

Mastering the Art of Lucid Dreaming

Reality Shifter

2007

Contents

1	Preface of the Publisher	3
2	Why You Should Learn Lucid Dreaming	3
3	Misconceptions About Lucid Dreaming	4
4	How To Create A Lucid Dreaming Lifestyle	4
5	Levels of Awareness in Lucid Dreaming	5
6	How to Enhance Your Dream Recall	6
7	The Best Dream Journal Method For Lucid Dreaming	6
8	Using Your Personal Dream Symbols For Lucid Dreaming	10
9	Using Reality Checks to Achieve Lucid Dreams	10
10	Simple Reality Checks For Lucid Dreaming	11
11	Eight Simple Techniques To Help You Have Lucid Dreams	12
11.1	Pre-Sleep Visualization	12
11.2	Lucid Dreaming Affirmations	12
11.3	Putting Your Intent on Paper	13
11.4	Visual Patterns	13
11.5	I Am Dreaming	13
11.6	Napping	13
11.7	Sleeping Upright	13
11.8	Meditation	14
12	How to Increase Your Odds of Having a Lucid Dream	14

13 How to Induce a Lucid Dream While Awake	15
14 How To Remain Lucid While Dreaming	15
15 Learning to Control Your Dreams	16
16 Creating Objects Within Your Dreams	18
17 How to Create Your Personal Dream Space	19
17.1 How to Program Your Dreams In Advance	19
18 How to Use Your Dreams For Problem Solving	20
19 Using Dreams to Rehearse For Waking Life	21
20 How to Create Your Perfect Dream Teacher	23
21 Creating a Dream Guide For Your Unconscious Mind	24
22 Journey Deeper Into the Mind in Your Dreams	24
23 Using Your Dreams For Healing	25
24 Using Lucid Dreaming to Overcome Nightmares	26
25 How To Analyze Your Dreams More Effectively	27
26 False Awakenings and Lucid Dreaming	28
27 How To Turn a False Awakening Into a Lucid Dream	29
27.1 Alarm clock	29
27.2 Bathroom mirror	30
27.3 Brushing teeth	30
27.4 Breakfast	30
27.5 Your Bed	31
28 How To Turn a Nightmare Into a Lucid Dream	31

1 Preface of the Publisher

This text has been extracted from the website realityshifter.com. The author Kris explains in 29 articles the basics of lucid dreaming, how to learn it and how to benefit from it. Some phrasing has been adjusted to match the type of media, formatting has been applied similar to the original posts.

The techniques in each chapter build on the skills learned in the preceding chapters, so they will be most helpful when read in the correct order. For people with basic knowledge about lucid dreaming, this text may also serve as a reference for looking up special techniques.

2 Why You Should Learn Lucid Dreaming

Mastering the art of conscious dreaming – also referred to as lucid dreaming – involves learning to become aware that you are dreaming while the dream is taking place. Once the dreamer has learned to recognize that he or she is dreaming, the possibilities are endless.

Dreams can be fun and exciting, offering the opportunity for adventures limited only by our own imagination, but the entertainment value is not the only benefit to learning to control our dreams. Dreams can also be an important tool for personal growth and for improving mental and emotional wellbeing. They provide us with a glimpse into the inner workings of our unconscious mind, bringing us closer to understanding ourselves.

Throughout history, various cultures have recognized the value of dreams. In ancient Greece, visitors slept within temple chambers in the hopes they would be blessed with a conscious dream that would provide information to guide their actions in waking life. Tibetan yogis recognized the significance of dreams and developed a set of techniques known as Dream Yoga specifically for the purpose of mastering the art of conscious dreaming. Native American tribal shamans used dreams for the purpose of physical and psychological healing, while the Australian Aboriginal peoples describe the Dreaming as a powerful force that underlies all of waking reality.

Many authors, scientists, philosophers, and even inventors have reported experiencing bursts of insight within their dreams. 17th century French philosopher Rene Descartes, author Robert Louis Stevenson, and sewing machine inventor Elias Howe all reported that their most important theories and ideas first occurred to them as dreams. Albert Einstein claimed the inspiration for his Theory of Relativity came to him while in a dreamlike state, and Dmitri Mendeleev, a 19th century Russian chemist, reportedly fell asleep at his desk and awoke after conceiving the Periodic Table of Elements in a dream.

There are many valid reasons for learning the art of conscious dreaming. Dreams provide us with access to previously untapped resources for personal growth and exploration. By becoming more consciously aware of your mind's activities in the dream state, you are creating a more active connection between your conscious and unconscious mind. That connection will aid you in uncovering the underlying source of mental and emotional issues, and can then help you to overcome or integrate those issues in order to create a more positive and beneficial waking life.

Dreams may also be used to rehearse events and prepare for situations in waking life. You can practice social interaction for business purposes by rehearsing a speech or presentation. You can determine your best course of action in a situation by rehearsing various scenarios and outcomes. You can even practice specific skills within your dreams. A study published in the *Journal of Sport Behaviour* found that runners who practiced in their dreams reported significantly faster times than non-dreamers.

Dreams can be used for problem solving and creativity, or to discover the answers to important life questions, such as, "What is my purpose in life?" or "What am I here to accomplish?" By posing questions to ourselves, we can receive insight from our unconscious mind via our dreams.

Conscious dreaming techniques may be used to overcome nightmares or to discover the meaning of recurring dreams. By learning to observe our dream activities and to discover our personal dream symbols and cues, we can uncover new and insightful details about why we dream the things we dream.

Dreams may also be used for physical healing. By envisioning a healthy body within our dreams, we can

encourage the body's natural healing process. For some, dreams may also have a spiritual purpose. Dreams are used by many people as a way to connect with the spirit or higher self.

Dreams can also provide entertainment value. By learning how to have conscious dreams, we can learn to create any dream environment or events we choose and can take the starring role in the adventure of our choice.

3 Misconceptions About Lucid Dreaming

Misconceptions about dreams and lucid dreaming abound. Many people view dreams as frivolous and consider lucid dreaming a waste of time and effort, when in fact lucid dreaming can be an extremely beneficial practice. Dreams can provide us with a very effective method of learning more about ourselves and, in turn, discovering how to improve our waking lives.

Some view lucid dreaming as solely a spiritual pursuit, while others consider it "New Age mumbo jumbo." Learning to have conscious dreams may be a spiritual experience for some, but spiritual practice is not required in order to learn lucid dreaming. Conscious dreaming can provide the dreamer with very practical results.

Many people also believe learning to control your dreams will interfere with the mind's natural dreaming process. This is also untrue. The experienced dreamer always has the option to refrain from exerting any control over the dream environment or events – to allow his or her unconscious mind to "steer" the dream, so to speak – while he or she simply acts as an observer and remains consciously aware that the events are indeed part of a dream. The dreamer also may elect to control only his or her own actions or attitudes within the dream while allowing the unconscious mind to control all other aspects of the dream.

A common objection is that lucid dreaming encourages an attitude of escapism. This depends entirely on the individual dreamer and his or her own personal approach. We frequently escape reality through other methods, such as reading a novel or watching a movie. Conscious dreaming may be considered to provide more practical benefits than many other methods of escaping reality, but, in the quest for conscious dreaming, it's important not to forget about or neglect the waking world.

A healthy sleep pattern should always be maintained. Not only will it ensure your waking reality is not ignored, it will also improve your chances of experiencing conscious dreaming.

Having said that, it's important to note that using conscious dreaming for entertainment purposes can be relaxing and beneficial and should not be considered a negative thing.

4 How To Create A Lucid Dreaming Lifestyle

The most important thing to keep in mind while learning lucid dreaming is that practice, patience, and persistence pay off. A daily practice is essential when first learning how to have conscious dreams.

The lucid dreaming techniques will gradually become second nature to you, but in the early stages it's vital to make a determined effort to perform the techniques several times throughout the day. Most of the techniques take only seconds to perform and can be done in any setting.

Eating right and maintaining a healthy sleep pattern are also very important. It's best to avoid caffeine, sugar, alcohol, and anything else that might interfere with your sleep pattern. If avoiding these substances is not possible, I recommended avoiding them in the afternoon and evening hours in order to allow your body time to fully process the substance prior to bedtime.

Creating a healthy sleep environment also can be beneficial. Arrange your sleeping environment in a way that discourages noise, distractions, and interruptions.

It's also worthwhile to maintain other habits that encourage lucid dreaming. Find a friend who is interested in lucid dreaming and work through the techniques at the same time, discussing your observations each day, sharing dream details, and reporting results. This will keep the idea of conscious dreaming in the forefront

of your mind every day. If you don't have a friend nearby who can act as a lucid dreaming partner, there are many discussion groups online where you may be able to find a partner or even an entire group of people willing to discuss dreams and lucid dreaming.

Create a time to discuss conscious dreaming with your family each day. Make it a daily routine to discuss your dreams of the previous night every morning at breakfast time or in the car on the way to school or work. Reporting your dreams each day will help to improve your dream recall.

If you are a parent, encourage conscious dreaming in your children by discussing their dreams with them each day. Tell them about your dreams, and suggest to them that they can influence their own dreams.

Read articles or books about conscious or lucid dreaming before bedtime in order to set the idea in your mind as you drift off to sleep.

Taking these extra steps will create an environment and lifestyle that encourages the onset of lucid dreams.

5 Levels of Awareness in Lucid Dreaming

While the term *lucid dreaming* refers to the state of being consciously aware within your dream, there are many different levels of conscious awareness, varying from only a vague awareness of the dream state to complete control over the dream events. Being consciously aware within your dream doesn't always mean you will be able to exert control over the dream environment or events, or even over your own actions. Gaining control takes practice.

In the early stages, you may have only a vague awareness that you are dreaming. This is typically referred to as being *mildly conscious* or *mildly lucid*. Mild lucidity may slip away very easily, especially as you transition from one dream scene to the next.

You also may find that you experience brief periods of conscious awareness or lucidity which come and go throughout the dream, slipping away as you become caught up in the events of the dream then returning when a specific aspect of the dream prompts you to question again whether or not you are dreaming. This is referred to as *periodic lucidity* and is a very common occurrence when learning lucid dreaming. It's very easy to become so involved in the events of the dream that we lose track of the conscious awareness we previously had and then must work to regain it.

As you progress in your practice of lucid dreaming, you'll gradually begin to achieve more intense levels of awareness and lucidity, and you'll become more skilled at using techniques to maintain that level of awareness throughout the dream.

Eventually, you'll be able to control your own actions and attitudes within the dream. You will learn to control your own responses to situations within your dreams, allowing you to react calmly and positively to events that previously would have caused fear or panic. By becoming consciously aware that you're dreaming, you will also recognize you have nothing to fear from the events in the dream and will be able to determine the dream's true underlying meaning. You'll be able to alter the course of the dream by altering your own actions and reactions within the dream. Developing these skills just takes consistent practice.

You'll gradually learn to control the events themselves and will become more adept at controlling your dream environment. When you reach this stage, you will have the ability to decide whether to take conscious control of the dream or instead allow your unconscious mind to guide the events of the dream while you simply remain aware that you are dreaming.

Ultimately, you'll develop the skill to program your dreams in order to dream about the situations or events of your own choosing. You'll be able to use your dreams to rehearse for events in waking life, to explore the unconscious mind for personal growth and healing, or simply for entertainment purposes. The choice is completely up to you.

6 How to Enhance Your Dream Recall

Enhancing your dream recall is one of the most important aspects in learning to achieve lucid dreaming. Everyone dreams, but not everyone remembers their dreams the following morning. If you are not able to recall your dreams, you may have a lucid dreaming experience and not even remember it!

There are many techniques to help you enhance your dream recall. In this article, I've included the most effective methods to help you first learn to recall at least one dream per night and eventually learn to recall multiple dreams each night.

The simplest method involves focusing your intent before you drift off to sleep. Before falling asleep, visualize yourself waking in the morning and recalling your dreams in vivid detail. Picture yourself writing the details of your dreams in a dream journal.

As you fall asleep, focus your intent by holding brief affirmations in mind. Your affirmations should be brief and straightforward, such as:

I will remember my dreams upon awakening.

or

I will awaken in the morning and remember my dreams.

Keep your attention on the affirmations as you drift off to sleep. If you find your mind wandering to other topics, gently nudge it back to your desired intent to remember your dreams when you awaken.

Upon awakening each morning, do not move or get out of bed. Instead, lie completely still and gently focus on recalling your dream. Dreams are very slippery things, and the slightest activity may cause most of the dream details to slip from your mind.

Do not concentrate too intently or you will find the dream details slipping away. Struggling too much to recall details is often counterproductive. With calm and relaxed attention, attempt to recall key images, events, and moods from the dream.

When you first awaken, take note of how you are feeling emotionally and mentally. What is your mood? Which emotions are foremost in your mind? Recall the overall tone of the dream.

Post a reminder somewhere near your bed so you will see it when you first wake up. The reminder should be brief and simple, such as, "Remember your dreams," and should be written in large clear letters. You may also want to post a similar reminder in the bathroom in case you get up in the middle of the night.

If you must use an alarm clock, use a Zen alarm clock¹ to wake up gradually. Waking up slowly with a Zen alarm clock rather than being jolted awake by a traditional alarm clock will greatly enhance your dream recall and your ability to become lucid within your dream.

Most importantly, keep a dream journal. The next chapter will explain in detail the best techniques for keeping a dream journal and how to use your journal more effectively to learn lucid dreaming.

7 The Best Dream Journal Method For Lucid Dreaming

Keeping a dream journal is the single most effective method for enhancing dream recall. It also can be highly effective at helping you achieve lucid dreaming. By recording the details of each dream in your journal, you will be able to track dream patterns and discover your personal dream cues, which then can be used in other techniques to trigger conscious dreaming.

The first step is to obtain a notebook or journal in which to record your dreams. Keep the journal and a pen or pencil beside your bed at all times, with your journal left open to the next blank page. You also may want

¹<http://www.now-zen.com/cgi-bin/aff?nzap426>

to obtain a second journal to leave in any other location in your home where you might fall asleep (such as the reclining chair in front of the television) or to take with you when you travel.

It's important to store your dream journal in an easily accessible location, preferably next to your bed. Even the slightest amount of activity can cause you to forget the details of a dream, and the small amount of activity involved in getting out of bed to locate your dream journal may in itself be enough to trigger the loss of dream details from memory.

Upon waking, after focusing on remembering the details of your dream, record as many details as possible in your dream journal. Make it the first thing you do every morning. After only a few moments of waking activity, you begin to forget the details of your dream. By following the steps outlined below, you'll learn to record a thorough description of your dream before important details are lost or forgotten.

- Begin by jotting down quick notes using **keywords**. For example: *garden, lost, school, Jane, tunnel, red*. Keywords will trigger your mind to remember further details about each dream scene as you continue to record the events of your dream. You can also use these keywords later to determine your personal dream symbols, which will help you pinpoint which reality checks will be most likely to trigger lucid dreams for you.

Designate a section at the top or bottom of the page for your keywords. You can also elect to use the outer margin of each page instead. Noting keywords in the same place on each page will make it easier for you to flip through the pages later to determine which words appear most often. You may also elect to circle or highlight specific keywords in your dream journal entries to make those words easier to find later.

- Write down any **person, place, or object that seemed central** to the dream, or note anything strange or unusual that stood out in the dream.
- Write down the **Who, What, When, and Where** of the dream in brief phrases or statements. Once you have captured the primary details of the dream, you may begin to elaborate further on each of the phrases or statements.
- Note the overall **mood or tone** of the dream, including any distinct feelings or impressions you experienced.
- Note the prominent color or **colors** in the dream, or note if the dream occurred in black and white.
- Draw or sketch key points or images from the dream. Since we dream in images, our recall is often enhanced by looking at our own sketches of dream events. You don't need to be a talented artist to do this. You are the only one who ever needs to see your dream sketches.
- Indicate the **level of lucidity** you experienced in the dream. This will allow you to track your conscious dreaming progress later. For each entry, use the same standards to note your level of lucidity. The following is a common method of assessing lucidity levels:

Not Lucid You experienced no awareness whatsoever that you were dreaming.

Mildly Lucid You experienced slight awareness that you were dreaming, but could not confirm or hold on to that awareness. This form of mild lucidity occurs often in the early stages of conscious dreaming practice. In this stage, dreamers frequently report having the vague sensation or fleeting thought that they were dreaming.

Periodically Lucid You experienced certainty that you were dreaming, but could not maintain that awareness throughout the rest of the dream. Periodic lucidity also occurs often during the early stages of conscious dreaming practice. Dreamers are able to attain a level of conscious awareness and confirm they are dreaming, but the lucidity slips away when they later become distracted or caught up in the dream again.

Fully Lucid You experienced certainty that you were dreaming and you were able to maintain that conscious awareness to remain lucid, but you did not have control over the dream events or dream environment.

Dream Control You experienced certainty that you were dreaming and you were able to remain lucid, and you achieved control over the dream events or dream environment.

After you have recorded all the details of your dream, give your dream journal entry a descriptive title. Be sure to include a date and time for each entry.

Categorize your dream. This will help you determine if certain types of dreams occur more often than others. The categories may be as simple as "School dream", "Flying Dream", or "Nightmare", or you can make them more detailed if you wish. I recommend keeping it simple at first. You can always add new categories later.

Don't be concerned if at first you remember only scant details. In many cases, dreamers are only able to recall a few brief details, and often dreamers can recall only one central detail that played a strong role or stood out in the dream. It is sometimes easier to recall emotions rather than specific details. The important thing is to write down whatever you remember, including the emotions or tone of the dream, and to make a habit of doing it every single morning. With practice, you will gradually develop the ability to recall at least one dream per night, and over time you'll begin to recall multiple dreams per night.

To help you remember these steps, the next pages shows a Dream Journal Template. It will walk you step-by-step through remembering all the details of your dreams. You may print it several times or create your own template.

Dream Journal Entry

Title	
Category	
Date / Time of Awakening	
Lucidity	<input type="checkbox"/> Not lucid <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly lucid <input type="checkbox"/> Periodically lucid <input type="checkbox"/> Fully lucid <input type="checkbox"/> Dream control <input type="checkbox"/> Can't remember
Recall ability	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly forgotten <input type="checkbox"/> Partially reconstructed <input type="checkbox"/> Well remembered
Keywords	
Description Who? When? What? Where?	
People / Figures	
Mood / Emotions	
Colors / Visuals	
Interpretation	

8 Using Your Personal Dream Symbols For Lucid Dreaming

Every person has his or her own personal dream symbols – objects, situations, or places that appear frequently within dreams. One person may dream often of a specific animal, while another may find himself or herself frequently visiting the same location in dreams. These commonly appearing phenomena vary from person to person and are known as personal dream symbols.

Discovering your own personal dream symbols can be of great help in achieving lucid dreaming. Once you have discovered your personal dream symbols, you'll be able to use those symbols as cues for a reality check to trigger a lucid dream.

In order to discover your personal dream symbols, it's necessary to keep a dream journal. (Refer to the previous chapter to learn the best methods for recording your dreams to encourage lucid dreaming.)

Over time, you'll begin to notice patterns emerging in your journal. Certain things will appear more often than others. **These are your personal dream symbols.**

Keep in mind, dream symbols don't always represent details that stood out or were prominently featured in the dream. You may find a specific dream symbol appears frequently as a background detail – something you notice but don't necessarily focus on during your dreams.

For example, my dreams nearly always feature water in some form, but water is not usually the focal point of the dreams. Instead, water often appears in the background as part of the scenery, even when my dreams take place indoors. By tracking my dreams with a journal, I discovered this pattern. Now every time I see water in any form, even just the faucet in my kitchen or a puddle on the street, I perform a reality check. After I began using water as my trigger for a reality check, the frequency of my lucid dreams quadrupled.

By working with what my mind was already doing, I greatly increased my odds of having lucid dreams. If you explore your dreams and take note of the things you already dream about on a regular basis, you can use that information to your advantage and boost your chance for lucidity.

9 Using Reality Checks to Achieve Lucid Dreams

In order to determine whether or not you are dreaming, it's necessary to develop a habit of performing frequent reality checks. A reality check simply involves asking yourself a question, such as "Am I dreaming?" or "Is this a dream?", and may also involve specific actions you can take to determine if you are awake or dreaming.

Because most of us are not in the habit of asking ourselves "Am I dreaming?" while in the midst of a dream, we must train ourselves to get into the habit of questioning our reality. By training yourself to regularly question your reality during waking life, the habit will eventually carry over to your dreaming life and you'll find yourself posing the question while dreaming. When that happens, you'll greatly increase the odds of realizing you are within a dream and thus increase the odds of achieving lucidity.

Asking yourself "Am I dreaming?" only whenever the thought occurs to you will not help you develop the habit. Instead, you must make a habit of remembering to perform reality checks at frequent intervals throughout the day. It may help to schedule your reality checks so they coincide with other events that typically occur multiple times during each day, such as every time you eat, every time you use the restroom, every time you walk in or out of your home, or even every time you walk through any doorway. If you make it a point to ask yourself "Am I dreaming?" whenever you perform specific activities, you'll eventually develop a habit of questioning your reality several times each day.

A common method of scheduling reality checks involves setting the alarm on your wristwatch to sound every hour and performing your reality check whenever the alarm sounds. I don't recommend this method because if it's the only prompt you use you'll eventually begin to rely on the alarm as your sole trigger to perform a reality check. If you do that and then never hear an alarm within your dream, you'll never be prompted to perform a reality check while dreaming. It's much more useful to incorporate a variety of separate prompts into your day so you are frequently reminded to perform your reality check without relying solely on one specific act or event to prompt you.

You should also begin to utilize your personal dream symbols as cues to perform reality checks. (Refer to the previous chapter for methods to identify your own personal dream symbols.) After I examined my dream journal and discovered water was something that turned up in more than half of my dreams, I began to use water as my cue to perform reality checks throughout the day. Each time I encountered water in any form in waking life, I took note of it and asked myself if I was dreaming. This became a habit and eventually I found myself in a dream, encountered water, and asked myself if I was dreaming. It prompted me to become lucid.

Review your dream journal to identify your own personal dream symbols and begin using them as prompts for reality checks throughout the day. By doing this, you'll condition yourself to perform a reality check whenever you encounter the dream symbol an object or event you've already identified as a frequent participant in your dreams. Later, when you dream again of that particular dream symbol, your training will have prepared you to ask "Am I dreaming?", providing you with an ideal opportunity to recognize you are dreaming and subsequently achieve a conscious dreaming experience.

In most cases, asking yourself "Am I dreaming?" is not enough on its own. Your dreaming mind is almost always firmly convinced of the reality of the dream situation, no matter how unusual or bizarre the situation may be. You may be sailing on a river of peanut butter while gazing at elephants with gossamer wings as they fly patterns in the sky above you, yet – without performing specific techniques to prove to yourself you are dreaming – your dreaming mind will be convinced the situation is entirely real. For this reason, it's necessary not only to ask yourself if you are dreaming but also to take other very simple steps at the same time to determine whether or not you are within a dream. In the following chapter, I'll describe some of those steps in detail.

10 Simple Reality Checks For Lucid Dreaming

One of the easiest reality checks involves using written or printed text to determine whether or not you are dreaming. In dreams, text nearly always shifts, wiggles, or changes as you glance at it. This makes it perfect for use in a reality check. Whenever you ask yourself, "Am I dreaming?", glance at something with text written or printed on it. Use a book, newspaper, sign, billboard, or anything else you can find that contains clear and easy-to-read text. Stare at the text for a moment. If the text remains clear and does not shift or wiggle, read the words and fix them in your mind then look away briefly. Look back again at the text and verify the words have not changed.

If the words have changed, congratulations! You're dreaming! If the words have not changed, try the reality check a second time just to be sure you are awake. Do this throughout the day, whenever you perform your other reality checks.

I recommend writing the words "Am I dreaming?" on a small card or piece of paper and carrying it in your pocket or wallet at all times. This will not only provide you with quick access to clearly printed text to use during your reality check but will also remind you to perform the "Am I dreaming?" reality check whenever you see the card.

Similar to written or printed text, the digitally displayed letters or numbers on a digital watch, clock, cell-phone, or handheld computer also may be used to perform the reality check. In dreams, digital displays have a tendency to wiggle or morph from one string of text into a new and entirely different string of text right before your eyes. Even when digital numbers don't wiggle, they tend to change randomly. Check the time on the nearest digital clock or watch, glance away for a moment, and then look back again. Has the time changed in an unusual way? If so, you might be dreaming. Double-check by performing this reality check a second time to see if the numbers on the clock randomly change again.

For another quick and easy reality check, attempt to use your mind to alter your surroundings. As you ask yourself, "Am I dreaming?", attempt to use your thoughts to affect something that normally would remain fixed or stable, such as the color of the walls or floor. Try to change the color of the walls by mentally willing it to happen. If you're dreaming, there is a very good chance you will be able to change the color of the walls to the color of your choice, or possibly to a random color or pattern. If the color changes, you'll realize you are dreaming. If the color does not change, make one more try just to be sure.

Another method to determine if you are dreaming is to attempt to fly. Don't leap into the air like Superman

– just in case you're *not* dreaming – but attempt to "think" yourself into the air. Focus on being lightweight and capable of flying, stand on your tiptoes and imagine floating upward, and see what happens. If you are dreaming, you may begin to float into the air. Flying dreams are fun and invigorating, and flying while lucid can be wonderfully exhilarating.

One reality check to avoid: never ask anyone else if you're dreaming. The answer inevitably will be "No", even when you truly are dreaming. Your dreaming mind will conspire to keep you in an unaware state. Since other people appearing in your dreams are really representations of your unconscious mind, they will almost invariably tell you you're not dreaming, which makes this type of reality check extremely unreliable. Stick to the other techniques instead.

As you learn to perform frequent reality checks, not only will you increase your odds of performing one while dreaming, you also will become more aware of the details of life you typically overlook. We are constantly bombarded with sensory information and unconsciously tune out a large portion of it. As you begin to tune in, you'll gradually become more and more observant of your surroundings. This new sensory awareness will aid you considerably in achieving lucid dreaming, and it may help you achieve an expanded awareness throughout your daily life as well.

11 Eight Simple Techniques To Help You Have Lucid Dreams

Achieving conscious awareness in your dreams is not as difficult as it seems, but it does require practice in order to attain a lucid state on a regular basis. The great thing about lucid dreaming techniques is their simplicity. They're easy to learn and easy to practice on your own, they don't cost anything, you don't need any fancy equipment to practice them, and they don't take a huge amount of time each day.

The most important thing is to be consistent about your daily practice. Inconsistent practice is a common cause for failure to achieve lucid dreaming. Practicing one or more of the following techniques every day will help you achieve conscious awareness in your dreams. It may not happen the first night, but if you're consistent it could happen in a few short weeks.

Start by using just one technique each day. After a few days, add a second technique and perform both techniques each day for a few days. Then add a third technique and perform all three techniques for the next few days, and continue adding a new technique every few days. Even if you practice every one of these techniques within the same day, it will not require you to set aside hours and hours of practice time. Most of the techniques take only a few minutes, and many of them can be done as you fall asleep.

11.1 Pre-Sleep Visualization

Before you fall asleep, use the following visualization to set your intent to have a lucid dream. Picture yourself falling asleep and entering a dream. Make the visualization as detailed as possible with vivid imagery. Look around and observe your dream surroundings. As you imagine yourself dreaming, visualize yourself performing a reality check and realizing you are within a dream. Picture yourself become consciously aware within your dream, imagine yourself remaining calm and lucid, and then picture yourself gaining control over your dream.

11.2 Lucid Dreaming Affirmations

Use one of the following affirmations at bedtime as you drift off to sleep. You can state the affirmation out loud, but that may interfere with falling asleep. I recommend repeating it mentally instead. You may also choose to record the affirmations in your own voice and listen to the recording as you fall asleep.

- I will become lucid in my dreams tonight.
- I am a lucid dreamer.
- I will have a lucid dream tonight.

- I will awaken within my dream tonight and realize I am dreaming.

Focus your mind on the intent to become lucid within your dreams, and if your mind wanders to another topic, gently bring it back to the affirmations.

When stating the affirmations out loud, you may choose to use a firm voice or may choose to use a more soothing and relaxing voice. Some people respond better to gentle reassurances spoken in a soft voice, while other people respond better to instructions given in a strong, commanding voice. You'll need to experiment with both methods to determine which approach triggers a stronger response in you.

11.3 Putting Your Intent on Paper

Before you go to bed, write down your intent to have a lucid dream. On a piece of paper or in your dream journal, handwrite each of the lucid dreaming affirmations. As you write each affirmation, focus not just on the words but on the intent behind the affirmation. Consider the full meaning of each statement. Put some emotion into it. Repeat each affirmation silently or out loud as you write it on paper.

11.4 Visual Patterns

As you fall asleep, on occasion you might remain conscious enough to notice patterns appearing in your visual range as if they are being projected onto the inside of your eyelids. These patterns may begin to take on the forms and shapes that become your first dream of the night, and can be used to help you achieve a lucid dream.

As you drift off to sleep, maintain your conscious awareness by focusing on the visual patterns being projected on the inside of your eyelids. At first, the patterns may seem geometric or even abstract. They will gradually take on the form of meaningful images. As you begin to notice these images, gently direct your conscious mind to step into the dream scene that is taking shape.

11.5 I Am Dreaming

Use the statement "I am dreaming" to guide yourself into a lucid dream. As you drift off to sleep, repeat to yourself over and over, "I am dreaming." Continue on in that manner until you fall asleep. Eventually, you will learn to maintain this thought in mind until you find yourself dreaming. This method is especially effective when used while napping during the daytime.

11.6 Napping

If your schedule permits, take a nap in the mid-afternoon. You will be more likely to slip quickly into the REM sleep state in which dreaming takes place. Before your nap, take steps to focus your intent on achieving a lucid dream. Use visualizations, affirmations, or the "I am dreaming" technique.

11.7 Sleeping Upright

Sleeping upright may help you remain consciously aware enough to become lucid within your dreams. At the same time, you also must remain comfortable in order to sleep well, so it is necessary to experiment with various positions to determine which position provides the highest level of comfort for you. There are several options available to you:

1. Sleep in a reclining chair.
2. Sleep while propped up on several pillows to elevate your head and upper body.

3. Sleep while propped up on a "wedge pillow" – a triangular, wedge-shaped pillow specifically designed to help you sleep in an upright position.

When sleeping upright in bed, it also may help to place a pillow or rolled towel beneath your knees in order to elevate them slightly. This will alleviate any pressure on your lower back or tailbone and will improve circulation in the lower body.

11.8 Meditation

Beginning a daily meditation practice is another effective way to increase your odds of achieving a lucid dream. Most meditators who spend at least twenty to thirty minutes per day in meditation report an increase in the vividness of their dreams, along with an increase in the quantity of lucid dreams they experience. It is not required that you take on an elaborate meditation practice. All that is needed is a very simple practice of sitting in a comfortable position while remaining physically inactive and focusing your mind on observing your own thoughts. Meditation also provides dozens of other benefits, including reduced stress, enhanced creativity, and more refreshing sleep. To achieve deep meditation without years of practice, try the Insight CD².

12 How to Increase Your Odds of Having a Lucid Dream

Because dreams take place in the REM sleep state and we experience the REM state more frequently in the later hours of sleep, the chance of achieving a lucid dream is much higher during the last few hours before you wake up. By making a slight adjustment to your sleep pattern, you can take advantage of this increased occurrence of REM sleep to trigger lucid dreams.

Using a **wake-up interval**, you can quickly increase your chances of having a lucid dream. The simplest method of employing the wake-up interval technique is to sleep until two hours prior to your usual wake-up time, get out of bed and remain active for one hour, then return to bed for the final hour of sleep. Your chances of achieving a lucid dream in that final hour of sleep will be dramatically increased.

For example, if you typically sleep for eight hours per night, on a normal night you may decide to retire to bed at 11 PM and wake up at 7 AM. To use the wake-up interval, you would instead go to bed your usual bedtime of 11 PM but set your alarm for 5 AM – six hours later – then awaken at 5 AM and spend an hour involved in any activity during which you're not likely to fall back to sleep. At 6 AM, you would return to bed and sleep for another hour. (As you can see, this results in a total sleep time of only seven hours, but we'll resolve that problem in a moment.)

During your one-hour wake-up interval, *do not stay in bed*. Even if you think you'll be able to remain awake for the full hour, chances are very high that you'll fall back to sleep. Instead, get out of bed and participate in other activities during that time. It's the perfect time to read about lucid dreaming, to review your past dream journal entries, and to use other conscious dreaming techniques.

I don't recommend watching television or using a computer during your wake-up interval. The flickering light of the TV or the glaring light of the computer screen can trick the mind into thinking it's daytime, which can in turn interfere with your sleep and your dream cycle when you go back to bed.

When you return to bed after your wake-up interval, as you drift off to sleep perform the same lucid dreaming techniques you use in the evening before bedtime.

As you may have noticed, when using the wake-up interval technique described above, an hour of sleep is lost. There are two different ways to handle this. You may elect to forfeit the lost hour of sleep, or, for better rest and better results, make up for the one-hour wake-up interval by retiring to bed an hour earlier in the evening or sleeping an hour later in the morning.

²<http://www.immrama.org/insight/insightcd.html>

13 How to Induce a Lucid Dream While Awake

Though it's difficult to induce a lucid dream directly from the waking state when you first go to bed at night, it is very possible to achieve a wake-induced lucid dream (WILD) during your wake-up interval in the morning or when napping in the mid-afternoon. In order to induce a conscious dream from the waking state, and especially when attempting it during a daytime nap, it's first necessary to completely relax your physical body. There are several very effective relaxation techniques described on this site.

When you are completely relaxed, lie comfortably on your back in bed. **Lift one hand and forearm until it is pointed upward, held perpendicular to your upper arm.** Keep your arm in this position as you drift off to sleep. When you lose conscious awareness, your arm will naturally fall back to the bed, which will most likely wake you up. When this occurs, begin the technique again. The purpose of this exercise is to teach yourself how to retain your conscious awareness as you transition into the sleep state, to maintain a perfect balance between a physically sleeping body and a consciously aware mind. You'll eventually become able to remain mentally awake long after your body falls asleep.

Another useful technique is to **perform a specific mental task** as you fall asleep. Though it may come as a surprise, something as simple and repetitive as counting sheep can be helpful. Counting your breaths can be equally effective. The goal is to continue the activity even as you drift into the sleep state. As long as your conscious awareness is active, the likelihood of achieving a lucid dream is increased.

You can combine the act of counting with the **"I am dreaming" affirmation**. As you lie in bed, think to yourself, "One. I am dreaming. Two. I am dreaming. Three. I am dreaming. Four..." and continue counting in a gentle, relaxed manner. As you fall asleep, hold on to your conscious awareness for as long as possible but don't concentrate so hard you can't fall asleep.

Actively involving your mind in a specific visualization can be even more effective because it provides the mind with ready-made scenery for your dream. As you lie in bed, **visualize yourself walking along a path** in the location of your choice. It may be a path in a lush forest, a path down a spiral staircase, a long corridor within a large mansion, or any other path that allows you to explore your surroundings as you move deeper and deeper into the setting you have created within your mind. Maintain your conscious awareness as you observe the details of your environment, even as you fall asleep. Repeat the "I am dreaming" affirmation as you explore the scene within your visualization, and eventually that visualization may transition into a dream.

You can also try **falling asleep with your eyes open**, a technique Erin Pavlina describes in her podcast³. I haven't successfully induced a lucid dream with that particular technique yet but it might work for you. The podcast is brief and offers an excellent introduction to lucid dreaming.

14 How To Remain Lucid While Dreaming

Once you become lucid within a dream, you may find the most difficult aspect is holding onto that awareness. It's incredibly easy to become caught up in the events of the dream and quickly lose whatever lucidity was initially gained. You may achieve conscious awareness one moment and not even notice when it slips away in the next moment. This is a common occurrence and will happen less often as you continue your daily lucid dreaming practice and learn to control your level of awareness within the dream.

The first time you realize you're dreaming, it is natural to feel a sense of excitement. It's important not to allow yourself to be carried away by this excitement or it is very likely you'll lose your hold on that conscious awareness and either become caught up in the dream again or possibly even wake yourself up. Try to remain calm and hold on to the thought that you are dreaming. Repeat to yourself, "I am dreaming. This is a dream." Focus your efforts on convincing yourself you are dreaming. This will help you maintain a firm hold on your newly achieved lucidity.

Sometimes it's also necessary to take other simple steps to remain consciously aware and to increase your level of lucidity. As you become consciously aware, the dream details may become fuzzy and it might be necessary to **request clarity from your own mind**. This can be done quickly and easily with a statement such as "Give

³<http://www.stevpavlina.com/blog/2006/01/stevpavlinacom-podcast-010-lucid-dreaming/>

me clarity," or a command such as "Clarity now!", as described by William Buhlman in *Adventures Beyond The Body*. You may be surprised at how well your mind obeys the command.

Because the dream details can become fuzzy and slip in and out of view as you become more aware, it may help to **focus on a specific object** to hold the dream scene in place. Select an object that is prominent in the current dream scene. If a specific object triggered the initial realization that you were dreaming, using that particular object as your point of focus can reinforce the thought that you are in a dream and therefore work to enhance the lucidity.

If possible, select an object that is not likely to move itself away from your immediate area. For example, choose a stationary flower vase instead of something mobile such as a dog or cat. The pet is likely to wander out of the dream scene, while the vase is more likely to remain in place and therefore remain in focus. If you focus your attention on a moving object it may cause you to become caught up in the dream by following the object, and becoming caught up in the dream can quickly result in a loss of lucidity.

If no other object is immediately available to use as a point of focus, **try focusing on your own hands** instead. Hold both of your hands out in front of you and focus on them while concentrating on remaining lucid.

Another method for maintaining your conscious awareness is called **spinning**. As soon as you feel yourself losing your awareness and slipping back into a non-lucid state, or even whenever you feel a dream may be ending and you might wake up when you'd rather stay in the dream for a little while longer, try holding your arms wide open and spinning your dream body around. Pay attention to the physical sensations experienced by your dream body while spinning. By focusing your attention on the physical sensations your dream body is experiencing, you're more likely to hold yourself in the dream and to maintain a high level of lucidity.

Whenever you become lucid within your dream, beware of false awakenings. Achieving conscious awareness in your dream is often followed quickly by waking up. Just as often, you may find yourself only dreaming of waking up but not realizing you are still dreaming. This is known as a false awakening. It may seem extraordinarily realistic, sometimes to the extent that you do not question whether or not you have truly woken up. Whenever you believe you have woken up from a lucid dream, it's important to immediately perform a reality check to determine if you have truly woken up or if it is indeed only a dream of waking up.

15 Learning to Control Your Dreams

As you grow more proficient at becoming lucid within your dreams, you may find it takes some practice before you're able to influence things within the dream or even to control your own actions in the dream. Being lucid simply means being aware of the fact that you're dreaming. There are many levels of lucidity, and some of them come with more control than others. Having a lucid dream doesn't always mean you'll have control of the dream, but with a bit of practice you can learn how to gain control of your dream self as well as the dream environment and everything in it. That's when things really get fun.

As soon as you achieve conscious awareness within a dream and have taken steps to maintain that lucidity, immediately remind yourself that you are in complete control of your actions and reactions. Quickly assess the dream scene – don't spend too much time looking around or you may get caught up in the dream and lose lucidity – then make a conscious decision about where you would like to go within the dream scene and what you would like to do. Make a determined effort to take that action before becoming involved in anything else within the dream. You may even want to make an effort to take a meaningless but deliberate action, such as jumping up and down, simply to prove to your mind that you are in control.

When you encounter something you normally would fear in your dream, make a point to stop yourself from becoming afraid. Take control of your actions and your reactions by facing the object of your fear and stating clearly to it that you are dreaming, you are not afraid, and you are in complete control. This will not only serve to convince your mind that you're in control of the dream, it also will reinforce your lucidity as you acknowledge you have no reason to fear because it is only a dream.

Step 1: Controlling Your Dream Body

To practice controlling your dream environment, you should first work to control your own dream body. It's easier to control your own actions than to control the other elements of your dream world, so it's best to start there.

In manipulating your dream body, you have a surprising amount of flexibility. Begin by attempting to change the clothes worn by your dream body simply by consciously willing it to happen. Try changing the color of your clothing, then attempt to change the style of the clothing.

Use the same technique to alter the length or color of your hair. Try making yourself taller or shorter. Change the color of your eyes. For fun, try consciously willing yourself to grow wings, a tail, or extra arms and legs.

Remember, your dream body is just a projection of your mind, so project anything you want and see what happens.

Step 2: Learning to Control Your Dream Environment

Once you have practiced maintaining control of your dream body, it's time to move on to controlling your dream environment. It is best to begin with small changes to your dream surroundings and gradually work up to larger changes.

Spend time practicing simple changes – such as altering the color of the room – before attempting to change the entire dream scene. Select a piece of furniture and change its style. Change the shape of an object from round to square or vice versa. Add a small feature to the room or to an outdoor dream scene.

Don't focus solely on visual changes. You should also incorporate your other senses in the process. Change the sound of music from one style to another. Attempt to alter the scent of a flower or food to an entirely different scent. Change the tactile sensation of a specific texture or fabric by altering the texture to a different style. This practice will also help you learn to use all your senses in other dream techniques, as well as in meditation or visualization techniques you practice while awake.

Once you've gained enough skill to make small changes in your dreams, attempt to affect your dream environment on a larger scale. Change your surroundings by mentally willing the entire dream scene to change to a location you're already very familiar with. Try not to close your eyes within the dream as you mentally will the changes to take place. Instead, mentally will them to take place right before your eyes and watch as the current dream scene wavers, shifts, and morphs into a new scene.

Don't be surprised if at first the new dream scene is nothing like the scene you attempted to will into place. It isn't unusual for your unconscious mind to influence the outcome. When this occurs, do not be disappointed. Instead, take the opportunity to observe the new dream scene and determine why that particular scene appeared. Try to determine what sort of message your unconscious mind is sending you. Ask yourself why certain details were substituted for the details you intended, or speak directly to your subconscious while in the dream by posing that question to it instead. The more educated you become about the inner workings of your unconscious mind, the more skilled you will become at working with it from a point of conscious awareness.

When you first begin, you may have difficulty changing an entire dream scene. There are several techniques you can utilize to become more adept at moving from one dream scene to another. Doorways and mirrors provide perfect points to transition from the existing dream scene to a new dream scene of your own choosing because they may be used as a gateway from one dream scene to another. When you want to change the dream scene and are not able to mentally will a new scene into place, find the nearest door or mirror. Stand before it and visualize the scene you would like to appear on the other side. When you have a vividly detailed image of the scene in mind, open the door and step through into that scene, or step through the mirror into the new scene.

You can also use a television or movie theater screen in your dream for the same purpose. On the movie theater screen, visualize the dream scene of your choice, then see and feel yourself being pulled into the screen and into that scene. On a television, change the channel and see the dream scene around you changing as

you do so.

The spinning technique I mentioned in a previous article can also be used to change the dream scene. Imagine the dream scene you would like to see, and hold that image in your mind while you spin. As you're spinning, your eyes will lose their focus and the current dream scene will become a blur. Hold the image of your desired dream scene in mind and will it to take shape as you slow down and stop spinning. By the time you've stopped, the new dream scene should be in place.

Whenever you attempt to make changes, no matter how small, remain calm and gently nudge the change into effect rather than trying to force the change to take place. Your focus should be calm and intent, but not so intent that you become tense. Try not to get frustrated if the changes don't occur, as that will most likely cause you to wake up. Keep in mind it takes practice and patience to learn to control your dreams.

16 Creating Objects Within Your Dreams

As you become more skilled at altering your surroundings within your dreams, you should also practice creating new objects. At first, practice working slowly and deliberately to create small, simple objects, such as a tennis ball or a spoon. Hold out your hands, palms facing upward, and use your conscious mind to shape and form the object, willing it to appear in your hands. Take your time and keep things simple at first. Don't try to create something complex or intricate yet. (Don't fret. We'll get to the complex stuff soon enough.)

Once you're comfortable creating small objects, use your mind to will into existence larger objects such as a simple wooden chair or a box. If the object is too big to hold in your hands, mentally will it to appear in a specific location in the room, facing a specific direction.

Regardless of the size of the object, remember to work on basic objects at first. Instead of jumping directly into creating complicated items, it's better to practice the creation of simple dream objects until you can create exactly what you need in the blink of an eye. Before you move on to creating more elaborate objects, practice reducing the amount of time and mental effort it takes you to fully form and create a simple object. Practice the technique of creating the same object over and over until you are able to create that object rapidly and can cause it to appear instantly in precisely the location you desire.

When you're able to very rapidly call into existence a simple object, you may then attempt to create more detailed and intricate objects. Begin with small but slightly more detailed objects, such as a telephone or wristwatch, and gradually work up to more complex objects. Pay attention to the little details, like the texture and weight of each object.

Practice creating specific room features, such as doors and windows. Practice creating live objects, such as plants or birds. Again, practice reducing the amount of time and mental effort it requires to create complex, detailed objects. Practice the technique of creating the same object over and over until you are able to call the object into existence with only the briefest thought and intent.

You may be wondering why it is necessary to practice such a technique, but the answer is very straightforward. In many different dream situations, you may find you're not able to influence your surroundings to the extent you would like. When this occurs, you will most often be able to create objects even if you can't change the rest of your dream environment. In doing so, you can create objects that will assist you in turning the dream events toward the scene of your own choosing.

For example, you may find yourself in a dream scene in which you are trapped in a particular location. It may be handy in that situation to create a door and simply walk out of the room, a technique which also reinforces the idea that you are in control of your dreams and will not allow yourself to be trapped. You can create an item to help you handle any dream situation, good or bad. Or, you can ask your unconscious mind to "create what I need in this moment to deal with this current situation," and then hold out your hand and expect the object to appear.

17 How to Create Your Personal Dream Space

Now that you've practiced controlling your dream environment and have become more skilled at creating objects within your dreams, it's time to put those skills to good use.

Spend time using your newly acquired skills to create your own personal dream space, a place within your dreams where you will always feel safe, secure, and in control. This can be a room, a temple, or even an outdoor location such as a secluded beach or a grove of trees.

When you create your dream space, select a setting that provides you with a deep sense of inner peace. Create your space from a blank canvas, adding only features that reinforce the sense of calm and tranquility. Be as detailed as possible, devoting attention not only to creating your visual surroundings but also to creating sounds, smells, and tactile sensations. Pay attention to the little details and make the space as inviting as possible.

Spend time reinforcing your dream space by visiting it often. Focus on a different feature each time you visit. During one visit, concentrate on the visual features, the overall look of the place, the spatial sense of it. Is it indoors or outdoors? Is it small and cozy or a vast expanse? What do the immediate surroundings look like? Give yourself a place to sit – a chair, a pile of cushions on the floor or ground, a tree stump, anything that feels comfortable to you and suits your personal space. Add any other features you desire – plants, books, a babbling brook – and then walk around in your dream space and just look. Look at things up close, look at things far away, and fix these details in your mind.

The next time you visit, focus on other details. What sounds do you hear? What do you smell? What does the air feel like? Is the temperature hot or cold or somewhere in between? If your space is outdoors, does the weather remain the same or does it fluctuate? Create the sounds, smells, and environment you choose, and fix those in your mind as well. On your next visit, focus on textures. What do things feel like to the touch? What does the fabric on your chair or cushion feel like? How about the walls, the bark of the trees, or the grass on the ground?

Be sure to give your dream space multiple entry and exit points. If your dream space is a room, add doors or archways leading in and out. If your space is outdoors, add paths that lead off in a few different directions. This will allow you to come and go from your dream space whenever and however you want, even during times when you're having trouble controlling a dream scene.

Your personal dream space is a location you'll be able to return to within your dreams at any time, whenever you want to collect your thoughts, whenever you feel a need for safety, or simply when you would like to spend a few moments in a calm and peaceful place.

Whenever you feel the need, use the technique of your choice to change the dream scene and move to your personal dream space.

17.1 How to Program Your Dreams In Advance

A technique called **dream incubation** is the perfect approach to use whenever you would like to dream about a specific person, place, thing, or event. It also can be a useful method of getting in touch with your subconscious to find answers. Dream incubation requires that you predetermine what you will dream about and then set your intent to dream with full conscious awareness about that particular thing. It is essentially a way of programming your dreams in advance. You can't always program all the details, but you can select certain features to incorporate into a dream.

When you first begin to practice this technique, choose simple objects to work with. For example, make a decision to dream about an apple, a boat, or any other straightforward object that can be easily incorporated by the unconscious mind into your dream. As you become skilled at dream incubation, you can select more complex targets such as specific locations, people, or events.

At bedtime, begin by writing out the details of your desired dream as if you are planning the entire dream in advance. Write notes about the dream in the same manner in which you write entries in your dream journal each morning. I recommend using the dream journal method I already described.

Write your description as if you're making a dream journal entry about a dream that has already occurred. By taking steps to convince your mind that the dream has already taken place in exactly the manner you described, you will greatly increase the chance of dreaming that same dream. Be sure to include a note indicating you achieved 100

After you've written the details of the dream, spend a few minutes creating a detailed mental image of the desired dream scene. Involve all your senses by including sounds, smells, and tactile sensations in your visualization. Fully visualize the dream as you would like to see it unfold. Use the visualization as a rehearsal for your dream, and make sure to imagine yourself becoming consciously aware within the desired dream scene.

If you plan to use the dream incubation technique to seek answers from your subconscious mind, you can be creative about how you'll receive those answers in the dream. Will you meet a person, a representative of your subconscious mind, and converse with him or her? Will you watch a situation in your dream unfold in a manner that provides the answers? Will you follow a winding path that leads directly to the information you seek?

You can even use a picture from a magazine to provide your mind with a ready-made visual image. Before going to bed, look at the picture and fix the image in your mind. Using the mental image of the picture, create sounds, smells, and tactile sensations to enhance the visualization. Temporarily immerse yourself in the dream scene until it is fully fixed in your mind, and again, don't forget to imagine yourself becoming lucid during the dream.

As you fall asleep, use affirmations to affirm your intent to dream about the desired object or scene. If you are drifting off to sleep at night use the affirmation, "Tonight I will dream about **¡blank!**", filling in the blank with the object or event of your choice. Include a conscious dreaming affirmation. If you are drifting off to sleep for a mid-afternoon nap or after a wake-up interval, instead use the affirmation, "I am dreaming about **¡blank!**." Fall asleep knowing you'll dream about precisely what you wanted to dream about.

Don't worry if it doesn't work the first night. Keep trying until you dream about the things you programmed in advance. The first time is always the hardest. After you succeed once, you'll find it gets easier and easier with each attempt.

18 How to Use Your Dreams For Problem Solving

As described in the first chapter, there are many ways to utilize conscious dreaming for personal growth and improvement. In this article and the next few articles in the series, I'll provide methods of applying lucid dreaming techniques for problem solving, creativity, healing, and more. I want to describe how lucid dreaming can be useful for problem solving.

Before going to bed, formulate a question or statement about the problem you would like to solve. Make the question or statement as brief and concise as possible. It should be specific enough to direct your unconscious mind toward the appropriate topic, but not so specific that it leaves no room for your mind to be flexible in presenting potential solutions.

For example, if you're encountering difficulties at work, try asking "How can I resolve the dispute with (insert your coworker's name)?"

If your concern is of a family or relationship nature, you could use a question such as, "How can I improve my relationship with so-and-so?"

You also can opt to use all-encompassing questions that can be applied in nearly any situation, such as, "What steps should I take to improve such-and-such situation?" or "How can I improve such-and-such aspect of my life?"

Instead of questions, you can also use statements such as, "I will dream of a solution to my problem with **¡blank!**", filling in the blank with the name or term of your choice.

Don't focus on all the intricate details of the problem. Simply present an overall picture of the problem and give your unconscious mind the freedom to come up with a solution. You may be surprised at how clever,

creative, and resourceful your unconscious mind can be.

Once you've formulated a question or statement related to your problem, set your intent to dream about a solution. Use the dream incubation technique to program your mind to dream about the solution to your problem. Be sure to include an affirmation stating you will become lucid within the dream.

Here is **another approach** to the problem solving method. Before you go to sleep, visualize the situation as it would appear if the problem was already resolved. Imagine the problem has been taken care of and everything worked out in your favor. See yourself within your dream experiencing the positive aftereffects of the resolution. Imagine the feelings that would accompany the resolution of the problem – joy, excitement, relief, satisfaction.

After you have vividly imagined the dream scene, affirm your intent to become lucid within the dream. When you awaken the next morning and write in your dream journal, mentally review the "memories" of your dream self to determine how you successfully resolved the problem in your dream, and then apply those same steps in waking life.

For example, let's say you have a problem with a coworker who tries to steal credit for all the work you've done on a specific group project. If the problem isn't resolved, your coworker is going to get the raise and promotion you really deserve. You don't want to appear to be the office tattletale by whining to your boss about it, and so far your coworker seems too dense to get the hints you've been throwing his way for the past few weeks. You also don't want a confrontation that turns out badly. You decide to turn the problem over to your dreaming mind for a few nights.

You visualize yourself in a scene occurring after the problem has been resolved. You imagine the project wrapping up in a successful way and your boss personally congratulating you on a job well done. You imagine yourself feeling extremely pleased and satisfied with how everything turned out.

Notice how you haven't visualized exactly how the problem was resolved? That's because if you already knew how to resolve the problem, you wouldn't need to bother your dreaming mind for a solution in the first place. The idea is to offer the problem to your dreaming self and let your unconscious mind get creative about the actual steps needed to resolve the problem. Leave those details empty and let your dreaming mind fill in the blanks.

Present the problem to your mind in a simple, straightforward way, and visualize how you'd like the situation to turn out in the end. Focus your intent on dreaming about a solution to the problem, and then simply go to sleep and let your dreaming mind handle the rest.

19 Using Dreams to Rehearse For Waking Life

Dreams are a wonderful stage on which to rehearse situations for waking life. You have unlimited opportunities to rehearse the same event until you have mastered it in your dreams, and there is no fear of embarrassment because you are your only audience and nobody else will ever see your rehearsal.

This technique may be used to rehearse any situation, from a simple conversation to a business presentation to a complex event with many possible outcomes. If you are unsure of which steps to take or which approach to use to handle a certain situation in your life, you can rest assured your unconscious mind will provide you with a variety of potential solutions and may even hint at which approach will produce the most beneficial outcome.

The same type of rehearsal may be used to practice other skills for waking life. Musicians have the opportunity to practice playing a musical instrument, or, by rehearsing their performance in their dreams, may overcome a fear of performing in front of a large crowd. Athletes can utilize their time spent dreaming as extra practice time to enhance their level of proficiency in a particular sport. The results of this type of practice are scientifically proven. A study published in the *Journal of Sport Behaviour* found that runners who practiced in their dreams reported significantly faster running times than non-dreamers.

To utilize your dreams to rehearse a situation for waking life, you'll need to employ a combination of the techniques described in articles throughout this series. To begin, you will need to follow the steps to incubate

a dream in order to make certain you dream about the desired situation. Common sense dictates that if you don't dream about the situation in question, you won't be able to rehearse for it.

Don't fret about the dream incubation process. One important thing to remember is that our concerns in waking life often find their way into our dreams. If a specific problem is bothering you, chances are it will worm its way into your dreams on its own, with little dream incubation required. If you are rehearsing for a significant situation or event that has been on your mind often lately, you most likely will find it's not difficult at all to incubate a dream about that subject.

To use this technique, incubate a dream about the desired situation, making sure to include the intent to become lucid within your dream. When you find yourself in the dream setting you programmed with the dream incubation technique, the stage is set for your rehearsal. Use the techniques to control your dream environment and to create objects within your dreams to make sure all the necessary pieces of the scene are in place. If you're practicing for a sporting event, create the stadium, field, track or other setting where the event will take place. Add your teammates or competitors, and add a crowd to cheer you on. If you're rehearsing for a business presentation, create the office or conference room where the presentation will take place. Create all the tools you'll need to give a fantastic presentation.

Take the time to try different approaches and tackle the situation from many angles, paying attention to how each approach turns out. Some will obviously produce better results than others. Use the dream time to rehearse until you've refined your approach. This may take several nights of practice and you'll need to repeat the scenario until you feel comfortable taking the same steps in waking life.

Example #1

Let's take the previously mentioned business presentation as an example. Perhaps there are several presentation methods you can use – visual aids, audio clips, printed handouts for the attendees, etc. – and a variety of opening remarks you can use to hook your audience, but you aren't certain which methods will be successful. Maybe you're not comfortable speaking in front of a large group, or you don't feel confident that you can get your point across to the audience.

Incubate a dream scenario in which you give the presentation in one way and observe how your audience responds, how comfortable you feel, how enthusiastic you are about the topic being presented and how well you convey the information and that enthusiasm to the audience. Try your presentation again using a different approach, and a third time using yet another approach, and so on until you find one that feels comfortable and produces the desired result.

Once you've practiced giving your presentation in your dreams until you feel comfortable giving it just as well or better in waking life, incubate a dream of yourself giving a highly successful presentation to an interested and receptive crowd, with the entire audience hanging on your every word. Incorporate as many details as possible into your dream to emphasize how well the presentation went.

Example #2

To use another example, let's say you're a runner hoping to win a medal in the 100-yard run. You would begin by creating a dream scene of the track where the run will take place. Put yourself at the starting line before the race. See the other runners line up beside you. Feel the texture of the ground beneath your feet and hands as you moved into the starting position.

You would go on to imagine yourself taking off, running the race. Feel the wind rushing past you as you run. Feel the pounding of your heart, hear the sound of your breath, feel your feet hitting the ground with every step. See yourself crossing the finish line first, and hear the roar of the crowd cheering you on.

Throughout this entire dream sequence, you also experience the emotional feelings that would accompany this event – the rush of excitement during the run, the exhilaration of pulling ahead of all the competition, the joy of winning the race.

The main focus should be on experiencing every detail to such an extent the dream feels real. You would

rehearse in this manner in your dreams as often as possible in the days leading up to the race. During the actual race, all that dream practice will contribute to your success.

This same technique may be applied to any area of life to help you improve your own level of skill. The important thing is to incubate dreams of *successfully* performing the task or feat. The more often you dream of achieving success in your endeavor, the more likely that improvement in skill will carry over to waking life and generate success.

20 How to Create Your Perfect Dream Teacher

Through the many techniques I described, you've already discovered you have the ability to create objects and even create entire scenes within your dreams. It is also possible to create *people* within your dreams. With this technique, you'll develop the skill to create entirely new characters to act independently or to act jointly with you. You can create not only characters to accompany you on playful adventures but also characters to act as your teachers or instructors.

Your unconscious mind is a tremendous resource filled with valuable information. Much of that information can be of great use when practicing a task or learning a new skill. By creating a dream character to act as your teacher, you provide your unconscious mind with the perfect outlet to convey information to your conscious mind.

A musician may wish to take lessons from a famous classical composer. An athlete might want training from a world champion or Olympic medalist. A writer may hope to gain inspiration from a bestselling author. A scientist may wish to study with a renowned Nobel prize winning physicist. A martial artist may desire instruction from a master in a martial art. As you can see, the potential uses for this technique are endless.

If you select a person from history as your instructor, the teacher you meet in your dreams obviously will be a creation of your own unconscious mind and not the person himself, but your unconscious mind will fill in the blanks to provide you with the lessons you need most. You won't be getting the real Albert Einstein or Mozart or Jane Austen, but your mind will get as close as it possibly can on its own.

It may help to create a fictional teacher instead of trying to create a specific historic personage. In your dreams you have the opportunity to create your own ideal teacher, one who embodies all the qualities you desire in an instructor. You can create a teacher who is an amalgam of several different historic masters in your field. Select the best qualities and personality traits from many different masters and merge those qualities and traits to create a single teacher.

To create your ideal teacher, first consider the skills and abilities the teacher must possess in order to provide you with the best possible training. Also consider your own personal learning style. Do you learn best through visual demonstrations, audible instruction, hands-on participation, or a combination of all three learning styles? Do you feel more comfortable with a teacher who instructs through firm guidance and gentle, supportive coaching, or a teacher with a tougher and more demanding approach?

Spend a little time creating a mental image of your ideal teacher. Is your teacher male or female? What does he look like? Is she old or young? How is he dressed? What does his or her voice sound like? Your unconscious mind will fill in many of these details for you, and may even send you a teacher who appears nothing like you originally imagined, but you'll greatly encourage the process by providing your mind with this mental image to use as a template.

Before bedtime, take a few minutes to vividly imagine a scene of yourself in the appropriate setting, studying or practicing your desired skill with your ideal teacher. Imagine your surroundings. Are you in a studio? In a lab or classroom? On a sports field? Fix this image in your mind and take the appropriate steps to incubate a dream of that event. Imagine your teacher standing before you, providing you with thorough instruction and guidance, pointing out all the details you need to know. During this dream incubation process, be sure to incorporate a conscious dreaming technique to ensure you become lucid in your dream, and then go to sleep with the intent and expectation to meet your teacher tonight in your dreams.

When you arrive at the dream scene, look around for your teacher. If all goes well, he or she will be there waiting for you. If your teacher is not already there, wander around a little bit and explore. You may find your

teacher somewhere in the dream scene, or he/she may find you. Pay special attention to paths and doorways that branch off from your current dream setting. If you come across one, follow the path or open the door. They frequently lead directly to your teacher.

As you're exploring the dream environment, use some of the techniques to make sure you remain lucid. If you don't use any of those techniques, there is a good chance you'll get caught up in other dream events and lose your lucidity.

21 Creating a Dream Guide For Your Unconscious Mind

Just as you can create your own ideal dream teacher, you can also create a *dream guide* – a dream character created specifically to provide your unconscious mind with a walking, talking personality with which you may converse during your dreams.

Allowing your unconscious mind to take on the form of a dream guide offers a way for your conscious mind to communicate directly with your unconscious mind. Dreams are rich with symbolism and metaphor driven by the unconscious mind, and over time you'll learn how to interpret those messages by reviewing your dream journal entries, but with this technique you can communicate with your unconscious mind in a straightforward manner to pose specific questions. By calling upon your unconscious mind in the form of a dream guide, you'll give it a way to interact with you in a much more direct and less metaphoric way.

You may wish to ask your unconscious mind for answers to particular questions, such as "What should I do about such-and-such situation?" With your unconscious mind taking on the role of a dream guide, you'll have the opportunity to obtain very specific answers. In conversing with your dream guide, you'll also have the chance to request additional details or ask follow-up questions to probe for more detailed information.

The dream guide technique takes the previously described problem solving technique one step further. Rather than presenting a single problem to your unconscious mind at bedtime and requesting that a solution manifest in your dreams, you'll have more opportunity to expand on your questions. You can converse with your dream guide for as long as you're able to maintain lucidity in the dream, so you'll gain the advantage of engaging your unconscious mind in a lengthy question and answer session.

You may wish to ask broad questions, such as, "What is my purpose in life?" When that is the case, meet your dream guide and ask him or her to lead you into new dream scenes that present information relevant to your question.

You'll need to use a combination of techniques to call upon your dream guide. First, use the dream incubation technique to program a dream in which you encounter your dream guide. Incorporate a selection of lucid dreaming techniques to ensure you become lucid in the dream. (If you've read this far in the series, hopefully you are already practicing those techniques on a regular basis.) Then, use the technique to create a dream teacher but modify the steps to create a dream guide who specifically represents your unconscious mind.

When using the dream teacher technique to create your dream guide, don't be too rigid about planning your guide's appearance or personality in advance. Allow your unconscious mind to create an appearance and personality on its own. The results will vary greatly from person to person and may surprise you.

After posing your question to your dream guide, remain in control of your own actions and responses but release control of the dream environment to your dream guide. In doing so, you'll allow your unconscious mind to generate dream scenes in response to your questions while you remain consciously aware and able to navigate those scenes. When this happens, pay special attention to the scenery. Your dream guide may not necessarily spell everything out for you in words. Some of the answers may appear around you in the dream scene instead and may take on many different forms.

22 Journey Deeper Into the Mind in Your Dreams

Whenever you get the feeling you're only scratching the surface of a particular issue in your dreams, it can be helpful to use a technique to delve deeper into the unconscious. In dreams, the unconscious mind frequently

is represented by archetypal symbols or metaphors. It may be portrayed as an untamed wilderness, a large unexplored house, a vast churning ocean, or even a busy and colorful market. Whatever form it takes in your dreams, your unconscious mind most often presents itself to you as an infinite expanse of detail to explore and investigate.

To dig deeper into your unconscious mind, you'll need to take steps to trigger a dream conducive to that form of directed exploration. Rather than posing questions to your unconscious mind and allowing it to guide you, you will instead direct your unconscious mind to open itself to your exploration and allow you to wander freely. The goal is to follow a path of your own choosing through the territory of your unconscious mind, investigating whatever details catch your interest along the way.

At bedtime, perform the lucid dreaming techniques described in previous articles in this series to ensure you become lucid in your dream. After performing the techniques of your choice, conduct a dream incubation session to direct your dream self to explore your unconscious mind. Visualize your unconscious mind in the form of your choice – as a lush forest, a house, a temple, or whatever metaphor you feel is most appropriate. If you have been recording your dreams in a dream journal, review your previous entries to determine if your unconscious mind has already shown itself to you in a specific form in the past. If it has already presented itself to you in a specific form, it may be more effective to utilize that form for this exercise.

As part of the dream incubation process, imagine yourself at the entrance to your unconscious mind. If you've selected a forest or jungle to represent your unconscious mind, visualize your dream self standing at the edge of the forest. Imagine a winding path leading into the forest. If you've selected a house or temple, visualize your dream self standing at the building's entrance before a closed door. Imagine your dream self opening the door to reveal a long corridor. Affirm to yourself that you are standing at the edge of your unconscious mind, ready to explore its depths.

In the mental image you've created, see your dream self becoming lucid before taking the first few steps along the path or corridor. Set your intent to explore your unconscious mind within your dreams that night, then retire to bed and await your dream. Hold the intent in your mind as you drift off to sleep.

Along the path through the landscape of your unconscious mind, you may encounter many twists and turns. At many points, the path may branch in several different directions, leaving you to choose which direction to explore. When this occurs, stop at the fork in the path and reaffirm to yourself that you are dreaming and will remain consciously aware within the dream. After reaffirming your lucid state, allow yourself to ponder each direction on the path to see if one direction tugs at you more than the others. This may be a hint from your unconscious mind indicating there is something worth pursuing in that direction.

Keep in mind the entire landscape of your dreams is generated by your unconscious mind and you do not necessarily need to create a specific scenario to represent the exploration of your unconscious mind. Simply by recording the details of your dreams in your dream journal each day and actively exploring your dream environment each night, you are already learning to understand the territory and mechanics of your unconscious mind. You're gradually becoming more and more familiar with the methods employed by your unconscious mind to direct your conscious awareness toward specific issues. This technique is merely another method that can help you in that process.

23 Using Your Dreams For Healing

It is well known that the mind can be a powerful tool for healing. Studies have indicated simply using a daily affirmation about wellness can improve a patient's health. In the same way, your dreams may be used for health and healing purposes.

Before going to bed, spend time performing the dream incubation technique to incubate a dream environment where you will be comfortable and relaxed, such as a beach, a garden, or a luxurious bedroom. Perform your choice of lucid dreaming techniques and set your intent to become consciously aware once you reach the desired setting in your dream.

If there is a particular illness or injury you would like to address, use your dream to envision the injury completely healed. You may wish to create a dream scene in which the healing or recovery time is compressed. By doing this, you can speed up the healing process in the waking world. Use the techniques you've already learned

about controlling your dream body, controlling the dream environment and creating objects to create a dream scene in which the time it takes to heal the injury or illness is reduced to mere minutes. See the injury or illness begin to rapidly heal itself, and continue to observe as the problem heals completely and totally until no trace of it remains.

Pay attention to all your senses within the dream. Don't just see the injury or illness disappear. *Feel* it disappear. Take a deep breath and smell your surroundings. Take in the scent of clean air and feel it energize you. Listen to the birds or the ocean surf or even the sound of your heart beating clear and strong. Walk around your dream environment and feel how healthy you are. Stretch your limbs, jump in the air, do somersaults, shout out loud. Act as silly as you want. It's your dream. Nobody can see you.

If you feel inspired, feel free to be a little more creative about how you eliminate the illness. You can create a dream scene in which your illness appears as a monster you successfully vanquish by making it shrink away to nothing in front of you, or depict your body as a plant you nurse back to health, or stand in a crystal clear stream and wash the illness away. Create any scene you feel comfortable with, but be sure to include plenty of imagery that represents health and vitality.

Before you end the dream and move on to a new dream scene, reaffirm to yourself that the rapid healing that took place within your dream will carry over into waking life.

You need not wait until you're ill or injured to use a healing dream technique. For continued health and wellness, it can be quite effective to devote a few nights to dreaming of yourself in a state of optimal health.

24 Using Lucid Dreaming to Overcome Nightmares

Lucid dreaming may be used quite effectively to overcome nightmares and to uncover the underlying source of recurring dreams. Most nightmares are generated by the fears of our unconscious mind and by situations that cause us stress in our daily lives. Often, upon awakening we wonder why we reacted with such irrational fear to very simple dream events that wouldn't seem frightening to us at all in waking life. On other occasions, the events of our dreams are so terrifying we question why our unconscious mind would place us in such a horrific situation.

When you become lucid within your dreams, you'll be able to control your reactions and can choose when, where, and how to confront your fears.

If you find yourself in a frightening situation while dreaming, the first step to overcoming your fear is to reaffirm to yourself that it is just a dream and **you are in control**. Because our fear often gains the upper hand, when a nightmare scenario occurs even experienced lucid dreamers sometimes find it difficult to maintain control of all the elements of the dream. At first, focus your efforts on maintaining control over your own actions and reactions. This in itself can be a tricky task. It may require a concerted effort just to keep yourself from running away.

Developing the skill to stand your ground and objectively evaluate the dream scene while in a frightful situation will take time. Have patience, and don't chide yourself later if you were unable to prevent your dream self from running away. Simply reaffirm to yourself that you are in control of your dreams, and use positive self-talk to encourage your dream self to remain calm next time. It may help to review your dream journal in the morning and analyze the contents of the dream to determine which part of it prompted the fear and what that particular thing may represent in waking life.

Once you're able to prevent your dream self from running away from frightening situations, you can employ various methods to turn your nightmares into positive learning experiences. If you're being chased, turn and face your pursuer and ask it why it is chasing you and what it wants. If you encounter something frightening, ask yourself what it represents and why you fear it, or command your dream guide to appear and provide an explanation.

If you find yourself in a frightful confrontation and cannot gain enough control over the dream environment to bring the confrontation to a complete halt, you can also choose to stand and fight your dream opponent. While the alternative – determining the true underlying nature of the nightmare – is obviously preferable, it also can be empowering to overcome obstacles and challenges within your dreams. When faced with such a

situation, remember the skills you've acquired thus far. You have the ability to change the dream environment and alter the setting to something more to your advantage. You also have the ability to call into existence any object you desire. Be creative and improvise. Be flexible and do your best to use these techniques in a way that will ultimately allow you to question your dream opponent to discover what he, she, or it represents in waking life.

Keep in mind that your unconscious mind often creates what it expects, and frequently uses your fears to construct the dream setting. Whenever there is uncertainty in a dream environment, your own fears will fill in the blanks. If you expect to encounter a fearful situation, your mind will quickly compose it for you in order to fulfill those expectations. Always remember **you have control over your dreams**. Reaffirm to yourself that nothing in your dreams can harm you and you have no reason to be afraid. Though you'll inevitably still have nightmares on occasion, you'll gradually overcome your fears as you become more confident in your abilities to manipulate and control your dream environment.

25 How To Analyze Your Dreams More Effectively

When analyzing their dreams, too many dreamers fall back on the standard definitions found in a dream dictionary. Dream symbolism can vary considerably from person to person, making most dream dictionaries only marginally useful. Dreamers should never rely solely on the standard dream dictionary definitions for interpretation.

We all have our own personal filters through which we interpret information, both while awake and asleep. These filters create the personal context in which our mind creates each dream scene. When analyzing a dream to discover its meaning, it's important to consider not only the *overall* context in which a particular dream symbol appeared but also the *personal* context.

After recording the details of your dream in your journal, **you must ask yourself what each dream symbol means to you personally**. An object or event that means one thing to one person may mean something entirely different to someone else, and as such, a dream symbol that holds one meaning for you may hold a different meaning for someone else. A dream symbol may have a frightening meaning for some dreamers, while for other dreamers it may hold no fear whatsoever. To most people, a knife might seem frightening. To a chef in a fancy restaurant, a knife is nothing more than another kitchen tool.

For this reason, it's extremely important to ask yourself, "What does this (object, place, event) represent for me personally?" By asking yourself this question, you'll be able to develop your own personal dream dictionary containing definitions that represent your own interpretations of individual dream symbols and what they really mean to you, not what they mean to anyone else.

When analyzing your dreams, it is important to keep in mind that other characters in your dreams may represent aspects of *yourself*. Though a friend or family member may appear in your dreams, that person may represent himself or may instead represent a quality or aspect of yourself. He may even represent a quality or trait you recognize in that friend and desire for yourself, or may have an entirely separate symbolic meaning.

The appearance of your father in a dream may be your unconscious mind's portrayal of your father himself, or instead may be a metaphor for something you associate with your father, such as authority, leadership, or support. Likewise, a particular friend may represent freedom, spontaneity, sorrow, or any number of other qualities.

The same is true of the appearance of animals within our dreams. Animals often represent hidden aspects of our own personality, or traits and qualities we subconsciously would like to adopt in order to handle a particular situation or relationship.

Consider the individual animal featured in the dream and which traits and qualities are readily identifiable in that animal. Are they traits and qualities you feel you lack? Or traits and qualities you think you exhibit too strongly? Also consider your personal relationship to that type of animal in waking life. Your relationship with the animal will help you interpret its significance in the dream. For example, one person may have a strong dislike for snakes, while another may keep a snake as a pet. What the snake symbolizes for the first person may differ greatly from what it symbolizes for the second person. You must determine what each person, animal, or object signifies for you personally.

You also may find that your emotions take on tangible form in your dreams. Emotions such as anger, frustration, jealousy, joy, love, or concern may take on the role of a person, object, or even a place within your dreams. A specific fear may be embodied by a particular person or creature in your dream, or may appear as a frightening item.

After you record your dream in your journal, take the opportunity to explore what each aspect of the dream means to you. Consider first the people, objects, or events that stood out the most. Which part of the dream was most vivid? Was there a specific thing that grabbed your attention? What did it look like and what was it doing? What could that item represent or what could it mean to you in waking life?

Always go back to the same question: What does this represent for me personally?

If you're uncertain what a particular dream symbol may mean to you, try this freenoting technique: Using a pen or pencil and a piece of paper, contemplate the dream symbol for a moment then quickly jot down anything that comes to mind, no matter how irrelevant or obscure the thought may be. Your unconscious mind speaks in symbols and metaphor, and symbols often have unexpected meanings, so don't worry if something seems unrelated. Write it down anyway. Continue to write down any words or ideas that pop into your mind. Allow your mind to freely wander through its own list of potential interpretations. Don't try to control the process. That usually does nothing more than stifle the flow of thought. Don't concentrate too intently on any one word, unless that word suddenly strikes you as the correct interpretation. When that sudden burst of recognition occurs, it is most likely a signal from your unconscious mind that you have stumbled onto the appropriate answer.

If a particular mood or tone was prevalent in the dream, take that into consideration when evaluating the dream's potential meaning. How you feel when you first awaken from the dream may be a strong indicator of whether or not the dream is a simple rehashing of the day's events or whether it holds greater significance. If a specific emotion was strongest in the dream, consider which situations in waking life most often trigger that particular emotion. There's a good chance the dream is a reflection of those situation in your waking life.

Observe your dream journal entries over time to identify patterns. Your unconscious mind may be sending you the same message in various forms, or you may have a specific mental or emotional issue that frequently surfaces in your dreams. The more dreams you record, the more likely you are to identify your personal dream symbols and patterns.

Keep in mind not every dream has life-changing significance. There are several different dream types. Some dreams act as a way for your mind to review the events of the day, some allow you to release pent up emotions, and others act as wish fulfillment. Some dreams may hold more significance, triggered by your unconscious mind in its effort to guide your conscious mind toward important information or to help you make the best decisions. Some dreams may have more collective or archetypal connotations. Many dreams will contain elements of more than one dream type. Only you can determine if a dream has deeper meaning for you.

In order to encourage dreams of significant meaning to occur more often, spend a few minutes each night reviewing the day's events. You may write about the events of the day in a journal or simply spend a few minutes in quiet contemplation replaying the day in your mind. By doing this immediately before bedtime, you'll relieve your unconscious mind of the need to rehash the day's events in symbolic form in your dreams, which will free up your dream time for more beneficial pursuits.

26 False Awakenings and Lucid Dreaming

A **false awakening** occurs when you're dreaming and believe you've woken up when in actuality you are still dreaming and only *dreamed* of waking up. You "wake up" and begin to go about your daily routine – visit the bathroom, brush your teeth, get dressed, etc. – until eventually you realize you're still dreaming.

At that point, you may slip into a completely new dream or you may wake up from the dream for real this time. Or, even more intriguingly, you may have another false awakening and believe you've woken up when instead you're still dreaming and once again only dreamed of waking up.

You "wake up" from a dream only to discover you haven't really woken up at all and you're still dreaming,

and then you "wake up" from your first false awakening and think to yourself "This time I'm REALLY awake," only to find out you've had another false awakening and you're still dreaming, and then you can "wake up" again into another dream of awakening, and so forth.

This cycle of false awakenings can go on and on. In fact, it can go on so long you begin to constantly question whether or not you're awake, and you wonder how you can ever be one hundred percent certain you're not still dreaming. This is exactly the kind of persistent questioning of reality that rests at the heart of lucid dreaming.

Lucid dreaming offers so much more than entertainment. It can lead to an entirely new awareness and insight into the nature of reality.

In the Tibetan study of lucid dreaming, sometimes referred to as dream yoga, one of the goals is to guide the student to discover waking reality is not so different from dream reality.

After all, how can you ever truly know you're not dreaming?

The only answer: *You can't*. There's no way to know with full certainty whether you're awake or whether or not this is a dream. It's one of those complex philosophical dilemmas that prompt more questions than answers. How do we define "real"? Is an idea real? Is a thought real? How can we determine if something is real when we experience everything subjectively?

I've been experiencing false awakenings more frequently lately. Yesterday, I dreamed of waking up, using the bathroom, brushing my teeth and hair, walking into my home office, and booting up my computer, before I finally realized I was dreaming. This is unusual for me because my dreams are usually very abstract and rarely feature everyday activities. I used the brief moment of lucidity that came with yesterday's false awakening to shift into a different dream scene and was able to remain lucid for a short time before truly waking up.

Though they sometimes can be unsettling, false awakenings provide the perfect opportunity to become lucid within a dream. If you experience a false awakening, you'll inevitably reach a point when you finally realize you're not truly awake like you thought you were. You'll realize you're dreaming, which is exactly what is needed for a lucid dream to occur. This sudden realization often results in the dreamer abruptly waking up (truly, not falsely), but that doesn't have to be the result. If you remain calm and relaxed, you can harness that realization as it emerges and use it to guide yourself into a lucid dream.

False awakenings also offer a glimpse at the illusory nature of waking reality. If a dream can fool you into thinking you're awake and experiencing the "real" world, what else can fool you into thinking the same thing?

27 How To Turn a False Awakening Into a Lucid Dream

Now I'm going to offer some simple suggestions that can help you turn your false awakenings into lucid dreams. These techniques will also help you remember to perform frequent reality checks, which can greatly increase the likelihood of becoming lucid in a dream.

To begin, think of the things you usually do when you first wake up. Which actions do you perform every morning upon awakening? For most people, this list will include turning off an alarm clock, getting out of bed, going to the bathroom, and other similar tasks. Those are the everyday activities that typically occur in a false awakening, so we're going to use them as the starting point for transitioning from a false awakening into a lucid dream, but because of the nature of these techniques, they'll also help you have lucid dreams even if you never have a false awakening.

27.1 Alarm clock

Use your alarm clock as a trigger for a reality check. Whenever you glance at the clock, regardless of the time of day or night, ask yourself, "Am I dreaming?"

This technique is made even easier by the fact that you can use the numbers on a digital clock or the hands on a traditional clock to perform your reality check. In dreams, we often have trouble focusing on text and

numbers for more than a few seconds at a time. The letters and numbers appear blurry, or they change rapidly, or they wiggle, or they morph into strange symbols, or they change uncharacteristically each time you glance at them. For example, you might glance at the clock and see a time of 7:30am then look away for a split second and glance back again to see a time of 3:45pm. Traditional clocks often behave oddly in dreams as well. The hands might spin rapidly or the time might change randomly.

To perform a reality check, simply glance at the clock. If the numbers are behaving strangely, you're probably dreaming. If the numbers are behaving normally, look away for a moment and then look at the clock again. Is the time still the same? If the time displayed on the clock changed in an unusual way, you're probably dreaming.

27.2 Bathroom mirror

Put a sign on your bathroom mirror that says "Am I dreaming?" Most people visit the bathroom immediately upon waking, most bathrooms have a mirror hanging over the sink, and mirrors are a great tool for triggering lucid dreams, which means the inevitable morning visit to the bathroom makes for a perfect lucid dreaming opportunity.

Write the question "Am I dreaming?" in big letters on a piece of paper and tape it to your mirror, or hang it on the wall where it will be impossible not to see it every time you visit the bathroom. Whenever you see the sign, perform a reality check.

If you suspect you're dreaming, look in the mirror. Does the reflection of the room match the room itself, or are there differences? Is the reflection unusually blurry or unsteady? Can you will the room in the reflection to change? Can you push your fingers or even your whole hand or arm into the mirror? (Be gentle when you try that, just in case you're not dreaming.)

If you really want to be gung ho about the process, you can put "Am I dreaming?" signs all over your home. It might cause a few raised eyebrows when you have guests, but you'll be the one having lucid dreams and they won't. If you think wallpapering your home with lucid dreaming signs is a bit extreme and decide to take a more subtle approach, I recommend at least putting a sign on the door through which you exit your house each day. It will act as a final reminder for you to perform reality checks not just while you're at home but throughout the rest of your day as well.

27.3 Brushing teeth

Every morning and night when you brush your teeth, ask yourself, "Am I dreaming?" Believe it or not, dreams about teeth are incredibly common. People dream about loose teeth, rotting teeth, missing teeth, toothaches, and a mouthful of teeth falling out, and as a result, psychologists have produced an abundance of explanations for "tooth dreams".

If you get yourself into the habit of performing a reality check every time you brush your teeth, the next time you have your own "tooth dream" you'll ask yourself if you're dreaming and the answer will be "Yes". Voila! A lucid dream.

27.4 Breakfast

Every morning when you eat breakfast, ask yourself, "Am I dreaming?" If you have a false awakening that lasts all the way through to breakfast, you'll perform a reality check and discover you're dreaming (which probably explains why you're conversing with Snap, Crackle and Pop about the mysteries of the universe and only now realizing that's not entirely normal behavior).

27.5 Your Bed

Whenever you see your bed, whenever you get into your bed, or whenever you get out of your bed, perform a reality check. This will not only cut short your false awakenings but also will encourage you to think about lucid dreaming immediately before falling asleep, immediately upon waking up, and every other time you walk through your bedroom.

28 How To Turn a Nightmare Into a Lucid Dream

In my last article, I described some techniques to help you remember to perform reality checks and to help you turn a false awakening into a lucid dream. Today, I'm going to offer two easy techniques to help you become lucid during a nightmare.

Technique #1

This technique might seem silly at first, but give it a try anyway. It's actually very effective.

Think back to the last nightmare in which you were running from something. Perhaps you felt like you couldn't run, like your muscles just wouldn't move fast enough or wouldn't even move at all. Or maybe it felt like you were running through waist-high molasses, like your legs were slogging through something so thick you could barely walk, let alone run.

Now try to remember the last nightmare in which you tried to yell or scream. When you tried to yell, did it feel like you couldn't get enough air, like you were breathing water instead? Or perhaps no matter how much you yelled there was no sound and the only thing that came out of your mouth was air.

These problems are common in dreams. Scientists have speculated it is the mind's way of interpreting the paralysis that occurs during REM sleep. While we dream, the brain halts the release of certain neurotransmitters, causing a lack of stimulation to motor neurons and resulting in muscle paralysis. This state is referred to as REM atonia, and it's generally assumed that this happens in order to prevent us from acting out our dreams while we sleep.

Unfortunately, this sleep paralysis also translates into nightmares in which we can't seem to get our body to move quickly enough. Your mind doesn't really want you to be swallowed up by the three-headed hydra that's been chasing you down the road. It's just that while you're trying very hard to run away, your brain is working just as hard to keep you still.

So how can we use this to our advantage to help us have lucid dreams?

Start by finding a place where you can be alone, if only because you might look a bit silly practicing this technique. It only takes a minute or two, so you don't have to set aside much time for it.

To begin, inhale deeply. Take in as much air as you possibly can. Now try to yell, only don't really yell. Instead, pretend you're in a dream and you've run into the usual problem – you try to yell but only air comes out, not sound. Exhale forcefully, as if you are screaming soundlessly in a dream. While you exhale, think, "This is a dream. I'm dreaming."

Do this a few times in a row. Inhale as deeply as possible, and then release all the air in one powerful, continuous breath while imagining you're yelling in a dream. Be sure also to think "This is just a dream" while you let out your dream scream.

How will this help you have lucid dreams? By practicing this technique, you'll condition yourself to think "I'm dreaming" whenever you find yourself yelling in a dream. Next time you have a nightmare, or even just a dream in which you're yelling, you'll realize you're dreaming.

Technique #2

The next technique involves a very simple visualization. Look in your dream journal and locate the entry for your most recent nightmare. (If you don't already keep a dream journal, you should. The previous article titled *The Best Dream Journal Methods For Lucid Dreaming* will help you get started.)

Look at your journal entry and read the description a few times until you're able to vividly imagine the dream events. Replay the nightmare in your mind once or twice in the way it actually occurred. Now, replay it a third time, but this time picture yourself becoming aware that you're dreaming. Imagine the realization suddenly dawning on you in the middle of your nightmare.

Imagine yourself becoming fully lucid, and picture yourself successfully willing the dream environment to change into something less frightening and more pleasant. As an alternate approach, picture yourself becoming lucid, calmly facing the source of your fear, and either conquering your fear or asking what it represents in your waking life.

Practice this same visualization technique for a few other nightmares you've written about in your dream journal. If you practice this method every once in a while, it will eventually filter into your dreams and the next time you have a nightmare you'll find yourself becoming lucid without even trying.

One Final Note About Becoming Lucid In Nightmares

Becoming lucid doesn't mean you have to face the source of the fear or probe the depths of your nightmare to find out whether or not it contains some deeper message. Sometimes it's helpful just to get the heck out of there and move on to a happier dream or wake yourself up instead. You can always be a dream warrior tomorrow night.