I enjoy listening to dreams and much of my understanding of them has, I think, arisen from this pleasure. And while at certain times I have found techniques like Gestalt, Psychodrama and free association useful in helping to understand a dream, I count being simply a receptive audience as one of my main resources. Symbolic language - the language of dreams - with its connection with myth, legend and fairy story, is, I believe a language whose richness we all have the capacity to understand and appreciate.

Robin Shohet

Morton Schatzman
THE USES OF LUCID DREAMS

Lucid dreaming is the awareness while dreaming that we are dreaming. During ordinary non-lucid dreaming, as in waking life, we usually do not wonder whether we are awake or asleep: we assume that the world we are experiencing is real; we believe that we and our bodies are located within that real world, and are relating to persons and objects in much the same way as we do when awake. However, there are dreams in which we are aware of our true situation, namely that we are asleep and dreaming. These are lucid dreams.

'What use are lucid dreams?' I am often asked. In the eighteenth century, a woman is alleged to have asked Benjamin Franklin, 'But what use is electricity?' He replied, 'What use, madame, is a newborn baby?' (1)

Lucid dreams have already been used as a means of coping with nightmares. In fact, some people first learned to dream lucidly in order to end their bad dreams. One woman told me that as a little girl when a dream frightened her, she would tell herself it was only a dream and wake up. Another remembered that as a child she transformed bad dreams by realising that she was dreaming and spinning her body around within the dream, until the unpleasant dream scene disappeared. Eventually she stopped spinning and continued dreaming.

An excellent example of a dreamer using lucidity to deal with a nightmare is given by Hervey de Saint-Denys, a French oriental scholar, who in 1867 published a book called **Dreams and How to Guide them:** (2)

> *I wasn't aware I was dreaming, and I thought I was being pursued by frightful monsters. I was fleeing through an endless series of interconnecting rooms, always experiencing difficulty in opening the dividing doors and closing them behind me, only to hear them opened again by my hideous pursuers, who uttered terrible cries as they came after me. I felt they were gaining on me. I awoke with a start, bathed in sweat.*
>
> *I don't know the origin of the dream. Probably some pathological cause brought it on the first time; but afterwards, when it was repeated on several occasions in the space of six weeks, it was clearly brought back solely by the impression it had made on me and by my instinctive fear of seeing it again. If I happened, while dreaming, to find myself in a closed room, the memory of this horrible dream was immediately revived; I wood glance towards the door, and the thought of what I was afraid of seeing was enough to produce the sudden appearance of the same terrors, in the same form as before. I was all the more affected on waking because, when this particular dream came upon me, I always lacked, through some curious twist of fate, that consciousness of my state that I so often had during my dreams. One night, however, when the dream returned for the fourth time, at the moment my persecutors were about to renew their pursuit, a feeling of the truth of the situation was suddenly awakened in my mind; and the desire to combat these illusions gave me strength to overcome my instinctive terror. Instead of fleeing, and by what must indeed under the circumstances have been an effort of will, I leaned against the wall and resolved to contemplate with the closest attention the phantoms that I had so far only glimpsed rather than seem. The initial shock was, I confess, strong enough - such is the difficulty that the mind has in defending itself against an illusion that it fears. I fixed my eyes on my principal attacker, who somewhat resembled the grinning, bristling demons which are sculpted in cathedral porticos, and as the desire to observe gained the upper hand over my emotions, I saw the following: the fantastic monster had arrived within several feet of me, whistling and cavorting in a manner which, once it had ceased to frighten me, appeared comic. I noted the claws on one of its paws, of which there*

were seven, very clearly outlined. The hairs of its eybrows, a wound it appeared to have on its shoulder and innumerable other details combined in a picture of the greatest precision - one of the clearest visions I have had. Was it the memory of some Gothic bas-relief? In any case, my imagination added both movement and colour. The attention I had concentrated on this figure had caused its companions to disappear as if by magic. The figure itself seemed to slow down in its movements, lose its clarity and take on a woolly appearance, until it changed into a kind of floating bundle of rags similar to the faded costumes that serve as a sign to shops selling disguises at carnival time. Several insignificant images appeared in succession, and then I awoke. (3)

I have sometimes drawn upon this experience of Hervey de Saint-Denys to help patients. Jack, a patient of mine in his mid-thirties, was worried that his mother, who had chronic heart trouble, might die suddenly before he could reach his parents' home, several hundred miles from where he lived. He had recurrent nightmares of receiving news that she was dying, rushing home and arriving to find her dead. In one nightmare,

My father phones me to say my mother is very ill and dying, and I'm to come home immediately. When I reach the station, doctors and nurses in white uniforms are in the waiting-room screaming at me, 'You're too late, you're too late!'

Besides offering him interpretations of his dreams, I told him how Saint-Denys had dealt with a recurrent nightmare. A few nights later Jack dreamed again of his mother dying before he reached her; as usual he felt awful in the dream. Then he told me that something new occurred:

Suddenly you're there in the dream. You say, 'Its only a dream, and it's your dream. You could dream it differently.' I do. I dream it all again. This time I get there before she dies. I tell her I love her, and despite having sometimes been angry at things she did, I understand that she loves me too. I'm pleased about things finishing properly between us, and wake up feeling good.

Jack had no more dreams about his mother dying until eleven months later - his longest period for years without such dreams. Then he dreamed:

I get a letter saying that my mother died. She has been dead for some time - the letter has arrived late. As I read the letter I get upset, and think I could have seen her again and spoken with her. I realise I'm dreaming, and then I re-dream the same dream I had eleven months earlier, from the point in it at which you appeared. I remain aware that I'm re-dreaming the earlier dream. 4

When lucid, the dreamer often can guide the dream voluntarily, as Jack found he could, which makes possible using the dream for various purposes, such as for coping with waking-life fears. Patricia Garfield, An American psychologist, suggests that:

A lucid dreamer with a phobia of any sort could present himself with the feared object (during a dream in which he knows he is dreaming and therefore cannot be harmed) and thus 'desensitize' himself just as a therapist might help him to do in waking life using imagination to visualize the feared object. 5

Rehearsals for various waking-life situations take place in dreams, and so another use for lucid dreams is to arrange those rehearsals deliberately.

Lucid dreaming may provide a window for scientific investigation into the psychology and physiology of dreaming. Research has already shown that certain subjects can signal that they are dreaming lucidly by means of volitional objectively recordable eye movements and forearm muscle contractions. (6) These results suggest the possibility of examining experimentally the long-standing assumption that a subject's dream report is a reliable account of what the subject really dreamed. These results suggest too that if, while dreaming lucidly, a subject can perceive external sensory stimuli (as it has been shown that subjects can who are not dreaming lucidly) and if the subject can signal volitionally in response to those stimuli, then he or she will thereby be engaging in effect in two-way communication while asleep. Many features of dreaming could then be examined experimentally. Currently I am in fact doing research along these lines with Dr. Peter Fenwick, Chairman of the EEG Department at St. Thomas' Hospital, and Mr. Alan Worsley, a talented lucid dreamer and scientific investigator.

Perhaps the most widespread use of lucid dreams will be gratification of the dreamer's impulses.

However, a male lucid dreamer whom I know told me this dream experience, which shows that even in lucid dreams, we do not always get what we want:

> *I'm with two attractive girls in a sexual situation. We're taking off our clothes, somewhat laboriously, I'm aware that it's a dream, and it's been going on for about two or three minutes. 'If we don't do something quickly', I think, 'there'll be no chance.' I think I'll explain to them that this is a dream and we're all figments of my imagination and shortly we'll all be disappearing, so that if they want something to happen, they'd better hurry up. Before anything more happens, I wake up.*

Suppose we could guide our dreams to such an extent that we could dream each night of whatever we wished: of eating delicious food, of amassing wealth, of making love with glamorous partners, of acquiring artistic talents, of exploring other worlds, of discovering new regions of this world, of getting fresh perspectives on waking-life problems. What would we choose? No one has developed an ability to direct dreaming to this degree - at least not reliably and regularly. But we cannot be sure that the amount of control that lucid dreamers have so far reported is the uppermost limit of possible control; just as, with practice, people can improve skills in waking life, so they probably can too in lucid dreaming.

Can psychological and spiritual insights be found in lucid dreams? Ram Narayan, who was the editor of an Indian medical journal and a seeker of spiritual liberation, in lucid dreams sometimes found himself exhorting his dream friends to believe that he was dreaming and that they were creatures of his dream, but they laughed at his words. Sometimes the 'dream creatures' were 'sádhus and saints, wrapped in long yellowish robes' who gave lectures, one of which he took down in his notebook:

> *"Even presuming that we are all fictitious beings, a creation of your mind and having no independant existence of our own, we ask you the question why have you taken the trouble of giving birth to us? What earthly purpose could it serve to create such a large number of animate beings at night and to see them absolutely annihilated before the day breaks?/ The question was really a very intelligent one and so puzzling to the mind of the dreamer that he felt himself entirely at a loss to reply. However, the wise sádhu of the dream himself broke silence and uttered the following words:-*

*"As a matter of fact, dear friend, you have never created us by your own free will; we are simply the result of your ignorance (**agyán**) during the sleep. While going to sleep, your object is not the creation of another world but only the enjoyment of the comfort and repose that you expect to derive therefrom. We are, of course, the necessary consequence of your **desire** for comfort and your **ignorance**. A typical illustration of this is the phenomenon of the birth of your own children in the waking life. The offspring comes into existence exactly in the same manner as came the dream world. While indulging in the gratification of a sexual impulse, your aim is only the momentary pleasure derived from the act, but the result is the germination of the seed (of **vásná** and **agyán**) and the consequent birth of a child. So long as you are in your senses and the master of your own feelings and imaginations you have a free will and an absolute control over your own mind and body; but the moment you lose yourself in sleep or identify yourself with passion, you forfeit the right of controlling yourself, and are thus compelled unintentionally to dream all kind of dreams, in the one case, and in the other, become instrumental for births of any kind of offspring. We are, dear sir, like your own children of the waking state, equally independent and self-subsisting."*

*As soon as the venerable **sádhu** finished his address another elderly figure from amongst the dream creatures rose from his seat and overawed the assembly with his long grey beard and his yogi's staff. He began his oration in a curious and amusing manner, though with an authoritative tone, his voice quivering with the dreamer: "What reason have you to call us your dream creatures and yourself the creator of us all? If you are our creator we say equally emphatically that so are we the creator of yourself. We are all in the same boat, and you can claim no sort of higher existence than ours. (If, however, you want to be convinced of my statement, I can show you the creator of us all, i.e. of yourself as well as ours.") With those words he struck the dreamer on his head with his heavy staff, who, in consequence, woke up and found himself lying in his bed with his mind extremely puzzled.* 8

Readers who wish to dream lucidly should be advised that the wish in itself may be sufficient to bring about its fulfilment. To the reader who would like specific techniques, I can present some that other authors have found useful. Saint-Denys suggested keeping a dream diary and explained why he believed this method was effective. He noted that any of his daytime habits could form part of the body of reminiscences to be drawn upon for the raw material of his dreams.

If he wrote his dreams in a diary, he would eventually dream of writing a dream in his diary. And if, while dreaming of recording a dream, he noted the details of the dream he was recording, he would virtually be dreaming lucidly. (9)

Peter D. Ouspensky, a Russian-born mystic, observed that it was easier to undergo 'half-dream states' (his term for what are now called lucid dreams in the morning than earlier in sleep, an observation which other lucid dreamers have also made. To bring on these experiences Ouspensky, after waking, used to close his eyes and keep his mind 'on some definite image or some thought', while beginning to doze and fall asleep. (10

Stephen La Berge, a California psychologist, reports success with this method: (1) Awaken spontaneously in the early morning and, if you were dreaming, memorize the dream. (2) Do something for 10 to 15 minutes which demands full wakefulness, such as reading. (3) Lie in bed and return to sleep saying, 'Next time I'm dreaming I want to remember I'm dreaming.' (4) Visualize your body asleep in bed and your eyes moving rapidly to indicate dreaming. At the same time, see yourself as being in the dream just memorized or, in case no dream was recalled upon awakening, imagine that you are dreaming. (5) Repeat steps (3) and (4) a few times. (11)

Perhaps more useful than any specific technique is the awareness that, while innate differences probably exist in people's abilities to dream lucidly, lucid dreaming is a skill that can be learned and can be improved with practice.

Footnotes

1. Stephen P. La Berge, Lucid Dreaming: An Exploratory Study of Consciousness during sleep, Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, 1980, p. 108.
2. Hervey de Saint-Denys: Dreams and How to Guide Them (translated from Les Reves et les Moyens de les Diriger), edited by Morton Schatzman, London: Duckworth, 1982
3. **Ibid** pp 58-59
4. **Ibid** pp 13-14
5. Patricia Garfield, Creative Dreaming, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974. p.175
6. Stephen P. La Berge, **op cit** and Keith M.T. Hearne, Lucid Dreams: An Electro-physiological and psychological study, Ph.D Thesis, Liverpool University, 1978

7. Ram Narayan. 'The Dream Problem and Its Many Solutions in Search After Ultimate Truth.' **Practical Medicine**, Volume 1, Delhi 1922. pp 303-305
8 **ibid** p 303 - 305
9. Hervey de Saint-Denys, **op. cit**
10. Peter D. Ouspensky, **A New Model of the Universe**, New York, Vintage, 1971, p.244
11. Stephen La Berge, 'Lucid Dreaming as a Learnable Skill: A Case Study', **Perceptual and Motor Skills**, 1980, 51 pp 1039-1042.

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Hilary Scaife

DREAMWORK WITH CHILDREN

It was my own children, then aged eight and six, who suggested to me in the spring of 1979, that I lead a "dream group for children". At this time I was studying at the Jungian - Senoi Institute, in Berkeley, California, and as part of the professional training I was undertaking in Dream Analysis committed me to leading at least one dream group during the four month course, this seemed to be a good suggestion.

I decided to lead two dream groups. One for adults and one for children. I had already had a year's experience of leading dream groups for adults in Edinburgh, but I had never before attempted dreamwork with children. It was to be the beginning of a new adventure!