

The meanings of your dreams

Dreams are a common phenomenon, a story or fragments of stories that we see when we are sleeping and sometimes even when conscious. Some dreams are grotesque; nightmares that force us to face our worst fears head-on. We find ourselves waking up screaming and panting, disoriented and detached momentarily from reality. Whereas some captivating dreams take us on a joyous journey to La La Land where we can do all the things we would never have the courage to do in the real world.

From times as ancient as the era of Egyptian Pharaohs and Islamic Prophets, dreams have been regarded as both premonitions of fortune and harbingers of sorrow. Dreams were important and understanding them was an even more crucial part of survival for various religious, cultural and societal factors back then. Conscious dream travel (the dreamer would leave the body and transform into a different animal-like entity to travel elsewhere), incubations (a sacred place where one would sleep to deliver foresights) and dream books (modern day 'Khowab Namas' found in every other book shop) were some of the essential methods of dream interpretation.

Understanding and Reasoning with Dreams

World renowned neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, Dr. Sigmund Freud strongly believed that dreams are a window to people's subconscious mind. They are a pathway for people to visit certain facets of their mind that they did not know existed.

Sometimes some dreams feel so incredibly real that it's difficult to differentiate between our imaginations and some distorted memory. Some dreams present a scenario so familiar that it feels like a déjà vu. There is no definitive answer to why exactly a dream – a timeless enigma – occurs, but different kinds of dreams may have different reasons for their occurrence.

Dreams of all sorts and distorts

According to Dr Tamima Tanjin, a distinguished clinical psychologist at Prottoy clinic, some of the most common dreams that people have are night terrors, nightmares, lucid and recurring dreams. Other frequenters include daydreams, psychic/intuitive and ordinary dreams that occur during the rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep.

Night Terrors & Nightmares: Factually, there is a big difference between night terrors and nightmares that many people may be oblivious to. When someone is facing a night terror, they tend to react violently; screaming, struggling for breath or having seizures are usual symptoms of night terror and it may be really difficult to wake them up. It is possible for the person to have absolutely no memory of having the night terror at all the next day. However, a nightmare on the other hand is a 'bad dream' that one may wake up from easily but remember for a long span of time.

Lucid Dream: A lucid dream is one where



you are conscious that you are in a dream so you may have some control over your actions, like for instance in a video game.

Alhan Aarsal, who recently completed his A'level examinations, is an avid reader and has extensive knowledge on lucid dreaming. "When you tell people about lucid dreaming, their reaction is that it's unnatural because dreams should guide themselves and you aren't supposed to have full control of your dream," he remarked in dismay. Although lucid dreams seem complicated, they allow dreamers to explore certain aspects of their brain that may not be possible in a normal dream. "A good analogy to use on these kinds of arguments is that a sailor does not control the sea; he merely chooses the direction," added Alhan and requested everyone to be more open minded regarding this topic.

Daydreams: In daydreams, your train of thoughts will seem to oscillate somewhere between consciousness and slumber. During daydreaming, people tend to become absent-minded or somewhere unaware of their surroundings and lose themselves in a wonderland built inside their head. The scientific community believes that the increasing usage and dependency on technology may be solely responsible for the lack of relaxed daydreaming moments in people's lives today.

Psychic/intuitive dreams: Sometimes some dreams seem like a foresight of an

upcoming incident. One may wake up from a dream with some sort of a message/warning and a few days later, they may find themselves in a situation that is astoundingly relatable to their dream. "I can think of a handful of times when intuitive dreams have really bothered me," admitted Suraiya Mehnaz, a student of North South University. "For instance, once I saw some random person dying in my dream, and a few days after that, I got the news of the demise of a distant relative of mine."

These dreams have led Suraiya to become more cautious about her actions in her daily life. As she believes that they have some meaning, Suraiya tries to remember all her dreams by writing them down and reads Islamic dream interpretations to better understand them.

Recurring Dreams: The title is pretty self-explanatory. These dreams occur more than once and portray a repeated scenario. For example, in your dream you may find yourself racing for dear life while being chased by a furious mob or a pack of ferocious animals; or end up naked in front of hundreds of guests at your own wedding. Recurring dreams are generally a reflection of the internal situation of someone's mind and may denote their level of excitement, stress, anxiety, hopelessness or depression regarding certain resolved or unresolved issues in their lives.

To believe or not to believe is the question

While today, our best pal for any research, Google does the job within milliseconds, there are many people who have pre-established dream interpretations that hold a significant meaning in their religion or culture. The mother of a close friend of mine read in a religious book that seeing milk, fresh fruits or large fish in a dream is a good omen. While this is quite normal, a few people totally lose their marbles over their dreams and go serious lengths to 'alter' their significance or impact. They devote themselves to believing them, visiting dream experts and buying stones, amulets and books of all sorts, simultaneously tormenting their mind and soul.

At the end of the day there is always a fine line between believing in something and obsessing over it and the latter has never done more good than harm in anyone's life. The human mind has the capacity to perform miraculous feats and dreams are one of its extraordinary creations that allow you to explore an unexplored dimension of your brain while you're asleep. So enjoy your dreams while they last and try not to over-contemplate on them!

By Nafisa Faruque

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