has become so difficult to deal with that no other means of solving it appear workable. The subject is usually in so much distress that an element of desperation enters into the process, and this desperation makes the process all that much more difficult. Having a belief in some sort of spiritual power doesn't make the task any easier, but it can go a long way toward easing the desperation and allowing the subconscious to do its thing, because what we often find is that our subconscious is more in touch with the power we ordinarily call God or universal intelligence than we are in our conscious minds.

If this is true, as it appears to be for a great many people, expressing faith in God or a

universal intelligence is very much like expressing faith in your own subconscious. That kind of faith can only translate into better results from your efforts, as we've already seen. I quote a passage from the first edition of this book:

“Before you begin inducing specific dreams, you must realize that the dreaming mind is a beast of lower evolution. It doesn't always do what it's told, and it forgets things if and when it suits itself. It can never be trusted to any great degree, but from time to time it might surprise you. And it takes a great deal of time, energy and patience to train.”



The evolution of the subconscious



I could almost choke on those words. I no longer believe that the subconscious is a less evolved being. Instead I see it as an equally developed being which lives in a different dimension from our everyday existence. And the rest of the passage makes the subconscious look like an undisciplined child who has not earned faith. This is brutality! I now believe the sensible, balanced way to approach the subconscious is as a twin to ourselves, deserving of the same respect, dignity and rights as you enjoy and expect in our waking lives.

What this means in terms of using dreams to solve personal problems is that to be truly consistent and honorable, to achieve permanent results you can live with, desperation and healing are incompatible. Once the desperation leaves, it's all too easy to drift back into the old ways, and all too easy to believe that they work. For this reason, I suggest that you look upon dream induction for dealing with personal problems as a means of doing what you are already capable of doing but which is difficult or impossible to do in your waking life.

For example, if you want to quit eating junk food but live in a situation which makes this difficult to impossible, your dreaming mind is not likely to present you with an earth-shattering solution such as empowering you with the ability to live without food. More likely it will propose a solution you could probably find just as easily while awake...if you had the time, clarity of mind and support. You could have a dream of working at a different job or living in a different location where you're surrounded by more natural food choices. This probably occurred to you in waking life, but seemed impossible because of the loss of income and convenience involved. Your subconscious may be dealing with factors you cannot fully comprehend.



The difference between conscious and unconscious truth



You may indeed be much happier in a lower-paying position near farmers' markets and clean air, but you may be blocked from accepting this "sacrifice" (it's really just a trade-off) because of prejudices and beliefs you have developed regarding money and responsibility. Your spouse and children may be happier in a smaller, cleaner community even with the loss of financial security. The challenge becomes accepting that this is as logical as it is illogical, that there is a deeper truth than the one you see, and the idea you got with your conscious mind has been confirmed by your subconscious. All you need to do is act on it, which is easier said than done unless you have managed to clear this old business and create an environment where you can weigh these "hidden" factors properly and make a wise choose, as opposed to an intelligent one.

Clearing old business and opening channels of communication is discussed in much more detail in the chapter on dream consciousness, Chapter 10, and I won't deal more with it

here. The principles, plans, approaches and techniques mentioned there will be just as useful when used in dream induction as they are for lucid dreaming.



A cybernetic method of dream induction



This technique for inducing dreams of any type has been refined from techniques described by a number of experts in this area. Feel free to adapt this to your personal needs, using whatever tricks and modifications fit you. The easier you can make it on yourself, the more likely you will be successful.

This is a very long topic. You may wish to print it for offline reading.



Step 1: Develop a clear, concise picture of what you wish to accomplish in dream induction. You can do this in writing or not, depending on your personal preference. You need to know the type of dream you want to induce (e.g. a problem-solving dream relating to a career move or a fantasy dream in which you fly) and what you hope to accomplish from the dream. It could simply be the satisfaction of knowing you've succeeded at inducing a specific dream, or it could be much more complex, involving a plan of action you want to define after the dream has been achieved and the outcome you'd like from that plan of action.



Step 2: Outline how you would prefer the dream to occur. This can be viewed as a form of prayer or meditation, as a request of the subconscious, or as a means of training the subconscious depending on your point of view. In the beginning, it's usually best to set few restrictions on your dreams. For example, if you wish to have a flying dream, you might limit your outline to wanting a dream in which you fly under your own power. If you've already done that, you might wish to have that flight accompanied by a feeling of exhilaration and freedom, or be able to use the flight to escape harm or fly to a specific destination. I like what sales trainer Tom Hopkins has to say about objectives in this regard: "It should be better than your best, but believable." This means that if you've never induced a dream before, simply having the dream with Saturn in it will probably be enough to start. If you're an accomplished dream inducer, you may wish to make your dream objective much more specific.



Step 3: Cultivate a sense of faith that the dream will happen, that you can achieve it. Remember the nature of the subconscious mind and its tendency to keep hidden from us those things in which we do not believe. You can cultivate this belief using subliminal techniques, by reading books on dreaming which describe the induced dream successes of others, by rereading this book, anything which opens you up to the possibility. This type of programming is best achieved passively; the more you resist it, the more difficult it will be to achieve what you want. Unfortunately, the less experience you have in seeing "impossibilities" such as dream induction realized in your life, the more difficult it will be to passively accept the idea. One of the best ways to increase your receptivity to the dream you seek is to express that desire through creative efforts such as sculpture, dance, painting, poetry, a short story, or some other form of creative expression which feels comfortable to you.



Step 4: Wait. Once you've done all the work you feel is necessary to make the dream happen for you, either cut back your effort or stop it completely, go about your life, and leave it alone. Eventually the dream will come. It might take time, remembering that on average it took five weeks for laboratory subjects to induce dreams, but it will come eventually. Some people have a tendency to quit too early or quit just before the finishing line, and in these people the best way to approach this problem is to apply "better than your best, but believable" to your

efforts at inducing the dream. As soon as the desire to quit kicks in, add a little more effort, but not necessarily to the point of exhaustion. A few people only seem to achieve success when they do reach the point of exhaustion, and you'll have to decide whether it's worth the effort if this is your particular pattern.

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? **Step 5:** Eventually the dream will occur, because your subconscious mind cannot digest all this effort without reflecting it back to you in a dream. Sadly, there is always the possibility that poor dream recall may result in your having the desired dream, waking up in the middle of the night and patting yourself on the back, falling asleep again and forgetting the whole thing by morning. I have no doubt that this can and does happen. I know it has happened to me because I often have spontaneous memories of dreams I had months or even years ago which I didn't note or remember at the time.

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? **Step 6:** Once the dream occurs, honor it by recording it in a diary, reflecting it in your creative efforts or following through on any suggestions or ideas it may have given you for your waking life. This helps keep the channels open and should make future attempts at dream induction more successful and beneficial. It's worth noting here that from time to time you may follow through on an idea from an induced dream and feel as though the results were horribly disappointing or even harmful. If this should occur, stop your dreamwork immediately and seek professional help. You may have deeply buried self-destructive programming with which you've been coping up until now, and your attempts to get closer to your subconscious might release this poison into your life with disastrous consequences if it's not understood and dealt with.

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? **Step 7:** If at first you don't succeed, *don't* try again! Step backward instead. Dream induction is heady stuff, a high adventure for a lot of people. It may be a shock to your system to try this early on in a dream enhancement program. It may be all you can do at this time to improve your dream recall or the vividness of your dreams. If this is true, dream induction might be putting the cart before the horse.

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Understanding your dreams



This is a purposely short chapter, considering the amount of space that could have been devoted to this subject. Rather than dealing with specifics, this chapter is designed to offer an introduction to the dynamics of dream symbolism so that you can better determine your own personal symbology and arrive at your own unique interpretations.

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Making sense of the inscrutable

The challenge of meaning

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;info_ico.bmp}How do you measure a sunset? Or a child's laugh? Or love? We simply don't have the tools to do it. Yet this is precisely the problem we face when attempting to come to grips with the meanings of dreams. We always run up against the wall of our own logic.

According to some schools of thought, dreams don't make sense, period, and any attempt to apply principles to them with the object of increasing our understanding is bound to fail. Dreams are simply bioelectric phenomena based on some reorganization task undertaken by the sleeping mind. This explanation seems to satisfy a large number of people, and it may be pointless to try to argue with them because we simply can't prove otherwise.

But there are other schools of thought which attach a high degree of importance to dreams and dream life. Many psychologists and psychiatrists view dreams as at least as important as our waking life, and as a means of getting to core issues as "the royal road to the subconscious mind".



Mystical sects across the globe use dreams and dreaming as a means of attaining contact with the spirit of God or the source of universal intelligence, or simply of reunifying themselves with nature. Dream life is seen as a completely separate dimension to waking, and every bit as real, by aboriginal tribes around the world. The shaman who learns to walk with a foot in both worlds is seen not as a madman to be silenced but as a master to be heard.



Completely subjective phenomenon

Drama for its own sake



It may be that we are indeed dealing with a different world in our dreams. Our waking life seems solid to the touch, as permanent as things get in our universe, secure, stable, predictable...within limits, of course. But as we come to better understand our world, we find things aren't as predictable as we'd like. We have particles which can be either matter or energy, crop circles and mass hallucinations that could be figments of our imagination or evidence of a deeper mystery. We can predict the weather, but not beyond a certain point where chaos enters into the picture and screws up our plans.

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;mathrvrs.bmp} At these edges where measurable reality and unutterable chaos mix, mingle and even have dinner at the same restaurants, things seem to take on a distinctly dreamlike quality. This leads many to believe that our entire world has been looking at the world through only one eye, the eye which measures. So we dream at night to give sight to this other eye, the eye which experiences and does not measure, the eye which sees two plus two not as four, but as tomato soup served in a glass bicycle tire.

Regardless of how you interpret the meaning of dreams as a whole, dreaming is an entirely subjective phenomenon. With rare exceptions, we dream entirely alone. Our dream experiences are private and cannot truly be shared with others even if we wanted to share them. This seems to indicate that what we face in dreams is something which cannot be slotted or pigeonholed to nearly the extent we'd like. Fixed systems for interpreting dreams always fail, because they always fall short of accounting for the individuality of the dreamer.



Conflict and resolution

Shared chaos

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;drama.bmp} I personally believe that dreams are simply a reflection of our waking conflicts, both positive and negative, and all images are representations of aspects of those conflicts. Many of our conflicts are shared. Carl Jung, the father of modern dream interpretation, found a series of archetypes, central symbols which seemed to be common to all people around the world. He discovered that these symbols wear different clothes but essentially have the same meaning in the life of an African herdsman or a Japanese accountant. Jung even attempted to catalog these symbols. He also discovered that dream symbols can be racial. Negroes and caucasians seem to have recurring dream symbols not found in the dreams of the other race until the races begin to mix and mingle. Even families have unique symbols.

Confusion arises when these symbols take on dual meanings. A cat in a dream may have a certain meaning in a peaceful dream but an entirely different meaning in an anxiety dream. Caucasians and Negroes might attach different meanings to the same dream colors to correspond to the differences in the way they perceive each others' skin tones. Even familial symbols can have different meanings between children of different sexes.



Clearly this is a very tricky area, one we're a long way from understanding at any depth. This chapter could have been the longest in the book, but because of the inherent difficulties in discussing dream interpretation, it seems presumptuous to attempt to cover more than the basics of this "soft" science.



Symbols are personal

The death of common meaning



.In my opinion, most westerners have grown so distant from their dreams and the mystical aspects of life which dreams represent that it's foolish to even attempt to attach specific meanings to dream symbols based on catalogues and anthropological studies. Books just won't work for most people, and even if they are correct, the meanings they offer for dream symbols may not match the dreamer's own impressions. And there are few things more disheartening than being disconnected from your own dreams.

This is why I believe it's important for anyone interested in exploring their dreams to develop their own personal dream symbology. The symbols themselves may even be meaningless in the long run. Dream researcher Stephen LaBerge reports that he has used dreams to resolve internal conflicts without knowing what the dream conflicts represented in his waking life. This doesn't appear to be denial, because he also reports the same increased feeling of strength and confidence which stems from resolving conflicts in waking life.

Approaching dreams from the standpoint of developing your own personal symbology isn't necessarily the hard way of learning dream interpretation. It all depends on your orientation and attitude. It denies you the ease of a predetermined set of rules and interpretations, but it offers you the freedom of choosing your own.

What others would impose on your reality



Many sets of dream symbols are created by authors who, intentionally or not, load their interpretations with judgments which may not allow the user dignity or self-respect. A self-selected set of meanings permits you to set your own pace and assign superficial meanings to symbols which may be too painful or confusing to handle in a larger sense. It might seem that a personal set of dream images is narcissistic or even childish, and this might be true for some people, but dreams are a world of mystery and wonder, and there's nothing wrong with approaching them from a child's point of view. As full of wonder as they may be, children are also narcissistic and immature. Dreams are an area of our lives where we can allow ourselves this luxury without fear of judgment.



! Symbols adapt to the dreamer

The mind map is flexible



There is also a curious phenomenon involving dream symbology which lends a great deal of credibility to the idea of choosing your own symbology. It seems that our dreams reflect the symbology we accept in waking life. Clients of Freudian psychiatrists tend to have dreams which present Freudian symbology. Clients of Jungian psychiatrists tend to dream in Jungian symbols. Christian mystics tend to dream in terms of Christian symbology. The mind map is flexible. It seems our subconscious will rise to meet us at whatever level we make room for it and in whatever language we ask it to communicate.

Then again, a lot of people crave guidance and support. If a book of dream symbols provides a ready-made recipe book for understanding your dreams, it's perfectly valid. But I would caution anyone seeking to interpret their dreams from a book to read the book, or at least browse every page, before doing so. This greases the wheels for you by letting your subconscious in on the rules you want to use to communicate. It is patently unfair to begin recording your dreams and then apply predetermined meanings to them based on information which may have been misinterpreted by the original author. It is just as unfair to apply meanings you've oily developed recently to a dream you had several months ago.

Finding a path in the wilderness

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;orient.bmp} One of the biggest keys to creating your own symbology is to attach meanings to symbols as they appear and keep the meanings consistent until they clearly don't fit any more. Eventually it seems we all outgrow our symbolic dream maps and need to redefine or recreate our symbology, but I believe this is best done at a time we choose for ourselves rather than when others decide we need to make the change. Veteran dream diarists continually update their personal catalog of symbols to reflect the changes in their internal and external worlds.



Sense or nonsense

The rule of law is anarchy



One common mistake I believe is made by many people who undertake a personal dream analysis is applying hard and fast rules to the study of their own dreams, or establishing a set of rules which is unworkable and unrealistic. If the illogical reality of dreams is as important to us as so many people seem to think it is, then we have to see this illogic as part of us and accept it on its own terms rather than force it to conform to our rules.

Most of us have effective filters to keep us from experiencing more distress than we can deal with. The subconscious will not usually bombard us with strangeness if we simply let it be what it is...unless -- and this is a big unless -- we've been struggling for a good part of our lives to hold our subconscious mind in check. If we've been doing this and suddenly do an about-face, allowing the subconscious to express itself as it wishes, we'll often discover that dream material doesn't stop at dreams. Instead it leaks out into our waking consciousness as well. Dream situations may have parallels in our everyday life which we never expected. We may find ourselves in out-of-control, dreamlike circumstances which seem to have no connection with the reality we have been used to experiencing.



There seems to be no way to deal with this explosion of subconscious material except to let it ride itself out and try to keep ourselves as free from harm as we can, but it can be difficult and often frightening to deal with. This sort of "psychic emergency" is not uncommon with people who begin a spiritual or mystical pursuit after many years of strict worldly discipline or a lifetime of suppressed dream memory or imagination.

Riding the waves of our own intensity



In most cases, accepting the illogic of the subconscious on its own terms does not involve this violent an outpouring. It usually means little more than a burst of imaginative or creative energy which often accompanies a spurt of interest in dreams, and enhanced dream recall and the perception of a more intense dream life. Very often this intensity "burns itself out". The subconscious may simply want to present some material to you and not much more.

If the themes or images recur it is often a request for waking action, but if your waking life has been relatively consistent and your dream themes and images keep changing, it may just be your subconscious playing catch-up. It may be an excellent time to look at your dreams in a non-judgmental way and attempt to determine through your feelings and first impressions what meanings your subconscious wants you to extract from your dreams.



Meanings don't always have verbal equivalents either. Some people will paint or sing their dream meanings and symbols. Verbal communication isn't nearly as intense as emotional connection and visual, physical or musical expression. Many people find early in their dreamwork that they have dream images which can't be expressed in ordinary terms, which makes perfect sense (or perfect non-sense) because dreams are non-ordinary reality.



It's okay to overlook the obvious

Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar



Sometimes we can go in the opposite direction, allowing our subconscious so much freedom to express itself that we overlook the obvious. I've experienced this on many occasions. Cars and driving have been recurring themes for me throughout my adult life, and after a period of intense study into sleep and dreaming eight years ago I found myself having recurrences of driving dreams I hadn't had since my late teens. In these dreams I was a passenger in a vehicle which had no driver. I would often face strange perils and unusual road hazards.

Needless to say, it was a pretty hairy ride. As I learned more about dreaming the driving dreams came back, except this time I was driving the vehicle. At first I was drunk behind the wheel. Later I gained sobriety but had difficulty controlling the vehicle. There were also many unusual mechanical failures and unusual hazards, particularly a set of brakes which didn't even work at low speeds. These dreams have changed again since then. And for the longest time I didn't grasp what the dreams meant. I looked at the feelings and the situations but never at the whole picture.

Driving lessons



Any armchair psychologist can easily see that the car represents my life, my safety and security, and the driver (or lack thereof) represents the person or power in control of that safety. Once that distinction is made, the dreams become clear to me and I can see what was happening in my life at the time by looking at who was driving the vehicle and how smooth the ride had been.

What I now realize is that if I had realized early on that the "driverless" drives represented a life completely without direction and control, I might have been prompted to make decisions I would regret later. My inability to grasp the meaning of these dreams may have protected me from my own impulsiveness, but even as I wrote this I made a slip and typed "indecisiveness" instead. Interesting. I know that had I believed that ten years ago I would have fought like a maniac to prove my decisiveness and possibly harmed myself in the process.

The message I'm trying to get across is that anywhere you seem blocked in your understanding of your dreams, you are probably not yet ready for the awareness you seek. Something in your waking reality or a judgment you've made on yourself or your world is probably holding you back from understanding, and the worst thing we can do at this point is insist on answers or force our interpretations to fit the images presented. It sometimes takes years for recurring images and themes to make sense, but that doesn't mean we can't make gains in our understanding in the meantime.

A barometer of invisible progress



Something else to note is that this sequence of driving dreams and the changes within them show progress in my life, progress I often have difficulty seeing reflected around me. A dream diary can be just as effective as a regular daily journal for pointing out the way our lives progress and change. Note also that while this example was general in the extreme, virtually every dream theme and symbol has a parallel with our waking lives, perhaps reflecting the data

shuffling process going on in the brain. Dream journaling can be a second chance to take note of circumstances and opportunities we may have overlooked in our waking lives.



Sometimes meaning isn't enough

Begging for attention



The subconscious mind can be a nag at times. We can find ourselves confronted with tricky, painful or confusing images which seem to change in shape, perhaps even in theme, but leave us with a specific feeling we can't shake. The meaning of these symbols or feelings might be painfully clear to us, but very often it isn't enough just to know what something means. It's fine to know that you smoke cigarettes to cover up past pain, but unless you do something about this knowledge, all you have is awareness and no real experience. By presenting a recurring image, theme or feeling, the subconscious may be asking us to do something in our waking life. Dreams are very often a cry for help from a part of us which can't find a suitable voice in the everyday world.

Lucid dreaming can be used as a tool for resolving problems such as these. Very often making a change in your dream life will prompt you to make a corresponding change in your waking life almost seamlessly, without apparent pain or effort. You can make these changes by using the dream induction techniques described in a later chapter or problem-solving techniques described in the previous chapter. Sometimes it's a lot safer to act out the requested action in a dream than it is to risk a major conflict with the law or cultural mores, and it is very often just as effective to "dream" your changes into being as it is to make them happen in waking life.



Fear

The only thing we have to fear is...



According to most of the experts in the area of personal growth, there is only one core conflict between our dreams and our waking life which needs to be solved, and that conflict is fear. It could be fear of being who we really are, even in as safe a place as our dreams, because of the possible pain it could cause. It could be fear of having an old, forgotten injury happen to us again.

But whatever the fear may be, it is to be accepted and respected. It is there for a purpose, and fear in all animals is a method of protecting us from harm. Understanding and experience are the two antidotes to fear available to humans, and I tend to believe that we need an adequate amount of both to properly deal with conflicts at any level in any area of our lives.



Spiritual masters say that in the final analysis, nothing really matters. None of our decisions really makes a difference, and that things will work out as they should regardless of what we do. But that isn't enough for most people. It sounds like a license to fight dragons with a rolled-up newspaper. It's our choice what we do and how we choose to participate in life, and right or wrong (and if the masters are indeed correct then it couldn't be wrong) I believe in gentleness and self-respect, in taking manageable risks backed up with experience and support.

Insanity: a most difficult thing to risk



These are risks we can live with regardless of the pain they bring, because we know they were our choices. When it comes to dealing with deep, sensitive material or heeding a call from your subconscious which appears to be dangerous or downright crazy, I believe it's perfectly acceptable to move slowly, or not at all if we choose to. We all take responsibility for our own actions and inactions when listening to voices from our dreams, and as long as we understand this, no decision needs to be distressing to us. In fact, making a distressing decision can often be like punching our subconscious. It may be a long time before it trusts us enough to speak to us again.



In summary

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;bookrow.bmp} There's not a lot to summarize from this chapter, actually. If you are interested in learning more about dream interpretation, you'll find a dozen books on the subject at any good bookstore or library, and as I said previously this is one "soft" subject where I do not feel comfortable offering more than basics and my own experience.

But this much I *will* say. The way we think of reality and view our world is changing. Dream-like reality and two-plus-two reality are growing ever more difficult to distinguish. We may see a day in the not-too-distant future when the ability to live and think comfortably in both realities becomes as important as computer literacy is today. Every step we take toward understanding our dreams, our subconscious, and the unexplainable phenomena of our waking reality helps prepare us and teach us for that day, and it is one of the most enriching educations we can get.



Dream consciousness



This is going to be the jumping-off spot for many people, the point at which a lot of readers will stop seeing this as a factual guide to sleep and dreaming and start seeing it as occult nonsense. If you find your credibility stretched beyond its limits with the concepts of lucid dreaming and out-of-body experience, this part of the book can be ignored. Or, if you happen to have a logical base for your beliefs in the non-existence of these phenomena, this chapter could provide you with proof that Steve's "not all there" himself, and offer you clues to where I may have misled you earlier in the book.

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Lucid dreaming

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The jumping-off point

Author's disclaimer

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;stats.bmp}I do my best to present logical, reasoned arguments based on experience and research in which I have faith, and to make clear where my experience and knowledge stops. But I am not always successful in my attempts. A lot of unintentional manipulation, skewing of truth and omission of important information occurs in virtually every book, and it is precisely these kinds of mistakes that result in people running into problems with the material. It is not my desire that anyone should have problems with this stuff; in fact, if anything my goal is to see that people benefit. But I am aware that I am limited in my abilities.

Are you cut out for this?

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;illusion.bmp} Shortly before presstime I came across something which you can use as a litmus test. This picture is a classic optical illusion. Depending on how you look at it, you'll see one of two faces (some even say there are three): an ugly-looking woman leering at you, or a pretty woman looking away from you. Gaze at the picture until you can see the two images. Once you see them, try to shift your view so that you can see either one or the other at will.

Now here's where it gets interesting. If life hasn't numbed you too much, you should notice that there's a moment between when you notice the first image and when you notice the second when your sense of yourself and your surroundings is different, when you open up for a moment, haven't yet recognized the new image but are ready to do so.

Imagine prolonging that feeling for several seconds, or several minutes at a time, and you have a picture of how the lucid state feels.

If this notion disturbs you, stay away!



If this material disturbs you in a repulsive way, if this description of the experience scares or disturbs you, **stay the hell away from it!** There may be more going on than you or I know about, and the last thing I want to do is raise specters for any reader before the reader is ready to deal with them. That's not just irresponsible, it's cruel. So feel free to read this with a skeptic's eye and make notes of any inconsistencies you may spot in the material. They may be your key to dealing with any other mistakes I may have made in this book and turning it from a potentially damaging brush with knowledge (or, and I don't completely discount this, a massive hallucination on my part) into a misguided resource which still contains some useful information for you.



In fact, I strongly suggest you do this with every self-help, personal growth and psychology book you read. I believe it's the only viable way to stay on track with your own life at your own pace and protect yourself from being controlled or manipulated by an author or teacher. An open mind is as much an empty trash bin as it is an empty jewel box, and often we don't know the difference between the two.



! Dream consciousness: a tricky reality

Where fact is separated from fiction

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;holmes.bmp} Does dream consciousness really exist, or is it a figment of an overworked imagination? Unfortunately, this is something that needs to be taken on faith by those of us who insist upon scientific proof and the double-blind study to define our universe. Stephen LaBerge, the Stanford researcher who has probably done more to advance our knowledge of lucid dreaming than anyone in the scientific community, has amassed an enormous amount of research which suggests that lucid dreaming isn't merely a reality, but an achievable skill for almost everyone.

Robert Monroe, founder of the Monroe Institute where the study of life after death and astral travel is treated as a serious subject of scientific research, says the same about out-of-body experience (OOBE). Whether they exist or not, the fact is that millions of people claim to have experienced one or the other, and while I can't quote percentages or figures, vast numbers of people have found these to be rewarding, enlightening experiences which have deepened their appreciation and understanding of life.



For many people, the question of whether OOBE and lucid dreaming are real or not doesn't matter. I personally believe we'll have tools to measure and define both in the years to come, but that won't be enough for those who insist that the tools themselves are suspect. There is the possibility that we're dealing with an entirely different phenomenon altogether. It could be that conscious dreaming is an illusion created by a strange neurological reaction that happens as we awaken from sleep, somehow distorting our ability to distinguish between the choices we make while awake and those we only think we make when we're asleep.

Not merely possible, but highly desirable

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;bookmark.bmp} Personally, I believe it is not only possible, but for many people highly desirable to develop the ability to make conscious choices within our dreams. This whole chapter is based on my belief in this possibility, so I suggest that if you cannot suspend disbelief for the time it takes to read this, you may wish to consider this book finished for you.

This chapter is divided into two sections, lucid dreaming and out-of-body experience. My personal experience and research suggests that lucid dreaming is a lower level discipline to OOBE, just as improved dream recall seems to be a lower level discipline to dream induction. For this reason I have chosen to focus on lucid dreaming first. I have also devoted considerably more space to this topic than I have to OOBE, primarily because I have not knowingly experienced OOBE.



Some personal background



It's only right that when an author wishes to shed light on a controversial subject that their own experience becomes part of that quest, and part of the evidence to support their beliefs. Here's a little background on my own experience with lucid dreaming.



[The gift of innocence](#)



[Newfound skills and new adventures](#)



[Freedom and comfort: the keys to creativity](#)



[Moving beyond the adventure](#)



[Hitting the wall and losing the "gift"](#)

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The gift of innocence

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;knotred.bmp}I remember having dreams as a child of six or seven in which I knew I was dreaming. I'd often have these awarenesses in nightmares and awaken myself by willing it, a difficult task on many occasions. This is a common experience, and many discover their first experiences of dream consciousness occur in nightmares. Later I began to have dreams in which I could make certain choices about what I wanted to do, and those choices sometimes, but not always, resulted in the appearance in my dreams of what I desired.

I was raised in a mentally rigid family and discovered that this awareness and ability to manipulate the contents of my own dreams was not tolerated by my parents, who had had no such experiences. I'd take my dreams to the breakfast table and be told in no uncertain terms that the experiences I'd had were figments of my imagination. Even at age 33 my parents look upon me as either a manipulative liar or someone who lacks the ability to distinguish truth from fiction.

Needless to say, this didn't do a lot for my confidence and didn't provide me with a lot of motivation for exploring my dreams in any more depth. When I left home in my teens, I discovered a renewed fascination with mysticism, and one book in particular had a profound effect on my dream life.



That book was "Creative Dreaming" by Patricia Garfield. Of all the mystical/occult/psychology books I had read to that point, hers was the first which touched on my own experience. She described how she had learned to enhance her dream life through lucid dreaming, and I cherished this book for many years. Every time I recalled reading it or picked it up for a reread, I found my dream life enhanced and over the years I developed tools and abilities of my own.



Newfound skills and new adventures

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;sunglas.bmp}Nine years ago, the realization of a waking dream, my first actual paid position as a musician in a rock and roll band, helped grease the wheels for me to enter into another level of dream proficiency. I took to lucid dreaming with a vengeance and began having lucid dreams regularly, a pattern which continued for several years.

It was tough going at first, because lucidity had always been a spontaneous and unpredictable experience for me. This time I was going about it deliberately. I used a number of cybernetic techniques to enhance my dream life, particularly to assist me in recognizing when I was conscious in my dreams so I would have the right of choice. Many of Garfield's ideas helped. It took only a few days after deciding I wanted to increase my ability in this area for me to achieve consciousness.

Once I had consciousness I had a lot of difficulty with the content of my dreams; there always seemed to be something attempting to pull me out of that consciousness, frighten me, or otherwise jar me back into "normal" unconscious dreaming. For the first while I had to settle for only a few seconds of consciousness before I felt my "dream body" disintegrating into what seemed like bubbles or scattered fragments of energy and I awoke or went back to an unconscious dream.



But oh, those few seconds! They were a joy like I had seldom experienced. I was a different person in those moments, usually free of my cigarettes, my hunger, my physical defects. Some describe dream consciousness as an ecstatic experience, but it seemed more to me like serene awareness.



Freedom and comfort: the keys to creativity



I was aided in my efforts by the extra time I had during the day to devote to my dream life. I kept a dream diary and spent a lot of time contemplating and thinking about my adventures. This focus assisted me in increasing my lucid dreaming ability, and in a matter of weeks I was able to maintain consciousness in my dreams for what seemed like several minutes, not just a few seconds.

And I could do just about anything I bloody well pleased. I lost my virginity in a dream...to the most beautiful black woman I had ever laid eyes upon. I died in dreams and came back to life. I flew, explored labyrinths, spoke with people in my dreams who represented various parts of me, and even made some tentative steps toward OOB near the end of this particular period. I found in lucid dreaming an adventure which my waking life seemed to be denying me, and while I am not sure I achieved any long-term benefits from these adventures they remain cherished memories with me, and experiences I would be loathe to trade for anything worldly.



Moving beyond the adventure



These adventures evolved even more as my dream life became more important to me. I eventually learned to guide myself directly into a lucid dream rather than have to wait until I noticed myself becoming conscious. I'll describe the technique I used a little later. Eventually the adventure wore off somewhat, but I believe it had just as much to do with the fact that I had approached the limits of my abilities. At that point I began to use lucid dreams to resolve conflicts in my life. I would often confront ugly, stressful or otherwise undesirable situations in my dreams, and by turning the tides and accepting these situations rather than fighting them, I found that I often achieved a sense of resolve with these images that translated into an increased feeling of well-being and self-assurance in my waking life.



Hitting the wall and losing the “gift”

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;pow.bmp}The peace I had in my waking life which led to my ability to experience lucid dreams was eventually shattered, not by external forces but by the force of my own desire. I realized I had an ability no one I knew possessed, and I wanted it all. I decided that I wanted to learn complete dream mastery, to become like the Tibetan dream yogis who strive not just for dream consciousness, but for complete consciousness of every moment of their lives, including dreams and deepest sleep.

It was all more than I was able to handle, and in short order both my ability to achieve dream consciousness and my interest in lucid dreams slid away, because this conflict had also seeped its way into my waking life. I quit the band, expecting to find a better position elsewhere, and I never did get another paying job as a musician. That feeling of freedom and the sense of having room to explore this aspect of my life never returned.

I lost the opportunity for growth and adventure provided by my dreams, but it is not gone forever. I know that much. From time to time my lucid dreaming skills return to me, and with a little work both on programming myself to become conscious in my dreams and on creating a peaceful atmosphere in my waking life, I find I am able to restore that ability.





LaBerge and his associates discovered that time in lucid dreams seems to pass just as we would expect it to pass in our waking lives, without the sense of the dream lasting several hours, days or even years as often occurs in normal dreams.

Reasons for lucid dreaming

Why bother? It's just a dream, after all...

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;info_ico.bmp}The reasons and motivations behind interest in lucid dreaming are the same as those behind dream induction, and probably the same as those behind enhancing your dream recall. They can include the need for adventure which waking life doesn't seem to permit, living out fantasies, filling needs and desires which your physical reality does not permit you to fulfill, self-improvement, enhanced consciousness both in waking life and in your dreams, self-discovery, a way to achieve a drug-free high, the list goes on and is just as personal as the person who does the dreaming.

There appears to be little valid reason for attaching judgments to the needs or desires one wishes to fulfill through these dreams. I have studied spiritual and mystical practices for many years and have yet to see where fulfilling one's desires in this way is at all detrimental to the person. There appears to be a self-correcting mechanism in lucid dreaming whereby once you've "filled your cup", so to speak, on a certain experience, there is a natural desire to seek something deeper.

Organized religion and cult practice usually requires that we accept self-sacrifice, pain and service as a part of life, but everything I've been able to discover about paths to truth and freedom points to a need to honor one's drives and needs as much as possible before moving on to the next level of challenge. Organized religion and cult practice tends to present the challenge before an earlier challenge has been mastered.

Exciting possibilities



Lucid dreaming could be a superb tool for dealing with a great number of societal problems. There is no reason why a recovering alcoholic plagued with constant cravings couldn't be taught to satisfy those cravings by dreaming of being drunk. Violent criminals could learn to get their aggressions out in their dreams, which would make even our prisons safer.

The problem is the emergence of new beliefs and behaviors which seem to accompany these changes. Alcoholic who permit or encourage themselves to have all the drunk dreams they want are likely to discover other aspects of their personality emerging as this need gets satisfied, and in most cases these emerging aspects will put them in direct conflict with the support systems which kept them from drinking in their waking lives. It seems that acknowledging and encouraging lucid dreaming as a means of self-expression requires that we have the same tolerance and understanding toward that self-expression in waking life.



Then again, there are some schools of thought which claim that a crime against an image in one's own mind is just as serious and harmful as a crime against a real person. It's a matter for

the individual to decide, and in a different world the challenge might be how we choose to deal with individual self-expression.



A brief modern history of lucid dreaming

From Freud to LaBerge



“Lucid” is, as I described it in an earlier chapter, just another word for “clear” or “transparent”. When lucid is used to describe consciousness it is usually interpreted as meaning aware or responsible. The possibilities contained within lucid dreaming have been known to mystics, shamans and even whole cultures for thousands of years, but the phenomenon has only come under serious scientific scrutiny within the last century or two.

Even Sigmund Freud, one of the most pragmatic and rigid thinkers of the last century, admitted to believing in the possibility of becoming conscious and in control of one’s own dreams. He even attempted to obtain the one book available on the subject at that time but never did manage to acquire it. One wonders what might have happened to the field of psychiatry had Freud been able to study and practice this highly unscientific game. The gap between Freud’s logical maps of consciousness and Jung’s less structured approach might have been narrowed considerably, and we might be much closer today to a more unified general view of human consciousness.

Margaret Mead and the Senoi



Margaret Mead, the best-known anthropologist of this century, presented western civilization some of the most valuable material ever offered on the subject through her studies of the Senoi, a primitive tribal culture in the South Pacific. Until western society and conflicts with rival cultures disturbed their peaceful existence, the Senoi were a remarkably harmonious society in which crime was said to be low and murder non-existent, and many authors have attributed that harmony at least in part to their embrace of dream life as just as real and important as waking life.

Mead’s research into the Senoi provided a great deal of raw material for Garfield’s 1974 release, “Creative Dreaming”. This groundbreaking work in the field of dream enhancement and dream consciousness wasn’t an overwhelming success when released, but within five years it became a highly sought-after title as the new age resurgence began. Carlos Castaneda’s books offered clues into the possibilities inherent in dreams and dreaming, but Garfield’s book appears to have been the first to present the concept, complete with a mountain of personal experience and techniques for achieving dream consciousness to the general public.

Stephen LaBerge: the father of modern lucidity research

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;lab.bmp} More than a decade passed before Stephen LaBerge finally broke the field wide open with his acclaimed bestseller “Lucid Dreaming”, a book which remains the definitive layman’s guide to the subject and recommended reading for anyone with more than a passing interest in dream consciousness. In this book, LaBerge presented the general public with hard research based on controlled studies which indicated for perhaps the first time ever that lucid dreaming was a measurable reality, albeit measurable only by controversial techniques.

LaBerge showed that lucid dreamers could signal to laboratory observers the precise moment when they achieved consciousness in their dreams by shifting their eyes in a rhythmic fashion, thus demonstrating the possibility to communicate dream experiences to the outside world while they are actually happening. His work continues even at this writing in the ongoing "Lucidity Project" which is attempting to plumb the depths of what is possible with dream consciousness. To him more than any other researcher we owe the scientific respectability now enjoyed by the concept of lucid dreaming. And despite the mountains of evidence and research which went into "Lucid Dreaming", it is still commonly found in the occult sections of bookstores rather than in psychology.





Some of the findings presented in regard to the Senoi, in particular the lack of cultural conflict and disharmony, have been challenged in rather convincing fashion by later researchers. Whether or not the Senoi truly were a peaceful, utopian community is less important here than the contribution made to our knowledge of dreaming and lucid dreaming in particular by the study of their culture.

Distinguishing features of lucid dreams



Lucid dreams are distinguished from normal dreams not by the similarity of the dream to reality, but by the perspective of the dreamer, although an argument could be made that dreams which are very close to our waking reality could also be considered “lucid” by some schools of thought. The reality of lucid dreams, if you can call it that, stems from the dreamer’s awareness of the unreality of the dream itself, and of their conscious presence in the midst of that unreality.



Lucid states



Gaps in logic as a key to consciousness



An event, not a process



Selective control over one’s environment



The transient nature of printed text



Control over environmental factors



A balanced right/left brain state

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Lucid states



According to LaBerge, lucid dreams occur exclusively in dreaming sleep states, but not necessarily in REM sleep. As demonstrated earlier, dream states can occur in non-REM (NREM) stage 2 sleep or in REM, and some evidence exists that sleep terrors occur in a fifth sleep state which seems to exist somewhere between delta and REM sleep. One study even indicated that lucid dreams occur more frequently in NREM states than in REM. But regardless of where they occur, lucid REM states are reported by subjects as more vivid than NREM lucidity, and the subject seems to have better control over their own actions and the nature of the dream.

Lucid dreams usually occur during the night’s first or last REM period. I have no evidence to back up this claim, but I believe there is a biochemical trigger involved in early-night lucid dreams, possibly involving nor-adrenaline or sensitivity to nor-adrenaline. Sleepers usually have difficulty falling back to sleep after an early-night lucid dream, and lucidity is much easier to achieve in morning REM states.



Gaps in logic as a key to consciousness



The gaps in logic which appear in virtually all dreams appear to have a great deal to do with the achievement of lucidity. It appears that the simple conscious awareness of something which is not possible in our waking lives is enough to trigger lucidity in most subjects, experienced or not. It may be partly cultural in origin, since westerners have experienced dozens of fictional characters asking themselves “Am I dreaming?” when confronted with something beyond their understanding in waking life. We may all be programmed to an extent to respond to this cue in our dreams as well, and the success of certain techniques for inducing lucid dreams seems to point to this.



An event, not a process



Lucidity is not a process, although many people use ritualistic processes to achieve it. Instead, it is a spontaneous occurrence which happens instantaneously and without warning. Lucidity occurs the split-second you realize you are dreaming, and it is always an unmistakable transformation when it is happening. The whole character of the dream changes in a way which is difficult to describe. All that really needs to be said is that when you first gain consciousness in a dream, you know that something important has just occurred.



Selective control over one's environment



Selective control seems to be a standard feature of lucid dreams. Lucid dreamers discover that they do not face problems as they are faced in waking life, where if you feel too sick to go to work but need the money you go anyway. In a lucid dream, work wouldn't be an option if your dream body was ill. You simply wouldn't be able to get out of bed. Selective amnesia is another feature. We've all had the experience of having an idea, name or word on the tip of our tongue and being unable to bring it to consciousness. Depending upon our level of dream control, we may not be able to recall even the simplest details of our daily lives.



The transient nature of printed text



Dream illiteracy is another interesting phenomenon. Beginning lucid dreamers faced with a book, note or newspaper often discover that the writing is completely illegible. More experienced dreamers eventually discover that they develop the ability to read, but the words tend to be nonsensical. Farther along this path, words begin to make sense and even form recognizable phrases and sentences, but eventually it seems that everyone faces the change constant.

Dreams are not static, and writing is a particularly plastic phenomenon. I have had only one lucid dream to my knowledge where I read something, attempted to reread it, and discovered that it had not changed beyond recognition. Writing seems to shift on almost all lucid dreamers, a reflection of both the transience of all dream experience and the shifting nature of consciousness itself.



Control over environmental factors



Marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Denys, a nineteenth-century pioneer of lucid dreaming, discovered that it is difficult or impossible to vary the degree of illumination in a lucid dream setting. I'm not exactly sure I can buy into this difficulty, though. I believe most civilized cultures have a built-in prejudice in regard to light and illumination. Part of it stems from the unworthiness of brilliance which we all learn to an extent from religion, and part of it stems from the way we look at physics. We can't alter the illumination of the sun by willing it, but we can alter the amount of light we perceive by narrowing our iris, a technique which can be taught with biofeedback. If we can teach ourselves to do this, we must surely be able to alter light levels in lucid dreams. It seems to be a matter of openness to the possibility.



A balanced right/left brain state

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;monster2.bmp} Dreaming is believed to be largely a right-brained activity. After all, the illogic of dreams suggests creativity, which is a right-brain function. Actually, it is emotions and free association which are primarily right-brained. True creativity involves both halves of the brain equally, and LaBerge has demonstrated that the two hemispheres do in fact show equal levels of activity in lucid dreams. To demonstrate this equal functioning, LaBerge had laboratory subjects sing and count in their dreams. He discovered that they could do both with equal facility.



Threats to the lucid state

Staying alive



Once we become aware that we're dreaming, we are in a lucid state. This is a transformational state, and it is accompanied by all the manifestations of transformational states achieved through psychotherapy, mystical or religious practices. Nothing really changes, but our awareness of what is around us is transformed and usually intensified. Among the manifestations which may accompany lucidity are fear, excitement, analysis and delight.

It depends on the dreamer what happens next, but in most cases these reactions are sufficient to end the lucidity. The dreamer may revert to an unconscious dreaming state or awaken. LaBerge suggests that any time strong emotions are triggered in a dream, the dreamer's "center" is threatened and lucidity comes to an end, but I tend toward the belief that it only appears as if emotions are the problem. I believe it is much more likely that any uncontrollable state in the dreamer can result in loss of lucidity.

Strong experience of any kind, not necessarily emotional, is likely to threaten lucidity if accompanied by an inability to control our reaction to the experience. If the dreamer is a compulsive eater and is offered or accepted food, it is likely that their reaction to this situation will end lucidity. Someone with compulsive thought patterns will be liable to lose lucidity if an opportunity to analyze an aspect of the dream presents itself.

Lucidity's worst enemy: not fear, but self-consciousness



Interestingly, it may not be the reaction or loss of control itself which ends the lucid state, but the way we look at our reactions instead. Fear is seen as a negative emotion in our culture, not as a mechanism of self-preservation which can be either negative or positive. If we see our fear of the unknown in an undesirable light, it makes sense that we would end our lucid state as a means of protecting ourselves. I have not seen LaBerge's more recent work but it would not surprise me, particularly in light of the findings he made in the area of lucidity as a growth tool, to discover that submitting to these "undesirable" experiences can extend our lucidity.



He suggested a technique for regaining lucidity when it seems to be slipping, and I have found that it works exceptionally well. The interesting thing about this technique is that it requires voluntarily going out of control and trusting that the result will be favorable. Trust in a favorable outcome may be much more important to maintaining lucidity than maintaining emotional control. The idea is to fall backwards and spin, to induce some sort of state of disorientation in yourself, as a means of *keeping* oriented. The reasoning seems to be that it refocuses our consciousness away from our surroundings or our reactions and toward balancing ourselves with our environment.



Is lucidity the same as enlightenment?

Mythological parallels

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;videocam.bmp}There is no question that lucidity has a great deal in common with descriptions of enlightenment or awakening experiences through the ages. Many, perhaps even most lucid dreamers, experience lucid dreams as superior in intensity, detail and presence to waking consciousness. My guess is that the overwhelming majority of those who have this experience are also using conscious techniques for achieving lucidity. The lucid state is one in which colors seem brighter, our actions freer, our bodies unencumbered, our worlds more vivid and detailed, precisely the description of reality given after an enlightenment experience. It is *not* like looking at life on a screen or through a camera lens.

Enlightenment, once achieved, is maintained through rigorous personal discipline and control. Depending on whom you choose to believe, enlightenment could be a permanent state or an ideal to be striven for. Lucidity has the same quality. It can be seen as an ideal or as something to hold onto at any cost. The trick, if you can call it that, is remaining detached enough from what's going on around you to maintain that clear center.

Lucidity also seems to stem either from discipline or spontaneous occurrence. Monks use discipline to achieve enlightenment, thrillseekers use drugs to get a taste of that state, and lucid dreamers use drugs, exercises and disciplines to achieve lucidity. The brain's pleasure centers are also involved in the process, because the same drugs which stimulate the pleasure center most in a given individual also seem to have the most dramatic effects in inducing lucidity for the same individual. This is my own observation, but I believe a detailed survey of lucid dreamers would bear this out.

Through the eyes of a child



Even the progression through various levels of dream mastery appear to mirror stages of spiritual advancement. LaBerge reports that when lucid dreamers first learn that they have the ability, their behavior tends to resemble child's play. They act like thrillseekers, attempting to scope out the limits of their lucidity primarily from a standpoint of pleasure. At some point the dreamer gets bored with wish fulfillment dreams and seeks something more.

LaBerge reports that this is the point where dreamers tend to relinquish active control over their dreams and concentrate instead on lucidity itself, letting the dream dictate where it wants to take them. This is consistent with reports of stage two enlightenment from psychologists and mystics. This particular phase of development is where dreams tend to be used most for purposes of personal growth, and it is in this stage where the seeker after spiritual enlightenment "shakes off the material chains".

Is lucidity in dreams the same as the enlightenment experience? I believe they're two sides of the same coin. Whether they're the same or not probably doesn't matter. They are so similar that any differences between them are unimportant.



Lucid dreaming and personal growth

Structures break down



Here's where I find myself at odds with the hierarchical system I have posited where dream enhancement is near the bottom of the ladder and OOBE's near the top. As I look at this structure, it seems artificial to me. I have frequently used dreams, and lucid dreams in particular, to solve waking problems. Here's one example.

Last year I found myself in a crisis of confidence with my girlfriend. I was being harassed for emotional infidelity with another woman friend, and I couldn't be sure that my girlfriend wasn't right about that, because there was some attraction there. While this was occurring I became aware that I was conscious in my dream and surrounded by people in a mall. I reasoned that these people must be connected to my subconscious so I began questioning them.

"What's the attraction with Mary (the 'other' woman)?" I asked.

"Michelle," was the answer.

Michelle was a third woman whom I admired who had provided me with intellectual support at a critical time, and someone I had wanted as a friend, but not someone to whom I had any romantic attraction. I didn't understand the question so I asked another person...and got the same answer. I didn't make the connection for almost a year. It wasn't need that kept the channels closed. It was my intense *perception* of need.

Only one path among many?



The question I have now is whether or not I could have accomplished the same objective without using lucid dreams. It's entirely possible that I could have had the same perceptions in a normal dream and understood the ramifications of the situation on awakening rather than immediately in my dreams. I tend toward the notion that the fact that this occurred in a lucid dream probably had as much to do with my level of skill in lucid dreaming than the circumstances in my life at the time. I had sought help from a number of sources, not just for this problem but for several others I was facing at the time and I seemed to keep meeting with opposition. At the time the dream happened I had given up on looking for help in my waking world, and when the lucid flash came I leapt at it as an opportunity, just as I believe I would have leapt at an equally enticing opportunity in waking life.

I was tempted before I began this section to suggest lucid dreaming as a path to personal growth which may be suitable for some people who have been unable to find needed help in more traditional areas, but I'm no longer sure of that. So rather than suggest who can and can't make use of this tool for this purpose, I'll limit myself to describing known techniques for this type of lucid dreaming.



Techniques for personal growth in lucid dreaming



Being a fantasy-oriented person, I find dreams much more satisfying for working out personal problems than therapists and counselors. Whether it's more effective for me doesn't matter. The point is that it suits my temperament to do things this way, and if you're interested enough in sleep and dreaming to have read this far it probably holds a similar fascination for you.



Senoi beliefs



Gifts, sex and confrontation



A possible threshold effect

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Senoi beliefs



The means I use in dealing with dream conflicts stems from Patricia Garfield's ideas, which in turn were adapted from the Senoi. The Senoi pattern of using dreams for personal growth seems to follow an archetypal pattern which some may recognize as the hero's journey and others may see as more Oedipal in form. They believe that any foe in your dreams, meaning any part of your dream which does something to harm you or disrupt the harmony of your dream, must be conquered and bested at whatever contest presents itself. Once they have done this, the foe is made to present the dreamer with a gift. It could be a song, a design, an answer to a question, or an idea but the Senoi believe it must be something they can use in their daily life.

These gifts are taken very seriously by the Senoi, and they use these gifts in their everyday life whenever possible. Interestingly, when sex in a lucid dream culminates in orgasm, they demand a gift from the lover as well. These techniques are taught to the Senoi as soon as the children are old enough to talk.

My personal technique involves not conquering the enemy, but facing up to it as an equal, and lately I have begun to try to make all transactions work both ways. If I want something from a dream enemy, that's one thing, but if the dream enemy is a part of my own subconscious, it must also want something from me or it would not be making itself known in such a violent fashion. So wherever possible I try to keep the score level. There may not be a choice in the matter, as this example seems to indicate.



Gifts, sex and confrontation

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;monster.bmp} I've already mentioned the first time I had dream sex. What I didn't mention was that not long afterward I encountered another lover, one of the ugliest females I had ever seen. Remembering what Patricia Garfield had said, and partly out of my own horniness, I accepted what was offered. I didn't know it at the time, but this was part of the deal.

Gifts in dreams seem to come in pairs with me; one desired, one not. I don't believe I'm the exception to this rule. The trick, if you can call it that, is to accept both sides of the

coin as a gift. The three-headed monster who comes at you with a knife may want to give you the knife as a gift. It may even want to cut you with the knife, removing a part of you which you don't need any more. It's difficult to accept this in many cases because we equate the images with negative, harmful consequences. Dream logic doesn't always fit waking reality, and a personal symbology can help in this department.



No matter what the transaction may be, the result of a successful confrontation appears to be a breakthrough for the dreamer of some sort, often resulting in an increased feeling of self-assurance that may last for days or may be a permanent part of the dreamer's personality. Both Garfield and LaBerge noted this aspect of breakthrough dreams, and they suggest that any active practice of dream control, whether through dream induction, lucid dreaming or OOBE, appears to provide the individual with a means of achieving a better basis for mature, responsible actions in waking life.

Just as with induced dreams, resolving conflicts within a lucid dream need not require conscious awareness that a problem has been solved. I have often had the experience of overcoming a dream demon and feeling the positive effects in my waking life and never knowing exactly what it was I overcame or integrated from the experience.



A possible threshold effect

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;triangle.bmp}There may be a threshold effect which occurs when lucid dreams are used for self-improvement which corresponds to the push-pull paradox in induced dreams. This threshold effect seems to relate to what kinds of triggers can be used and what kinds of experiences can be attained. LaBerge noted that during the first month of his lucid dream diary he was able to use anxiety as a reliable trigger for lucidity, but once he got the hang of this technique he noticed a decreasing number of anxious incidents in his dreams which he could use to achieve lucidity. It may be that achieving lucidity was all he needed to help deal with the anxiety, and that the incidence of anxiety dropped as his mastery over anxiety increased. Rather than find a friendly trigger for regular use of the technique, he may have burned it out through enough use that he no longer needed to feel anxiety in his dreams. Psychiatrists would no doubt see LaBerge's efforts as indicating of great progress against an anxiety problem. It raises a sticky question though. LaBerge found lucidity a desirable enough state that he worked to achieve it, yet if he did manage to deal with his anxiety it seems to have cost him some of his ability to become lucid. Does this mean that what LaBerge did doesn't qualify as growth at all? Personally I believe it qualifies it as change, and I'm no longer sure in my own mind any more that growth really occurred here.



Ecstatic dreams

Transcending even dreams themselves

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;sphere.bmp} The pinnacle of lucid dreaming experience is said to be the ecstatic dream, also known as the “high” dream or the transcendent dream. According to those who have experienced it, and I do not count myself among them yet, it is even closer to the state of waking illumination described by the mystics than normal lucid dreams. If lucid dreams seem like illumination when compared to normal dreams, this type of dreaming adds a whole new dimension to existence which makes lucid dreams appear mundane and ordinary.

Both LaBerge and Garfield report having had this experience, and both claim it altered their outlook on waking life in a positive and welcome way. There may be some who believe this experience is merely a play-toy compared to OOB, and there could be some truth to that. The achievement of an ecstatic dream usually occurs after a period of work on oneself or personal growth. It indicates a rebirth of sorts. And if OOB is the highest realm of dream experience consciously available to humans, an ecstatic dream could simply be a farewell party, a send-off before one begins the difficult work of achieving true out-of-body consciousness and mastery over both one’s waking life and one’s dream life as well.



Lucid dreams and sex

An outlet available to anyone



Not being one of the more well-endowed or popular males to emerge from my hometown, the use of lucid dreaming as a sexual outlet seemed a natural to me. LaBerge has even suggested teaching this technique to paraplegics. If they were not crippled from birth, they tend to retain a dream image of themselves as able-bodied.

Dream sex is just as real in intensity and depth as waking sex, as my personal experience attests...and many claim it is even more enjoyable than sex in waking life. There even appear to be strong biological indicators, some rather unusual. Women experiencing orgasm in a dream exhibit the same vaginal contractions they would display while awake. Men don't show a similar intensity of penile contraction and contrary to a popular myth, ejaculation is not necessary for male orgasm in dreams. Adult males can experience wet dreams, though not as commonly as adolescents as a rule. I'm an exception to that rule, having had no wet dreams of any kind until my mid-twenties.

Whether a lucid dreamer is able to attain orgasm in a lucid dream appears to depend upon the level of control they have in their dreams and the lack of conflict with the dream images. Many of the women I meet in my dreams simply don't mesh well with me sexually and I don't often achieve orgasm. I have never achieved orgasm with a man in a lucid dream, probably due to the level of conflict I have still not resolved with men in my waking life.



Lucid dreams and healing

Making peace with the demons inside

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;bludemon.bmp} If psychological healing is possible through lucid dreams, and physical manifestations as powerful as orgasm and agonizing pain can be experienced, it may be possible to use lucid dreaming as a means of healing physical problems as well. It seems only sensible that if we can make peace with psychological demons in our dreams, we ought to be able to dream ourselves into any area of our bodies while in the dream state and effect repairs in the “dream dimension”.

We already know the potential the mind has for managing diseases from cancer to the common cold. If the idea holds water, this could be a major weapon in our growing arsenal of holistic treatments for disease and open up a whole new arena of psychosomatic healing. LaBerge and his associates had done some preliminary work into determining the potential of healing through lucid dreams, but I have not seen the results. If we discover a valid, measurable principle at work here, we may have some real evidence that the practices of the shamans and medicine men of primitive tribes who often performed their healing at a level similar to dream consciousness.



This should not be mistaken for a potential breakthrough in our ability to deal with illness. The truth of the matter is that it takes lucid dreamers many years to develop a level of competency in their dreams close to that available to them in their waking lives, and the shaman undergoes a rigorous training to perform the work.



How to learn lucid dreaming



The more we learn about lucid dreaming, the more approachable it becomes, and it appears as though it is not merely teachable, but a learnable skill which most people can acquire. Be aware, though, that learning this new mode of experience often involves *unlearning* many cherished beliefs about existence, and that intelligence may be a detriment to success rather than an advantage.



[The basics for would-be lucid dreamers](#)



[Eleven techniques for achieving lucidity](#)



[Hypnotherapy for inducing lucid dreaming](#)



[A device for triggering lucidity](#)



[Points to remember when lucid](#)



The basics for would-be lucid dreamers

First things first



If you already have strong dream recall, you may be able to acquire the ability to gain consciousness in your dreams with little or no difficulty. If you do not have this ability, lucid dreaming is still within your grasp as a short-term project, although you may not be able to accomplish much with it over the long term until you develop greater interest in your dreams and the improved recall and brilliance which come from this devotion.

? Note: A note to all electronic readers: if you wish to accelerate your learning curve toward achieving lucid dreams, reading this section of the chapter before bed for a week or two will provide your subconscious mind with a powerful stimulus which should help accelerate results. If you are already susceptible to lucidity, it should assist you in making permanent improvements to your dream life, and if not it will still help you make quicker short-term gains. Load this chapter into a text editor and clip it into a separate file if you wish.

The first prerequisite: better recall



I do not believe it is necessary, but LaBerge suggests all would-be lucid dreamers improve their dream recall abilities even further, regardless of their current levels, before embarking on a deliberate program of lucid dream work.

One method LaBerge claims to be infallible for increasing dream recall is a regular morning memory check. Every morning, before getting out of bed, ask yourself what you just dreamed. He says this is an excellent way to track small successes. Very often in the early stages of learning lucid dreaming, we have brief flashes of lucidity which we'll ignore or forget if we don't take notice of them as they occur. These little flashes of lucidity are small successes, and these are often useful as encouragement to continue our efforts. If we don't take notice of them, we won't have that extra encouragement. In fact, the same principle applies to all levels of dreamwork. Small successes are the fuel which keep us going when we feel ready to quit.

You probably have two opportunities for lucid dreams each night, one in your first REM period and one in your second. Awakening from an early night dream is an excellent opportunity to review your memory for flashes of lucidity.

A smorgasbord of programming techniques



There are as many different techniques for programming yourself for lucid dreaming as there are authors on the subject, and a large number of books on the subject has appeared since this book was originally published. Each technique produces a different result and in a different way. In order to maximize your chances of success, use the dynamics of lucid dreaming to your advantage and choose a technique which appears to offer you the least opportunity for distraction and loss of control. These same characteristics are what will assist you in making the most of your lucid dreams once they begin to appear.

Many authors suggest having a predetermined goal or ideal in mind as you go into your lucidity program. I feel that for most novices, this is counterproductive. The mere attainment

of lucidity is difficult enough at first without complicating matters with goals and objectives. Early experiences of lucidity in dreams tend to be difficult to maintain and control. Objectives simply add pressure.



Eleven techniques for achieving lucidity



The following techniques can be used singly or in combination. If you choose to use several, it would seem to make sense to select those you can use consistently for as long as you expect your program to last. Maintaining lucidity requires discipline at first, and a disciplined approach to achieving the state may be an excellent peace offering to your subconscious.

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Prerequisites



There are many other techniques for learning lucid dreaming, but I find that regardless of how good the technique may be, there are two requirements which needed to be satisfied before anyone I know has been able to achieve dream consciousness. First there must be a fair degree of peace in the person's life, at least consciously. I've never been able to achieve lucidity in a crisis unless I exhausted myself into a peaceful state.

There must also be some sense of lack in one's waking life. In the few periods in which my life was fulfilling, I seemed to have dreamless sleep. My lucid dreams all seem to have strong elements of something I've wanted in my waking life. The key seems to be having that sense of lack balanced by one's sense of peace so that the lack doesn't become a driving need.



Technique 1



During the day, remember to periodically ask yourself "Am I dreaming?" Check your environment for signs that you are dreaming. If you do this often enough, eventually you're likely to ask the same question in a dream. When you do, you have an excellent trigger to lucidity.



Technique 2



As you fall asleep, repeat to yourself "I'm dreaming". There are two ways to do this. You can repeat the phrase in rhythm, perhaps timed to your breathing or heartbeat, or randomly. The random method seems to make more sense because of the random nature of lucid flashes and

the enhanced shock effect it has on the subconscious, but shock effect may not be desirable to you. You may fall deeply asleep or you may slip from consciousness directly into a dream.

Experts can often slip directly into a lucid dream using this technique, and it is particularly effective if you can use it in the morning and have an extra hour or two to sleep. This technique seems to work just as effectively at triggering early-night lucid dreams as morning lucidity, perhaps because the subconscious may decide to process the day's events from the beginning instead of backward from evening to morning.



Technique 3



This is a more subtle technique and requires either a dream diary or time to contemplate your previous dreams. The idea is to vividly relive past dreams and take special note of any incidents of fantasy or illogic. These were all potential triggers for lucidity. As you review these incidents, note that they are proof that you were asleep. Tell yourself that whenever similar occurrences happen in future dreams, you'll know you're dreaming and use this knowledge to become lucid.



Technique 4



"False awakenings" are superb triggers for lucidity. With practice you'll know whether you've just awakened to another dream or to your waking world. You'll usually feel much more energetic in a false awakening than you would awakening to the real world because your dream body doesn't have body chemistry working against it. Many people aren't aware enough of their own bodies to make that distinction. It's often easier to spot unusual characteristics in the room in which you have awakened than to do body checks. Once you spot something which tells you that you're not in your bedroom, lucidity can be achieved simply by realizing that you must still be asleep.



Technique 5



Most people know by adulthood whether or not they are easily hypnotized. If you are, self-hypnosis can be used to program yourself to recognize dream states and trigger lucidity. The best programming triggers to use are those things you recognize as frequent dream images and situations which do not occur in real life. While in the hypnotic state, relive these images and situations at whatever depth you can manage and program yourself with the knowledge that these are dream situations you can recognize as such and use as triggers to lucidity.



Technique 6



Cybernetic techniques using endless loop answering machine tapes available at Radio Shack and other electronics retailers can be used to program you for receptivity to the lucid state. They often have startling results. A short loop programmed with nothing but the phrase "I'm dreaming" repeated every few seconds and played at a nearly inaudible level could be heard by your sleeping mind as if it were being played at ear-splitting volume. And once you know you're dreaming, lucidity is yours.

It might be just as effective to have the same tape repeat "I'm dreaming" only once every five or ten minutes. This will jerk you out of reverie on occasion, but eventually you'll hear it while you're dreaming. If you're close to being receptive to lucidity, this has an excellent chance of triggering a lucid dream for you. In fact, this is probably the quickest, easiest method of all for triggering lucid dreams, at least for the sake of short-term success.



Technique 7



Healthy people who awaken from dreams in the morning, and many unhealthy people as well, remain in a REM brainwave pattern for several minutes after awakening. This is an excellent opportunity to achieve lucidity. If you already have the ability to resume a "dream in progress" you can attempt to enter the dream fully conscious...and thus lucid. If you don't have that good a grasp on your dreams, you can try a chant or repetition of "I'm dreaming".

If you have a tape with the phrase on it, now is the time to play it. Your brain is already in REM state, so the tape will affect your consciousness precisely at the level you want it to be affected. If you have a spouse, get them to guide you into lucidity by watching your eyes. As soon as they begin to see your lenses dance around under your eyelids, get them to tell you, softly and matter-of-factly, "You're dreaming." It helps if they use your name. If your name is Joan, your bedmate could say "You're dreaming, Joan. You ARE aware that you're dreaming, aren't you." Have them state this as a fact rather than a question and it will have added impact. You can return the favor for them on another occasion.



Technique 8



Dreamlets or hypnagogic hallucination, the visions we get as we're falling asleep, are another way to trigger lucidity. Novices may find it much easier to achieve lucidity in a dreamlet than in an actual REM dream. The idea is to maintain a constant conscious awareness of these dreamlets as they begin to appear and take part in them consciously as the opportunity and awareness present themselves. These lucid dreams aren't as vivid and rewarding as lucid REM dreams, but they are an excellent starting point. You may find them so entertaining that you'll have no desire to go farther for quite some time.



Technique 9



The emotional calm felt as sleep approaches is ideal for inducing lucidity. Sex and meditation, particularly after a period of intense effort, tend to intensify your perception of this emotional center. You can use these to help you sleep, or you can use this time as an opportunity to enter your dreams from the heightened consciousness which comes from this exhilaration and endorphin boost and achieve lucidity.



Technique 10



The times when you awaken in the morning and don't have to get up are your best opportunities for lucid dreaming. A nearly foolproof method of achieving lucidity is to select a day, usually a Saturday or a Sunday, when you don't have to get up until you want to. Go back to sleep as

often as you need to, and each time try a different method for achieving lucidity. If remaining in bed doesn't eventually make you feel listless and out of sorts, you'll eventually achieve lucidity, although it may take several tries if your dream recall is poor to begin with.



Technique 11



Practice dreamlike thinking in your waking life to prime your subconscious pump. Make deliberate leaps of logic when you think to yourself or talk to yourself or an understanding partner. Converse as you would in a dream. When someone asks you to pass the milk, ask if they want it wet or painted. When you see a billboard, imagine the letters and words changing or appearing illegible. This trains your attention to realize that these leaps off the logical rails are occurring while you are awake, and are consciously chosen. When they occur in dreams without your conscious choice, you'll know it.



Hypnotherapy for inducing lucid dreams

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}If you're one of the "lucky" five or ten percent of the population who can be easily hypnotized from a relaxed state, you might wish to have your first lucid dream induced by a hypnotist. If you choose to take this road be sure to select a qualified professional, preferably a practicing psychologist who understands the dynamics of hypnosis. A great deal of information can be passed to the subject at a subverbal level during a hypnotic session, and it is important to be able to trust that anything you might get from a hypnotist this way will be something you want for yourself anyway.

A capable hypnotist can guide a subject directly into a REM state and induce lucidity with suggestion. If you like, they can also leave you with a trigger program which allows you to become lucid in future almost at will. If you find a hynotherapist but discover that they have doubts about the reality of lucid dreaming, it might not be a wise idea to use them unless you recognize their disbelief as something you once possessed. If you do see this in them, consider having them read "Lucid Dreaming" by LaBerge as a means of acquainting them with the subject. And don't worry if you're one of the 90 percent who don't hypnotize easily. This shouldn't hold you back from lucid dreaming in any way.



A device for triggering lucidity

Technology to map the unconscious



Several years ago, LaBerge reported that he was working on a device designed to assist people in achieving lucidity. I haven't seen such a device advertised and I don't know if he ever did get it to market. It is based upon the idea that we are very sensitive to tactile stimulation in the REM state, and we can easily incorporate touch into our dreams. Once a dreamer learns that a touch at a given time means they must be dreaming, lucidity is an easy feat to accomplish.

The difficulty facing LaBerge was creating a device which could detect REM sleep and send a tactile signal without being uncomfortable or a hindrance to good sleep. A penis band would probably work for men, and it might be easy to rig such a device yourself if you're handy with electronics. Erection always accompanies REM, and a circuit which signaled a processor when erection occurred and then sent a few tactile signals a minute or two later might be just the ticket.

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;cogs48r.bmp}Creating a similar device for women might require a little more thought and effort. A pressure-sensing pad placed in the vagina might be too prone to natural shifts in pressure from rolling over, whereas a penis ring can easily be adapted to respond only to erection.



Points to remember when lucid



That was one of the dumbest subheadings I ever wrote. These are actually points to remind yourself while you're awake in the hope that you'll remember them when you're dreaming. You can always mentally rehearse being in a lucid dream and recalling these points, but that seems to me that it could be a waste of effort. Lucidity and lucid dreaming are spontaneous events, and while you can program yourself to remember certain activities in a lucid dream, it might defeat the purpose of what you are attempting to do.

In LaBerge's studies he had lucid dreamers look left, then right, then left to signal when they had achieved lucidity, but this and similar experiments were designed to help him determine whether lucid dreamers could communicate with the waking world. Novices will find communicating with their own dreams challenge enough, but as you progress you may wish to try a few of these.



Remember that it's not impossible, not even difficult



A technique for prolonging lucidity



Use conflict as a springboard



Remember to ask for a gift



Expectations play an important role



Floating and flying are excellent triggers

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Remember that it's not impossible, not even difficult

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;people.bmp}First and foremost, remember that lucidity is nothing special, although it has special qualities. Virtually anyone can do it. Internalizing this idea could go a long way to reducing the panic, excitement or loss of control which seems to occur early in your lucidity experience. Anything you confront in your dream is part of your subconscious mind, and you need not panic. You can awaken at almost any time simply by willing it. It might not be easy to awaken but you can do it.



A technique for prolonging lucidity



If you wish to prolong a lucid experience, LaBerge discovered a technique for maintaining lucidity. He relates that whenever he feels his grip on consciousness fading in a dream, he allows himself to fall backwards and spin. He usually retains his lucidity, although the setting of the dream is usually completely different from what it was. I have tried this technique myself and it works to perfection. The key, probably for both of us, is that we trust our dreaming minds and have a felt sense that falling and spinning will not send us into an abyss of nothingness or result in pain.

Some people have a powerful aversion to falling or spinning. The key seems to be finding a way to lose control in a consciously chosen fashion. This gets you out of the situation you're in, which is an out-of-control situation, and into one where you may be able to function with a little more security. There may be some argument that this is a cop-out of sorts, that

making an exit from a dream situation where you can't be in control is childish, but if you have no aversion to being childish in your dreams, it's just about the safest place to behave that way.



Use conflict as a springboard



Conflict in dreams is always an excellent point at which to become lucid, because dream conflicts almost always have distinctly dreamlike aspects to them. They are almost never like conflicts we would experience in our waking lives. This may be the subconscious' way of attempting to get our attention without threatening us. If we know that the conflict we face in a dream is dreamlike and cannot damage us the way a waking conflict can, it becomes much easier to face. and facing it in a lucid state is an excellent way to learn more about it.

It is also an enormous challenge, because many dream foes can appear to be violently aggressive and might even cause us great pain which we actually feel in the dream itself. You can go a long way toward defusing these conflicts by looking at your potential foe with an eye to seeing the beauty in it, what might be underneath the aggression which is lovable. This too can be tricky because a difficult foe will change shape to hide its beauty.

The best defense you have against enemies of all types, both in your dreams and in your waking life, is a constant posture of wanting to see the beauty at the core of whatever is around you. Part of me resists saying this, but it appears that any enemy that doesn't respond to love and a sincere search for its beauty should probably be annihilated with whatever weapon you can find. The beauty may lie so deeply hidden that you have to wipe out the foe to find it.



Remember to ask for a gift



Remember to ask for a gift from any vanquished enemy, or if you prefer, an exchange of gifts. Make use of the gift in your waking life in some form, even if it's just a notation for your diary or a phrase you can say to yourself.

Programming yourself so that nothing in your waking life can frighten or repulse you will help you to achieve the same result in your dreams, and this can go a long way toward helping you maintain lucidity once you achieve it. Think of everything in your dreams as a part of you which you must first come to accept and embrace fully before you can begin to change it. If your dream lovers make you feel repulsed or ashamed, remember that this is a part of yourself asking for love, a part of you that needs acknowledgment. There is a rule in psychotherapy that what we don't work on inside will be presented to us as an outside problem, which is all the more reason to adopt as accepting an attitude as you can to what is being presented by your subconscious.



Expectations play an important role

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;mathrvrs.bmp}Your expectations of your lucid states play a big part in determining what will actually occur in these states. What you expect to experience or accomplish will probably come to pass, for better or worse, and if stray or repetitive thoughts of negative events keep passing through your subconscious, these are powerful triggers for negative events in your lucid states. Compulsive negativity is something which must be embraced as well, but because of the potential this has for destruction in your external world, professional guidance should be sought for coping with this problem.

Any degree of dream consciousness, no matter how dim or how brief, is still lucidity and to be considered a partial success. When I am returning to dreamwork after a layoff it is not uncommon for me to experience several episodes of being blind or crippled while in a lucid state, but at least I am lucid.



Dr. LaBerge advises all lucid dreamers to remember that the essential aspect of consciousness in lucid dreams is maintaining control over yourself, not so much over your dreams. Heed your doctor's advice. When your hold on consciousness starts to fade, remember that it's your life and your dream, and that as long as you are alive your wish is king. You might be able to maintain lucidity longer if you make an agreement with your subconscious. Tell it that you'll allow changes to the dream which are out of your control if it will allow you to maintain your lucidity.



Floating and flying are excellent triggers



Signs of floating above ground or flying are excellent triggers for lucid dreams. If you can fly straight up, you may be able to achieve an ecstatic dream.

Above all, enjoy yourself. If you've been interested enough to read this far, the world of the average unconscious dreamer is likely to seem less and less satisfying to you. Lucidity offers realms of opportunity and experience so rich it will take you several lifetimes to explore them all, and it can be the greatest adventure you can have without drugs or a guru.



Out-of-body experience



If the notion of lucid dreaming stretched your credibility to its limit, the concept of out-of-body experience will probably snap it completely. This is probably the most controversial outgrowth of sleep research and inquiry, and clearly an area where science is not going to be able to provide us with proof for a long time. Regardless of what you believe though, keep in mind that there is *always* more going on than meets the eye, and that this brief introduction to the concept is only a very small part of the puzzle.



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Is there life after lucid dreaming?

...or are OOBÉ and lucidity identical phenomena?



I once posted a message on an echo devoted to the discussion of astral travel and out-of-body experience (OOBE) asking for the impressions of people who had experienced both. What I wanted to know was what difference there was between the two experiences in the way they felt. Only one person responded, and they told me that there was no perceived difference between them. I waited for rebuttals from the several dozen others on the feed who had similar experience. No one refuted the claim.

I now know that I have had an OOBE. Not a spectacular experience, but I have had an OOBE. At least one, perhaps several, perhaps dozens. And in my experience there has been no qualitative difference between this experience and lucid dreams...except one. OOBE's have strong elements of reality mixed in with the dreamlike elements of lucidity. In comparing reports from books by Robert Monroe and others on the subject of OOBE with reports of research done by LaBerge with highly skilled lucid dreamers, I find little difference between the two and even LaBerge admits that the line between the two, if it exists at all, is a fuzzy one.

Determining the difference: a judgment call



What difference there may be seems to be found less in the quality of the experience itself than in the quality of the setting in which it occurs. It is as if the lucid experience is the first stage of enlightenment, the transformation from unconsciousness to consciousness. The student then progresses through various realms of experience in this conscious state depending upon their level of personal mastery.

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;dali.bmp}Adepts at OOBE claim that lucidity is the "child realm", and other realms exist to the conscious dreamer. The next is the astral realm in which one can explore one's actual physical world without taking one's body. The next stage is the etheric realm, in which the dreamer, if anyone with this level of consciousness can still be called a dreamer, can explore the entire universe. Soul travel permits one to travel backward and forward through time, not limited by three dimensions. And mystics claim there are even more realms beyond these.

John Lilly, an experimenter in altered states of consciousness in the 1960s and 70s, claimed to have discovered at least one of these realms. He also claimed to have discovered corresponding earthly realms so hellish that it becomes obvious why so few people seem to achieve these states.



A realm of experience beyond our science

A completely subjective phenomenon?



Do these experiences correspond with actual soul travel or life after death? If the reports of mystics from many cultures are compared with experiences of OOBIE travelers and explorers in the “higher” realms, the two appear identical in many respects. But this is a place where our science cannot take us.

Subjects claiming to be adept at the practice have been studied repeatedly and found in most cases to be well-meaning frauds. They could not do what they claimed they could do. The subjects were asked to leave their bodies and travel to a selected room at a distant location and report on the contents of that room. In all but a few cases the results were inaccurate. Those few reports where results did show accuracy are noteworthy enough for further study, but the many which did not are cause for alarm in a day when so many claim to have “the gift”.

I like accuracy, and I have developed a real fondness for verifiable and repeatable phenomena. I had done lucid dreaming for some time, but my heart leapt when I read LaBerge’s accounts of how his dream subjects were actually able to signal him in the laboratory when they had entered a lucid state. I have had a habit of leaping for any opportunity that looks like a viable means of escaping the chains of a world I have not loved well.

A science in its infancy

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;crysbll.bmp} But I have been bruised often enough in the process that I have learned to look for the proof of the pudding. The Monroe Institute has amassed an enormous body of information documenting these other realms of experience and claims to have taught thousands of people how to astral travel through their books, workshops and controlled studies, but I have my doubts about how many actually achieved what was promised or advertised.

This is an area of study still in its infancy. I well remember fifteen years ago when I asked anyone who would listen whether they had ever had a lucid dream. I would describe the dream experience for them and they would often say yes, they had experienced lucid dreams. But when I queried them for more detail I usually discovered that they had not had lucid dreams at all, but rather had experienced lucid flashes in unconscious dreams.

I do not believe these people are charlatans. I do believe that OOBIE is a new age novelty which is being as heavily oversold today as lucid dreaming was ten years ago. Not everyone can achieve lucidity and not everyone can master the lucid state, which is fine because not everyone wants to. I put many years of effort into achieving an OOBIE without success. The only real success I achieved came incidentally, two days before I began writing the section on OOBIE for the first edition of this book. And as many will notice instantly, it wasn’t a real OOBIE but a close approximation. And that’s where things get tricky.



A personal account of OOBE...or not

Sacrament or abuse?

{ewr LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;candy.bmp} I fell asleep rather fitfully after a day of heavy sugar consumption. This has been a problem with me for many years and sugar and other drugs tend to help trigger lucidity and OOBE in a lot of people. I had a sense of drifting in and out of a semi-conscious state, always seeming to have some sense that I was awake and aware, until I felt myself push against the mattress and fall between the bed and the wall.

I slept on an eight-inch foam mattress on the ground, so this experience was not at all out of the realm of possibility. I was awake at that moment and I knew it, but I also realized that something wasn't quite right. I looked at my bureau. It was where it should have been, and looked like it should have, illuminated by the streetlights. Again, nothing unusual there. I had a lot of lucid dreams during the period when I worked on the book and false awakenings were common for me.

False awakening

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;knotred.bmp} I tried to get up, but my body wasn't responding for me the way it usually did. Even in lucid dreams I have had little difficulty controlling my limbs. I had often recalled an article on astral travel I had read in 1975 or 1976 which described movement in the astral state as achieved through will, not through normal physical expression, so I willed myself to my feet, and slowly but surely I made it.

I was wearing my blanket around my naked body because the night was cold. I thought to myself, "I'm up, but why? What do I have to do?" I was having a very intense false awakening, much more intense than usual, and I still didn't seem to realize that I was dreaming. And I couldn't think of anything to do. This was highly unusual for me. If I had been aware of my lucidity and had no other options in mind, I would almost certainly have gone looking for a woman to make love with.

Then I noticed myself feeling very light on my feet, so I jumped up in the air, wondering if I could stay up in the air. Sure enough, I hovered about six inches off the ground. It was then that I knew I was dreaming. I recall nothing more about the dream today, but when I awoke that morning I remembered the experience and was very surprised by what I had experienced. Because with one exception the room was exactly as I would have expected it in waking life. The exception? It was three feet longer than it is in real life.

Was this an out-of-body experience? Knowing what I know about OOBE from the accounts of those who claim to have experienced it, I can only believe that it did fall into that category. And if so, then it was not the first OOBE I had had.

The thin line between fact and fantasy

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;ufo1.bmp} Here's the tricky part. Was I actually in my "soul body", hovering above my room with an astral blanket on my back? Or was I actually in bed, experiencing all this in my mind? Where does reality stop and fantasy begin?

When Betty and Barney Hill were allegedly abducted by aliens in the 1950s in that most famous of all close encounters stories, how is it that their experiences mesh perfectly and make

perfect sense...except for their report that the leader of the aliens appeared to be wearing what they could only describe as a Nazi uniform? And what about the reports of Carlos Castaneda's experiences? Did Don Juan really show up in the market that day in his dream body or did Castaneda only imagine it due to a hypnotic trigger planted by the shaman?

We have a long way to go before we can adequately answer these questions and a great deal to learn about the human mind. These phenomena appear not just possible, but very real to students of astral travel, but until we have better data on the subject I feel this should all be taken with a grain of salt. Because while I may believe that I was in my astral body hovering over the floor of my room, the room was not completely what it was in waking life. If I had left my room to explore elsewhere and been asked to report what I saw, I could most certainly give a report but that report could not be relied upon for accuracy. There was something in the way of accuracy which I could not get past and still have not mastered, and I thank my training as a journalist for the pragmatism to see my own limitations in this regard.



Mastery, mysticism and the lack of yardsticks

Blinded by innocence



I believe a lot of people who allege to be masters of the astral plane have not yet acknowledged their limitations. That may be less their fault than the fault of their teachers who had an obligation to define the rules and limitations of this universe, but it still leaves the field wide open for charlatans to feast on unwary victims. This is definitely a case of buyer beware and I have a strong aversion to much of what I have seen passed off as truth regarding this experience. I don't believe most of it will hold up under close scrutiny.

My personal belief is that there is something real at work here. The number of cases reported by LaBerge and Monroe which defy the laws of probability seem to make that crystal clear. The problem is the mud which covers the crystal. When I had my OOBEE and awoke in my room, a room three feet longer than it should have been, I was encountered by a trick of fantasy intruding upon my impression of reality. If it was not my soul doing the traveling, there was definitely a part of my consciousness in that room at that time looking around and seeing what was there to be seen. But that part of my consciousness lacked enough clarity to distinguish the difference in the room's size as an unreality.



That lack of clarity is the key to what is really happening here. The difference between a lucid dream and an OOBEE seems to be that OOBEE has a much greater depth of reality to it, but that doesn't diminish in any way the fact that OOBEE is not a perfect dream experience of waking reality. In fact, it would appear that the only people capable of achieving this reality are those who can achieve dreamlike clarity and consciousness while awake. I have met a few people able to enter that state for short periods of time. I have met no one who was able to maintain it.



The value of OOB

Applying the static to the relative

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;info_ico.bmp}The critical question here is practical value does OOB have? More than with any other type of dream, I believe that it is up to the individual to decide what value, if any, the OOB experience may have. We have social contexts for measuring the value and purpose of all other types of dreams, although our parameters for gauging lucid dreams are shaky at best. We do not yet have widely-accepted social parameters concerning OOB. Value is a relative concept, and without some yardstick to measure against, attaching meaning to OOB is an exercise in futility.

But there can be no question that those who have had the experience attach a great importance to it. Those who consider the experience personal seem to feel it has an uplifting effect, and vivid OOB's or experiences under stress such as near-death experience have had profound effects upon those who have been through it. Some seem to undergo a personal transformation while others gain a power over their lives or environments...or the lives of other people.

The ethics in these cases get highly complex and even the masters of disciplines which teach the skill seem to believe that OOB can be a highly destructive experience if the energy discovered or unleashed from within is projected onto others, which teachers and cults often do.



OOBE cults

Brainwashing at the highest level

{ewl LZANI,LZANIMATE,GRAPHIC2.DAT;hypno.bmp}There are religious and spiritual cults where OOBE is a central theme. Fans of Robert Monroe's work seem to form groups with cultish overtones. Many present-day followers of European mystery schools started by those such as Aleister Crowley and Madame Blavatsky seek OOBE and use the experience to achieve power.

Eckankar, a quasi-Buddhist cult which holds itself up as the one true religion, has posited OOBE as the be-all and end-all experience, and the goal of life as mastery of the astral state...according to their rules, of course. Initiates are instructed in the achievement of OOBE and even given maps of this particular realm. The offering of a roadmap may not be malignant in itself, but Eckankar literature seems to write a version of the astral world meant to fit their particular worldview, and much of what they teach is unique to Eck. No other astral travelers seem to believe that past masters of Eck give ongoing lectures on Eckankar on the astral plane of the planet Mars.

Full circle

{ewl LZANI.DLL,LZANIMATE,GRAPHICS.DAT;fullcirc.bmp}And so we come full circle...but since we live in a universe which evolves, the circle completes itself at the same location but at a higher level. Where does the dream end and reality begin? Because one of the strongest messages the existence of OOBE seems to send is that the fabric of our daily lives is just as plastic as a dream, just as fraught with illusion and danger, and ultimately, just as benign and harmless.

The problem is that it doesn't look so harmless to the average person staring down the barrel of a rifle. The conscious dreamer knows it is a dream and the mystic knows it is only life on this plane, not the whole truth of reality. Ultimately, it matters less whether lucid dreams, OOBE or astral travel exist than how we react to their existence in our lives.

The secret seems to be courage and fearlessness. But when you're not sure whether the rifle is loaded, fearlessness can be a pretty tough sled. And when the object of your desire seems to be so useful and so harmless, it can be tough to see beyond that desire to something deeper. The individual's dilemma is whether or not desire and fear are part of what makes us human and gives our lives meaning, or part of what separates us from our humanity. And that is a question which will probably rage for as long as homo sapiens sapiens walks this earth.



Techniques for OOB

I do not intend to list techniques for OOB in this book. Monroe provides plenty, as do LaBerge, and if OOB is technically outside the realm of dreams, it is also outside the scope of this book. The techniques shouldn't even be needed by those with the perceptiveness which seems to be required for the experience, because as you may have noticed, the achievement of each type of dream experience seems to involve the same type of dynamic as the others. If you're receptive to a particular type of dream experience, the same techniques should work regardless of the type of dream sought, and you may be just as likely to experience a certain type of dream spontaneously as you would through induction.

Besides, not being proficient in this area, it wouldn't be my place to steal from the libraries of those who have done the work.

And just as abruptly as dreams end, so does this book.

