

FAQ's, Dream Quiz, & Dream Facts

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

Reference: The International Association for the Study of Dreams www.ASD.org

Does everyone dream?

Yes. Laboratory studies have shown that we experience our most vivid dreams during a type of sleep called Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep. During REM sleep the brain is very active, the eyes move back and forth rapidly under the lids, and the large muscles of the body are relaxed. REM sleep occurs every 90 - 100 minutes, 3 to 4 times a night, and lasts longer as the night progresses. The final REM period may last as long as 45 minutes. Less vivid dreams occur at other times during the night.

Why do people have trouble remembering their dreams?

Some people have no difficulty in remembering several dreams nightly, whereas others recall dreams only occasionally or not at all. Nearly everything that happens during sleep— including dreams, the thoughts which occur throughout the night and memories of brief awakenings—is forgotten by morning. There is something about the phenomenon of sleep itself which makes it difficult to remember what has occurred and most dreams are forgotten unless they are written down. Sometimes a dream is suddenly remembered later in the day or on another day, suggesting that the memory is not totally lost but for some reason is very hard to retrieve. Sleep and dreams also are affected by a great variety of drugs and medications, including alcohol. Further, stopping certain medications suddenly may cause nightmares. It is advisable to discuss with your physician the effect of any drugs or medications you are taking.

How can I improve my dream memory?

Before you fall asleep, remind yourself that you want to remember your dreams. Keep a paper and pen or tape-recorder by your bedside. As you awaken, try to move as little as possible and try not to think right away about your upcoming day. Write down all of your dreams and images, as they can fade quickly if not recorded. Any distractions will cause the memory of your dream to fade. If you can't remember a full dream, record the last thing that was on your mind before awakening, even if you have only a vague memory of it.

Are dreams in color?

Most dreams are in color, although people may not be aware of it, either because they have difficulty remembering their dreams or because color is such a natural part of visual experience. People who are very aware of color while awake probably notice color more often in their dreams.

Do dreams have meaning?

Although scientists continue to debate this issue, most people who work with their dreams, either by themselves or with others, find that their dreams are very meaningful for them. Dreams are useful in learning more about the dreamer's feelings, thoughts, behavior, motives, and values. Many find that dreams can help them solve problems. Further, artists, writers, and scientists often get creative ideas from dreams.

How can I learn to interpret my dreams?

The most important thing to keep in mind is that your dreams reflect your own underlying thoughts and feelings, and that the people, actions, settings and emotions in your dreams are personal to

you. Some dream experts theorize that there are typical or archetypal dreams and dream elements that persist across different persons, cultures, and times. Usually, however, the same image or symbol will have different meanings for different people. For example, [an elephant in a dream can mean one thing to a zoo keeper and something quite different to a child whose favorite toy is a stuffed elephant](#). Therefore, books which give a specific meaning for a specific dream image or symbol (or "dream dictionaries") are not usually helpful. By thinking about what each dream element means to you or reminds you of, by looking for parallels between these associations and what is happening in your waking life, and by being patient and persistent, you can learn to understand your dreams. It can be helpful to keep a dream diary and reflect on many dreams over a long period of time to get the truest picture of your unique dream life. Many good books that can help you get started interpreting your dreams. See the [ASD BFAQ'sook Suggestion List](#).

What does it mean when I have the same dream over and over?

Recurrent dreams, which can continue for years, may be treated as any other dream. That is, one may look for parallels between the dream and the thoughts, feelings, behavior, and motives of the dreamer. Understanding the meaning of the recurrent dream sometimes can help the dreamer resolve an issue that he or she has been struggling with for years.

Is it normal to have nightmares?

Nightmares are very common among children and fairly common among adults. Often nightmares are caused by stress, traumatic experiences, emotional difficulties, drugs or medication, or illness. However, some people have frequent nightmares that seem unrelated to their waking lives. Recent studies suggest that these people tend to be more open, sensitive, trusting, and emotional than average. (For a detailed flyer on nightmares, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to [ASD](#). You may also click [here](#) for more information on nightmares.)

Is it true that if you dream that you die or that you hit bottom in a falling dream, you will in fact die in your sleep?

No, these beliefs are not true. Many people have dreamed that they died or hit bottom in a fall and they have lived to tell the tale! You can explore the meaning of these kinds of images just as you would explore any others that might occur in your dreams. However, if any aspect of your dreams worries or distresses you, talk to a professional mental health practitioner about your concerns.

Can dreams predict the future?

There are many examples of dreams that seemed to predict future events. Some may have been due to coincidence, faulty memory, or an unconscious tying together of known information. A few laboratory studies have been conducted of predictive dreams, as well as clairvoyant and telepathic dreams, but the results were varied, as these kinds of dreams are difficult to study in a laboratory setting.

Is it possible to control dreams?

You often can influence your dreams by giving yourself pre-sleep suggestions. Another method of influencing dreams is called lucid dreaming, in which you are aware you are dreaming while still asleep and in the dream. Sometimes people experience this type of dreaming spontaneously. It is often possible to learn how to increase lucid dreaming, and thereby increase your capacity to affect the course of the dream events as they unfold. Some things are easier than others to control, and indeed complete control is probably never possible. Some professional dream workers question the advisability of trying to control the dream, and encourage learning to enjoy and understand it instead.

DREAM QUIZ

What Is Your Dream I.Q.?

- 1) Does alcohol a) increase or b) decrease dream sleep?
- 2) Prozac a) increases or b) decreases dream sleep?
- 3) Research shows that dream recall is improved the most if you ...
 - a) Write down your dream or any thoughts within ten minutes of awakening
 - b) Tell your dream to someone within five minutes
 - c) Before sleep and throughout the day, silently affirm "I easily recall my dreams."
- 4) Depression, anxiety, and fatigue a) increase or b) decrease dream recall?
- 5) Approximately one third of all adult dreams involve ...
 - a) Anger and aggression
 - b) Anxiety and fear
 - c) Eroticism
 - d) Guilt and shame
 - e) Surprise
- 6) After dogs, which animal do children and adults dream most frequently about?
 - a) Birds
 - b) Snakes
 - c) Horses
 - d) Cats
 - e) Fish
- 7) The last dream period of the night, usually lasts about ...
 - a) 25-45 minutes
 - b) 15-25 minutes
 - c) 5-15 minutes
- 8) People almost never dream of _____?

Sleep Disorders Centers - To locate a Center near you, contact:

The American Sleep Disorders Association
604 Second St. SW
Rochester, MN 55902, or call (507) 287-6606

Q & A: 1. b) 2. a) 3. a) b) & c) 4. b) 5. b) 6. c) 7. a) 8. God

DREAM FACTS

References for Dream Facts: Robert Van de Castle's book, *Our Dreaming Mind*, and Patricia Garfield's book, *Your Children's Dreams*.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Plato's student, Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.), wrote about dreams saying, "The most skillful interpreter of dreams is he who has the faculty of **observing resemblances**." These resemblances may involve similar shapes, colors, textures, actions, or the sounds of words.

The term "**assonance**," refers to the similarity in the sounds of **words**, and occurs frequently in dreams. For example, although a person named "Janice", might not be dreamed about **directly**, many of the following words that **sound like** "Janice" might occur in the dream story, with fascinating frequency: Van - Can - Japan - Jam - Fan - Kiss - Disk - Miss - Hiss - Candice - Istanbul.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

In Dr. Robert Van de Castle's book *Our Dreaming Mind*, he suggests, "Although the overwhelming **majority** of dreams are in **color**, there are situations in which the message of the dream mandates that it be conveyed in black and white. If the dreamer needs to realize that he or she is viewing some waking situation in a **black-and-white**, all-or-none fashion, the dream imagery may include the **keyboard** of a piano or the **stripes** of a referee's shirt . . . If the dreamer needs to be sensitized to how **gray**, confining, or confusing his or her outlook is toward life, dreams may be cast in somber prison-gray tones or the dreamer may wander around in a fog."

Of course, the presence of a keyboard may also refer to the dreamer's longing to express herself **musically**. Sometimes a piano is just a piano!

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Twenty watts of power is all that is needed to generate the electrical activity of your **three-pound** brain—about the same amount found in a refrigerator **light bulb**.

Your brain, when fully formed, will contain **100 billion neurons**, or nerve cells, and has a massive storage capacity for **100 trillion bits** of information!

The most important “brain fact,” however, is the potential for neurons to form **connections**. Imagine that your palm represents one neuron. Then, imagine that you learn something new, and suddenly, your palm sprouts fingers. Your five fingers proceed to connect with other palms and fingers. This process of forming connections, begins during the last trimester **before** birth and continues until you are very “well-connected” indeed.

When your brain dreams or thinks, **chemicals**, called “**neurotransmitters**”, transmit information from one neuron to the receptor sites on other neurons.

Levels of chemicals, like **acetylcholine**, the so-called **memory messenger**, vary, as we all know. Have you ever awakened and discovered that your **level** of acetylcholine was too low? It is at these times that dreams seem to evaporate like water in the desert. According to Freud, you repressed some troublesome memory or another. According to recent research, you can blame much of your memory problem on your brain’s **fluctuating** chemicals.

Do you want to gain some influence over these all-powerful chemicals? Simple. Your conscious mind’s consistent “intention-to-recall” can produce some equally powerful chemicals of its own. Although, on some forgetful Monday mornings, it may very well be a triumph of “*Matter-Over-Mind*,” mercifully, when it comes to dream recall, you can **easily** win the battle of “Mind-Over-Matter.”

Try this. Take a daily dose of firm intentions, go to bed, and every day, for **three weeks**, patiently record your dreams, thoughts, and feelings, within the first **ten** minutes of awakening.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Kasatkin, a Russian psychiatrist at the Leningrad Neurosurgical Institute, concluded from his research, that dreams produced by **physical illness** share some **common features**:

- (1) Illness is associated with an **increase** in **dream recall**.
- (2) Illness causes dreams to become **distressful** and to include nightmarish images of one, or more, of the following: **war**, fire, blood, corpses, tombs, **raw meat**, garbage, dirty water, or references to **hospitals**, doctors and medicines.
- (3) These dreams generally appear **before** the first **symptoms** of the illness may appear.
- (4) Dreams caused by illness, are **longer** than distress dreams caused by ordinary annoyances and **persist** throughout the night and throughout the **duration of the illness**.
- (5) The content of the dreams can reveal the **location** and the **seriousness** of the illness.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Just by closing your eyes, you can more easily enter a meditative state that is accompanied by **alpha brain waves**. This state is **very** conducive for meditating on dream symbols. You might try letting your imagination observe **changes** that **evolve** as you contemplate a particular dream symbol. The term for this process, first coined by Carl Jung, is called "**active imagination**."

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Physically-based sexual problems can be easily diagnosed during dream sleep. This is because there is a marked **increase** in circulatory activity in the genital area for men and women when they dream (**usually, in REM sleep**). In men, this results in an erection.

For men in their **60's and 70's**, tumescence, or the presence of an erection, occurs for a total of about **1 1/2** hours a night. **Tumescence** in older boys, **ages ten-twelve**, occurs for approximately **three hours** a night, and primarily during dream sleep.

Men who have a **physical** basis for **impotence**, such as **severe diabetes, nerve damage**, or interference from certain **medications**, will **not** have erections while they dream. On the other hand, men whose impotence stems from **psychological** causes, will have full erections during dream sleep.

To remedy physical causes of impotence, **medical treatment** is usually undertaken. To remedy psychological causes of impotence, counseling is typically begun in order to work through possible underlying **anger, stress, depression**, or, the gradual **loss of admiration** and **love for oneself** or for one's partner. An experienced therapist, who is well-trained in resolving sexual problems, is recommended. Seek out a therapist whose reputation is well-known in the helping professions.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Alcohol, caffeine, and many medications, including **antidepressants** and **sleeping pills**, affect the various stages of sleep and dreaming differently. Prozac **increases** REM dream sleep.

Before you take **stimulants** or depressants, check out any negative effects they may have on **each** of the stages of sleep, including precious REM sleep. A pharmacist, your doctor, or a sleep expert, may be able to assist you. Refer to **Resources** for information on **Sleep Disorders Centers** near you.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Depression, anxiety, or fatigue can wreck havoc with your dream **recall**. But here's the good news! Just as you can repeat your intention to wake up after a fifteen minute nap, and then successfully awaken, likewise, you can also repeat your intention to recall your dreams and then awaken with at least one dream story or image. This is especially true if you persevere for **two-three** weeks—the time it generally takes to eliminate or **acquire** a new habit. Thankfully, your subconscious mind can sometimes be persuaded to follow the commands of your conscious mind.

Remember to assist your subconscious mind, by **relaxing** before sleep, and by getting those essential “forty winks.” It also doesn't hurt to recite the many benefits that come to those who make dream exploration an important part of their inner spiritual life.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

You are not alone if your dreams feature you in an **unpleasant** situation. About **66%** of the dreams of “normal” subjects deal with unpleasant emotions or outcomes. That is to say, **two** out of every three nights, dreamers may experience feelings such as the following: frustration, dread, revulsion, shame, anxiety, or deep sadness.

All the more reason to keep a “**Positive Dream Images Journal**.” Even a dream that is predominately unpleasant, can render beautiful dream imagery that sparkles up your life. On a rainy day, these beautiful images can warm your heart and inspire you to soar toward wonderful goals!

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Dream researcher, Robert Van de Castle, and author of *Our Dreaming Mind*, conducted an extensive study of children's and adults' **dreams of animals**. He discovered that children's dreams contained **three** times as many animals as the dreams of **adults**.

Dogs and **horses** were dreamed about most frequently by **both** adults and children, and were followed next, by dreams of **cats**. Children, for the most part, dreamed about **land-based animals**; their dreams included guest appearances by some nasty Lions and Monsters and Bears!

In contrast, the adults' dreams included animals that are found in the **air** (birds and insects), as well as under the **sea** (fish).

Of the 300 adults' dreams studied, the seven most common animals were as follows:

Dogs	66	Birds	27
Horses	59	Snakes	24
Cats	27	Fish	21
		Insects	20

Of The 211 Children's' Dreams Studied, The Seven Most Common Animals Were As Follows:

Dogs	30	Snakes	15
Horses	28	Bears	14
Cats	15	Lions	13
		Monsters	13

Patricia Garfield, *Your Child's Dreams* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 390.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

According to Dr. Patricia Garfield, who wrote *Your Child's Dreams . . .*

Children's three, most common, **pleasant** dreams are:

1. Engaging in a **Pleasant Activity**: A game, a picnic, or a bed-time story
2. Obtaining a **Desirable Possession**
3. Giving an **Outstanding Performance**

Children's three, most common, **unpleasant** dreams are:

1. Being **Chased or Attacked**
2. **Sensing Something** Scary
3. Occurrence of **Injury or Death**

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Although uncommon, a few dreamers, in particular, children ages **3 to 7**, can experience a disorder of partial arousal, termed "**night terrors.**" These dreamers awaken screaming in terror, and appear **unaware** of people in the room, or their surroundings. Night terrors, which usually occur during the first **two** hours of sleep, are probably the result of being **catapulted** from **Stage 4 sleep**, where some dreams can occur, into sudden wakefulness.

Stress can also have some effect on the **frequency** of night terrors. Fortunately, as the nervous system **develops**, most young dreamers cease having night terrors as they become older.

For additional information, refer to Dr. Patricia Garfield's excellent book, *Your Child's Dreams*.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Religious texts throughout history, are replete with references to dreams.

- 1 There are **217** references to dreams in the **Talmud**, which is a collection of rabbinical literature representing the contributions of over 2,000 scholars from various countries.
- 2 According to the **Buddhist** Pali Scriptures, **five** of the Buddha's dreams describe his future vocation as a wandering monk.
- 3 The **Muslim prophet**, Mohammed, is said to have received his divine mission in a dream.
- 4 According to the **New Testament** of **the Bible**, the mother of Jesus, Mary, was told by the angel Gabriel, in a dream, that the child she would give birth to, was the Messiah, the Son of God.
- 5 In the **Old Testament** of the Bible, Psalm 127 declares that the Lord, ". . . giveth unto his beloved in their sleep."

The following words are also said to have been spoken by God:
"If anyone among you is a prophet, I will make myself known to him in a **vision**, I will speak to him in a **dream**." (Numbers 12:6)

- 6 In the New Testament, dreams are mentioned on **numerous** occasions. See the following references: Luke 1: 11 - 20; Luke 2: 8 - 14; Luke 9: 28 - 36; Matthew 1: 20 - 21; Matthew 2: 13, 19 - 20, and 22; Matthew 3: 16 - 17; Acts 9: 3 - 9; Acts 10: 3 - 21; Acts 16: 9; Acts 18: 9; Acts 23: 11; Acts 27: 23

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Surprisingly, although we may often think or talk about God, during the day, it is **very rare** to dream of God, during the night.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Blind people dream. **Helen Keller**, who was both deaf and blind, spoke of the joy she experienced while dreaming, "I am moved to pleasure by visions of ineffable beauty which I have never beheld in the physical world. Once, in a dream, I held in my hand **a pearl** . . . In dreams we catch glimpses of a life larger than our own . . . thoughts are imparted to us far above our ordinary thinking."

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Filling the **two** hours before sleep with **uplifting** thoughts and past-times, may be the best bed-time ritual. Such happy activities and thoughts are **likely to be incorporated** into your dream stories.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

If you live until the age of **seventy**, you will have spent approximately **six** exciting years in the "Land of Dreams." To avoid the dreaded "Rip Van Winkle Effect," keep a Dream Journal and record these eventful years to reflect on later, when your spirit desires **wisdom**, as it once desired knowledge.

Dreamwork

- [Top Ten Dreamwork Techniques](#) — "Your Guide to Happiness, Wisdom, and Purpose"
- [What Did You Dream Last Night?](#) — "Ask A Puzzling Question Tonight . . . Discover Your Dreaming Mind's Answers Tomorrow"
- [Artists Dreaming Joy](#) — A workbook that helps artists express a multitude of joys