

Notes on dreaming

"A dream is a projection: an externalization of an internal process." -- Freud.

This is one of few ideas that have survived the test of time for Freud's dream theory...and even if he's not referring to *video* projection, I do agree... though it doesn't take us very far into understanding why we dream. If you venture into the realms of academic studies on the one hand and the pop websites on the other, you may want to just wake up from the nightmare of trying to make head or tail of dreaming. Here are a few things I've learned that I trust enough to pass on:

When we dream, parts of us shut down so that we can immerse ourselves in our creative process:

- The left side of the brain (the part that perceives everything chronological); the right brain (the part that perceives the big picture) has free reign. Our *entire* life experience is present when we dream!
- The capacity to move our bodies (so that we don't actually act out our dreams). Any physical awareness (like hot flashes) will break the spell and chase the dream away. If you want to remember the dream, you mustn't move...which is hard since you've been paralyzed and really need to move. Sometimes, if you go back to the exact position you were in, the dream will come back to mind.

Only 2% of us remember our dreams on a regular basis. We dream a lot; even those who have good recall only remember a fraction of what we dream. But whether we remember them or not, our dreams help us deal with our obstacles... which is comforting to know!

There is a simple reason why we generally don't remember our dreams: if we did, it would be nearly impossible to distinguish lived experiences from dreamed ones!

We sleep in cycles during the night; there are 5 stages to a 90-110 minute cycle, during which we plunge into deep sleep, and then come back to the surface; we actually wake up slightly about every 90 minutes (completely if you get hot flashes...damned hot flashes!). The 5th stage, the REM state (Rapid Eye Movements) is when we dream the most – but it is not the only time, and it is *not* the deepest, most restful stage of sleep.

People suffering from depression, having bigger obstacles to deal with, spend a lot more time in the REM state, dreaming, and get less 'deep' sleep. Unfortunately, the attempt to solve problems is trumped by the lack of rest, and dreaming can't do its job properly.

One study concludes that left-wing ideologues have more vivid dreams than right-wingers, and don't sleep as well. I threw that in because I think it seems plausible that those who are troubled by the status quo would be more depressed than conservatives.

Dream experts *all agree* that no one knows whether or not dreams can predict future events.

Vive le mystère!

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