

## Chapter 1

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# Opening Your Dream Door

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**D**reams really are, in the truest sense, a doorway: to greater self-awareness, knowledge, success, and the possibility of a rich, full life. Sounds great, but how do you open and walk through that door? This chapter is a great place to begin. You'll see that there is an actual pathway, with clearly delineated steps, that can take you from wishful thinking about dreams to a reliable dream habit. You'll find your previously mysterious, invisible inner life can be revealed on a regular basis to assist you in many useful ways.

In this chapter, you'll discover some specific benefits of an active dream life, familiarize yourself with the steps in the dream process, and fine tune your understanding of sleep and dream dynamics. This way, you can build motivation and enthusiasm, be aligned with the natural flow of dreams, and get out of your own way by becoming aware of what inhibits dreaming.

## *Dreaming Fully*

You can engage with the dream process better after you have some ideas about what dreaming does. Scientists write dreams off as the haphazard firing of neurons in the brain, but when you work deeply with dreams over time, you begin to understand them quite differently, seeing their spiritual roots. The following sections will help stretch your context for dreaming and inspire you about their vital importance in maintaining a healthy and happy life.

### *The function of dreams*

The best way to begin understanding more about your dream life is to first understand how dreams function:

- ✓ **Dreams are restorative.** When you have uninterrupted sleep and go through a series of deepening dream cycles during the night, you touch into and revisit your spiritual core and life purpose. Dreaming helps you stay on track, remember who you really are, how you fit into the whole, and renew yourself with fresh life energy and motivation.
- ✓ **Dreams are about creation; the ultimate Dreamer is your soul.** Most cultures where mystical spiritual experience is valued believe that the soul projects (think “movie projector”) or “dreams” the personality and entire physical life into being. “Life is but a dream,” we so often hear. When you remember that you are the soul,

or the Dreamer, and not the dream itself, you have more power to change the “dream” and create a life where your destiny can unfold instead of suffering and pain. You’re not stuck! Dreams show you what’s possible. All you have to do is dream something different! You are only as limited as your imagination.

- ✔ **Dreams are about learning to be superconscious — and you’re learning 24 hours a day.** You are dreaming not only at night but during your daytime waking reality, too. Your nighttime dream world is as real to your soul as your daytime world. They feed into each other, inform each other, teach each other. You, the soul, are never unconscious! You are always focusing on themes and issues that further your growth, flowing through different realms of your awareness. By interpreting day and night dreams, you can discover what’s going on in your innermost life.

## *What’s in it for you?*

A productive dream life begins with being fired up and motivated. You won’t get started or stick with it unless you understand the benefits that dreaming provides. So I’ve listed some important ways you can improve your life by working with dreams:

- ✔ **Entertain yourself and grow your imagination.** Dreams give you many interesting, fun things to talk about with your spouse, friends, and family.

If you do nothing more than fly without an airplane or interact with dragons in your dreams, you'll be far richer than if you'd lived by logic alone. Dreams keep you childlike and open, and help promote a free, joyful spirit. Since anything goes in dreams, it's not much of a stretch to extend the same dynamic imagination to your waking reality. Imagination may be one of the most undervalued skills you have. It determines the quality of your life, since what you can imagine is truly as far as you'll let yourself go. Dreams show you it's not so hard to move beyond your comfort zone.

- ✓ **Discover what's what in your psyche.** Dreams provide firsthand contact with the fascinating mystery: "Who am I?" They teach you about your psychological process and the subconscious beliefs and fears that interfere with growth and happiness. Your dreams can show you how to be more flexible, tolerant, loving, and lovable.
- ✓ **Tap your inner wisdom.** Dreams relay accurate, inspired advice from your higher mind, or soul, the part of you that always knows the truth. They may even warn of problems that are brewing, or help you prepare for an upcoming event. Dreams reveal your unlimited creativity and notify you when you're off center and need to realign with your life purpose.
- ✓ **Be all that you can be.** Dreams expand your sense of personal identity because you realize you're composed of energy, emotions, thoughts, and higher patterns of awareness. You'll start

thinking of yourself as more than a physical body and will have access to new realms of experience that empower you to be more, know more, and do more.

- ✔ **Develop intuition and innovation.** Recalling dreams, interpreting them, and intending them are all acts that require intuition and imagination. The more you work with dreams, the more you'll learn to trust yourself, and you'll realize how naturally intuitive and creative you are.
- ✔ **Increase real life success.** Dreams help you in real ways — with problem solving, decision making, improving communication, healing yourself and others, even manifesting the help and resources you need. The dream state is a fertile field awaiting the seeds you sow.
- ✔ **Melt barriers of time and space.** Dreams expand your capacity to know things that are in the past, the future, in other locations, and other dimensions of reality. Dreams that come true, or give you information you couldn't obtain by normal means, can open you to know, not just theorize, that we are all much more vast than we realize.

## *Understanding the Steps in the Dream Process*

To develop a conscious, intentional dream practice and receive the full benefit from your dreams (for more on the benefits of dreaming, see the section

“What’s in it for you?” earlier in this chapter), it helps to know the steps in the dream process. Each step is important and each feeds energy to the others. Drop one step out and the whole process falls apart. The following stages are expanded in more detail in subsequent chapters. The more times you repeat the full sequence of the following steps, the stronger and more second nature your dream habit will become:

- 1. Intend to remember a dream.** The best way to launch your dream process is to have a strong resolution to know your own mysteries. Then be more specific. You can prepare your awareness to be fertile and receptive, but if you want to dream, you must have a need or curiosity that serves as an energetic magnet. Decide what kind of dream, experiences you want to have. Do you want to visit an exotic place or connect with a relative who’s died? Do you want to heal psychological or physical wounds? Perhaps you’d like to go to school or to the inventor’s library and learn about future technologies. Maybe you need help solving a problem. Pick something specific or ask for general guidance; then program your subconscious mind before sleep. For example: “I will remember my most important dream in the morning.” Or, “Bring me an insight concerning which job offer to accept.”
- 2. Sleep well; wake up well.** If you’re too stressed or wake often during the night, your dream cycles will be disturbed. If you try a few pointers from the lists of dream inhibitors and

dream enhancers later in this chapter, you can learn to get a better night's sleep. When you wake in the morning, take a few moments to gently rise from the depths of sleep, to come back to daily reality slowly, so you can maintain a connection with your dreams. Maintain the subtle feelings and sensations in your body before your mind kicks into gear.

3. **Recognize dream activity.** It's important to develop a habit of turning your attention immediately to your dreams as you awake. Let your first thought of the day be: What have I just been doing? Dreams come in various forms: a cinematic saga, a fragment, a single symbol or word, or even a highlighted experience later in the day after you awake. Speak in present tense about dreams: I'm swinging on a rope, jumping from tree to tree. I sense I might fall. Speaking to yourself in the past tense can distance you from the dream.
4. **Record your dream.** Once you've learned to preserve your live connection with your dreams, you must do something to make the dreams real and physical to your body. This way your body, which is intimately connected with your subconscious mind, knows you meant what you said the night before when you asked to remember your experiences in other dimensions, and it will cooperate. If you do nothing, your body will think you're crying "Wolf!" So tell someone right away, describe the dream into a recorder, or write it in your dream diary!

- 5. Decode the message.** Making sense of your dream is perhaps the most daunting step, but also the most fun. There are many techniques for discovering the hidden messages in dreams, and you will find lots of ideas in this book. This is where you will determine what dream zone you've been visiting, where you'll use the dream dictionary and penetrate into your dream symbols. This is where you'll ask yourself: How is this dream image, dream choice, dream action, dream emotion, part of a process I'm going through right now in my waking life? How are the dream elements part of a life lesson I'm learning so I can become more of my true self? Bringing the subliminal into conscious awareness validates the process.



Remember, you are always the best interpreter of your dreams, though asking for insight from others can often be helpful.

- 6. Follow through.** If your dream contains guidance, insight, a warning, an answer to a problem, an inspiring image, or an intriguing thought, use the information. Follow through on what you receive, because this is why you dreamed the dream in the first place — so you could discover more about yourself. Using dreamtime insights in daily life reinforces your intention to connect the two halves of your experience, completes the dream cycle, and frees you to move into a new phase of exploration and creativity.



- 7. Do it all again.** When establishing a reliable dream habit, your subconscious mind will engage fully and bring you dreams consistently after you repeat this process at least three times. Some people say seven times, just to be sure.

## *Tuning In to Your Dreamtime Dynamics*

Science tells us that everyone dreams for a total of approximately two or three hours per night. Robbed of vital dream activity through sleep deprivation or stress, we become irritable and disoriented, and will balance ourselves by dreaming excessively the first chance we get.



The dreams of children are shorter than those of adults and often contain animals and monsters. Nearly 40 percent of children's dreams are nightmares, which may be part of the normal developmental process of learning to cope.

In the following sections, you explore the stages of the natural sleep/dream cycle you progress through several times each night, and I give you various ways you can improve your sleep/dream cycle.

### *Know your dream cycles*

Every night you rotate through four basic phases of sleep that repeat approximately every 90 minutes. During these cycles, you oscillate between awareness

that is close to waking reality and awareness that penetrates deep into the collective, spiritual realms.

What's important to understand here is that if your deep sleep cycles are disturbed, you may not be able to renew your vitality and sense of purposefulness easily.

✓ **Phase one:** Brainwaves slow from their waking frequency, called *beta*, to the more relaxed *alpha* state, where you may feel you are floating, and pictures may drift through your mind. Your muscles relax, and your pulse, blood pressure, and temperature drop slightly.

✓ **Phase two:** Your brainwaves slow more until they reach the level known as *theta*. You are now in a light sleep state characterized by many bursts of brain activity. Most dreams occur at this level, during which the eyes move back and forth rapidly beneath the eyelids. This is known as Rapid Eye Movement, or *REM sleep*, and it lasts from several minutes to an hour.

During REM sleep, your extremities may twitch, but most of your body is paralyzed. Your heart may beat erratically, and breathing can become irregular and shallow. When awakened, you easily remember your dreams. A newborn infant experiences eight to ten hours of REM sleep per day. By age five, a child's sleep pattern has become almost the same as an adult's.

✓ **Phases three and four:** In the third and fourth phases, about 20 to 45 minutes after you fall asleep, your brainwaves finally reach the ultra-slow, regular *delta* frequency, which produces a



deep, “dead sleep.” You progress from 20 percent delta waves in phase three to over 50 percent in phase four. If awakened during either of these stages, you feel fuzzy and lost; so resist waking fully, and drop back to sleep immediately.

## Dream breakthroughs

Many people have made discoveries while dreaming. Here are some examples of extraordinary breakthroughs that can inspire you to pay close attention to the deeper meanings of your dreams:

- ✔ **Friedrich August von Kekule:** A professor of chemistry in Ghent, von Kekule had been searching for the molecular structure of benzene. In 1865, while dozing before his fire, he dreamed of a snake seizing its own tail. He awoke suddenly with the revolutionary idea that certain organic compounds are not open structures, but form closed chains or rings.
- ✔ **Melvin Calvin:** A 1961 Nobel Laureate in chemistry for his work with photosynthesis, Calvin, while daydreaming in his parked car, recognized the structure of phosphoglyceric acid in a matter of seconds.
- ✔ **William Blake:** The English artist and poet William Blake, while searching for a less expensive method of engraving his illustrated songs, dreamed his dead younger brother, Robert, appeared to him and revealed a process of copper engraving, which Blake immediately tested, verified, and began using.
- ✔ **Elias Howe:** Howe, who invented the sewing machine, couldn't figure out how the needle would work. He dreamed he was taken prisoner by natives who danced around him with spears that had holes near their tips. He changed his design to incorporate the dream's idea and it worked!

## *Enhance your dream ability*

Like so many people today, you may be working too many hours, or splitting your time between too many people and activities. You may be living on the surface of yourself, feeling frustrated, disgruntled, and fragmented. By the time bedtime comes, you're probably too keyed up to sleep well. In the morning you may still be too tired to think seriously about the "luxury" of interpreting your dreams. Put some attention on the need to harmonize the flow of your sleep cycle and dream process by eliminating dream inhibitors and focusing on dream enhancers. By doing so, you can nurture yourself and maximize your success in all areas of your life. Familiarize yourself with the following things that either detract from or add to dreaming proficiency:



- ✓ **Dream inhibitors:** Drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, barbiturates, sleeping pills, tranquilizers, muscle relaxants, many mood-stabilizing drugs, as well as alcohol, tobacco, and stimulants like caffeine and amphetamines — can delay sleep, reduce your amount of REM sleep, and your ability for dream recall. Dream activity also can decrease when you are socially overactive and too stressed. Too much aerobic exercise close to bedtime tends to release adrenaline, which can prevent sleep.
- ✓ **Dream enhancers:** Dream activity occurs more frequently when you've been engaged in quiet, private activities like meditating, reading,

studying, or after a period of new learning. Eating foods like turkey, milk, bananas, or cheese, that contain the amino acid tryptophan, before bed can have a sedating effect. Vitamin B complex, especially B6, has been shown to produce more vivid dreams, as has the herb St. John's Wort. The hormone melatonin seems to help regulate your body clock, and even a small amount has been shown to help induce drowsiness. Ask your physician before you take any kind of supplements, however, and be sure not to exceed the recommended doses. A warm bath before bed can also lead to dreaming, since as you cool down afterward, you tend to get sleepy.

