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CHAPTER 6: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF LUCID DREAMING

HOW TO STAY ASLEEP OR WAKE UP AT WILL

So far you have learned how to increase your dream recall and various techniques for inducing lucid dreams. Perhaps you have succeeded in having a few lucid dreams, or perhaps you know how to induce them more-or-less at will. Now that you are learning to realize when you are dreaming, what can you do with this knowledge? As discussed previously, one of the most fascinating potentials offered by lucid dreaming is the ability to voluntarily control dreaming. It may be possible to dream anything you choose, as the Tibetan dream yogis believe. But before you can try it, you need to be able to remain asleep and retain lucidity!

Novice lucid dreamers often wake up the moment they become lucid. They can recognize lucidity clues, apply state tests, and conclude that they are dreaming, but are frustrated because they wake up or fall into nonlucid sleep soon after achieving lucidity. However, this obstacle is only temporary. With experience, you can develop the capacity to stay in the dream longer. As you will see in a moment, there are also specific techniques that appear to help prevent premature awakening. If you continue to apply will and attention to your practice you should be able to refine your lucid dreaming skills.

PREVENTING PREMATURE AWAKENING

Informally experimenting in their beds at home, lucid dreamers have discovered various ways of remaining in the dream state when threatened by early awakening. All the techniques involve some form of dream action which is carried out as soon as the visual part of the dream begins to fade.

Linda Magallon, editor and publisher of the Dream Network Bulletin, and an intrepid explorer of lucid dreams, has described how she prevents herself from waking up by concentrating on the senses other than vision, such as hearing and touch. She reports that all of the following activities have successfully prevented awakenings from visually faded dreams: listening to voices, music, or her breathing; beginning or continuing a conversation; rubbing or opening her (dream) eyes; touching her dream hands and face; touching objects such as a pair of glasses, a hair brush, or the edge of mirror; being touched; and flying. [1]

These activities all have something in common with the Spinning Technique described below. They are based on the idea of loading the perceptual system so it cannot change its

focus from the dream world to the waking world. As long as you are actively and perceptually engaged with the dream world, you are less likely to make the transition to the waking state.

Magallon may be a dreamer with an unusually active REM system; it may be that she has little trouble staying asleep once she is in REM. However, many others are light sleepers who find it difficult to remain in lucid dreams for long periods of time. These people need more powerful techniques to help them stay in their lucid dreams.

Harold von Moers-Messmer, a German physician, was one of the handful of researchers who personally investigated lucid dreaming in the first half of the 20th century. He was the first to propose the technique of looking at the ground in order to stabilize the dream. [2]

The idea of focusing on something in the dream in order to prevent awakening has independently occurred to several other lucid dreamers. One of these is G. Scott Sparrow, a clinical psychologist and author of the classic personal account,

LUCID DREAMING: DAWNING OF THE CLEAR LIGHT. [3] Sparrow discusses Carlos Castaneda's famous technique of looking at his hands while dreaming to induce and stabilize lucid dreams. [4] Sparrow argues that the dreamer's body provides one of the most unchanging elements in the dream, which can help to stabilize the dreamer's otherwise feeble identity in the face of a rapidly changing dream. However, as he points out, the body isn't the only relatively stable reference point in the dream: another is the ground beneath the dreamer's feet. Sparrow uses this idea in this example of one of his own lucid dreams:

"...I walk on down the street. It is night; and as I look up at the sky I am astounded by the clarity of the stars. They seem so close. At this point I become lucid. The dream 'shakes' momentarily. Immediately I look down at the ground and concentrate on solidifying the image and remaining in the dreamscape. Then I realize that if I turn my attention to the pole star above my head, the dream image will further stabilize itself. I do this; until gradually the clarity of the stars returns in its fullness." [5]

DREAM SPINNING

Some years ago I had the good fortune to discover a highly effective technique to prevent awakenings and produce new lucid dream scenes. I started by reasoning that since dream actions have corresponding physical effects, relaxing my dream body might inhibit awakening by lowering muscle tension in my physical body. The next time I was dreaming lucidly, I tested the idea. As the dream began to fade, I relaxed completely, dropping to the dream floor. However, contrary to my intention, I seemed to awaken. But, a few minutes later I

discovered I had actually only dreamed of awakening. I repeated the experiment many times and the effect was consistent--I would remain in the dream state by dreaming of waking up. However, my experiences suggested that the essential element was not the attempted relaxation but the sensation of movement. In subsequent lucid dreams, I tested a variety of dream movements and found both falling backward and spinning in the dream to be especially effective in producing lucid dreams of awakening. Here is a method for spinning to remain in the dream state:

THE SPINNING TECHNIQUE

1. Notice when the dream begins to fade

When a dream ends, the visual sense fades first. Other senses may persist longer, with touch being among the last to go. The first sign that a lucid dream is about to end is usually a loss of color and realism in your visual imagery. The dream may lose visual detail and begin to take on a cartoon-like or washed-out appearance. You may find the light growing very dim, or your vision becoming progressively weaker.

2. Spin as soon as the dream begins to fade

As soon as the visual imagery of your lucid dream begins to fade, quickly, before the feel of your dream body evaporates, stretch out your arms and spin like a top (with your dream body, of course). It doesn't matter whether you pirouette, or spin like a top, dervish, child, or bottle, as long as you vividly feel your dream body in motion. This is not the same as imagining you are spinning; for the technique to work, you must feel the vivid sensation of spinning.

3. While spinning, remind yourself that the next thing you see will probably be a dream

Continue to spin, constantly reminding yourself that the next thing you see, touch or hear will very probably be a dream.

4. Test your state wherever you seem to arrive

Continue spinning until you find yourself in a stable world. You will either still be dreaming or have awakened. Therefore, carefully and critically test which state you are in (see Chapter 3).

COMMENTARY

If I think I have awakened, I always check the time on the digital clock beside my bed. This usually provides a foolproof reality test.

Frequently, the spinning procedure generates a new dream scene, which may represent the bedroom you are sleeping in, or some more unusual place. Sometimes the just-faded dream scene is regenerated in all its vivid glory.

By repeatedly reminding yourself that you're dreaming during

the spinning transition, you can continue to be lucid in the new dream scene. Without this special effort of attention, you will usually mistake the new dream for an actual awakening--in spite of manifest absurdities of dream content!

A typical false awakening would occur if, while spinning, you felt your hands hit the bed and you thought: "Well, I must be awake, since my hand just hit the bed. I guess spinning didn't work this time." What you should think, of course, is "Since the spinning hand that hit the bed is a dream hand, it must have hit a dream bed. Therefore, I'm still dreaming!" Don't fail to critically check your state after using the Spinning Technique.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SPINNING

This method is extremely effective for many dreamers, including myself. Out of the one hundred lucid dreams in the last six months of the record in my doctoral dissertation, I used this technique in forty percent of my lucid dreams. New dream scenes resulted in eighty-five percent of these cases. Lucid consciousness persisted in ninety-seven percent of the new dreams. When spinning led to another dream, the new dream scene almost always closely resembled my bedroom.

The experiences of other lucid dreamers who have employed this method have been very similar to mine, but suggest that the post-spin lucid dream need not be a bedroom scene. One of these lucid dreamers, for instance, found herself arriving at a dream scene other than her bedroom in five out of the eleven times she used the spinning technique.

These results suggest that spinning could be used to produce transitions to any dream scene the lucid dreamer expects. (See Exercise: Spinning a new dream scene, later in this chapter) In my own case, it appears that my almost exclusive production of bedroom dreams may be an accident of the circumstances in which I discovered the technique. I have tried, with very little success, to produce transitions to other dream scenes with this method. Although I definitely intended to arrive elsewhere than my dream bedroom, I cannot say that I fully expected to. I believe I will someday be able to unlearn this accidental association (if that is what it is). Meanwhile, I'm impressed by the power of expectation to determine what happens in my lucid dreams.

HOW DOES SPINNING WORK?

Why should dream spinning decrease the likelihood of awakening? Several factors are probably involved. One of these may be neurophysiological. Information about head and body movement, monitored by the vestibular system of the inner ear (which helps you to keep your balance), is closely integrated with visual information by the brain to produce an optimally stable picture of the world. Because of this integration of information, the world doesn't appear to move

whenever you move your head, even though the image of the world on your retina moves.

Since the sensations of movement during dream spinning are as vivid as those during actual physical movements, it is likely that the same brain systems are activated to a similar degree in both cases. An intriguing possibility is that the spinning technique, by stimulating the system of the brain that integrates vestibular activity detected in the middle ear, facilitates the activity of the nearby components of the REM-sleep system. Neuroscientists have obtained indirect evidence of the involvement of the vestibular system in the production of the rapid-eye-movement bursts in REM sleep. [6]

Another possible reason why spinning may help postpone awakening comes from the fact that when you imagine perceiving something with one sense, your sensitivity to external stimulation of that sense decreases. Thus, if the brain is fully engaged in producing the vivid, internally generated sensory experience of spinning, it will be more difficult for it to construct a contradictory sensation based on external sensory input.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU DO AWAKEN PREMATURELY

Even if you find that despite your best efforts to stay asleep you still wake up, all is not lost. Play dead. If you remain perfectly motionless upon waking from a lucid (or non-lucid) dream, and deeply relax your body, there is a good chance that REM sleep will reassert itself and you will have an opportunity to consciously enter a lucid dream, as described in Chapter 4. For some people with a strong tendency to REM sleep, this happens almost every time they awaken from a dream until they decide to move. Alan Worsley is one of the world's most experienced lucid dreamers. He has been conducting personal lucid dream experiments since the age of five. During the 1970s, he was the first person to signal from a lucid dream in pioneering experiments carried out in collaboration with Keith Hearne. [7] Worsley appears to possess this felicitous sort of physiology, and offers the following advice for dreamers who have just awakened but yearn to return to their lucid dreams: "Lie very still--don't move a muscle! Relax and wait. The dream will return. I've had dozens of lucid dreams in a row with this method." [8]

USING INNER SPEECH TO PREVENT LOSS OF LUCIDITY

We have used language to control our thinking and behavior since we first learned to speak. Our parents would tell us what to do and how to do it and we were guided by their words. When we first we did these things under our own direction, we would repeat out loud the parental instructions to remind ourselves of exactly how and what we were trying to do. Now, having fully incorporated the role of parental guide within us, we repeat the instructions silently to ourselves when carrying out complicated new procedures.

This process of verbal direction of conscious behavior can also be used to regulate your behavior in the lucid dream, for instance to maintain your awareness that it is a dream. Until becoming and staying lucid is a well developed habit, we are all too likely to lose lucidity anytime our attention wanders. The moment we take a bit too much interest in some facet of the dream, lucidity vanishes. If you are a novice lucid dreamer who has problems maintaining your lucidity, the temporary solution is for you to talk to yourself in your lucid dreams. Continually remind yourself that you are dreaming by repeating phrases like "This is a dream!...This is a dream!...This is a dream!" or "I'm dreaming...I'm dreaming...I'm dreaming...." This self-reminding can be spoken "out-loud" in the dream, if necessary. Otherwise it's better to say it silently to avoid the repetition becoming the predominant feature of the dream.

Sparrow recommends the same procedure, advising dreamers with shaky lucidity "to concentrate on an affirmation which serves as a continual reminder of the illusory nature of the experience." [9] Sparrow considers it essential that the affirmation (e.g., "This is all a dream") must be learned by heart and cultivated in the waking state in order for it to be an effective aid in the dream state.

After you have acquired some experience, you will learn to recognize the situations in which you tend to lose your lucidity (i.e., the presence of strongly attractive or repellent elements), and find that you can maintain your lucidity without conscious effort. Learning to do this can happen fairly rapidly. In my first year of studying lucid dreaming, I lost lucidity in 11 (18%) of 62 lucid dreams; in the second year, I lost lucidity in only 1 (0.9%) of 111 lucid dreams, and in the third year, only 1 (0.5%) out of 215 lucid dreams. [10] In the following 10 years, the rate of lucidity lost has stayed at less than one percent.

AWAKENING AT WILL

"My first lucid dream arose from my discovery as a child of 5 that I could wake myself from frightening dreams by trying to shout 'Mother!'" [11]

"I have found a paradoxical sounding, but simple technique for waking at will: 'Fall asleep to wake up.' Whenever I decide I want to awaken from a lucid dream, I simply lie down on the nearest dream bed, couch, or cloud, shut my dream eyes, and 'go to sleep.' The usual result is that I immediately wake up, but sometimes I only dream that I wake up, and when I realize I'm still dreaming, I try again to wake up 'for real', sometimes succeeding at once, but sometimes only after an amusing sequence of false awakenings.' [B.K., Palo Alto, California]

"When I was a little girl, about six years old, I came up with a method for awakening myself when dreams got too

unpleasant. I don't recall how I came up with the idea, but I would blink my eyes hard three times. This worked well for a while, and got me out of some pretty horrific and surrealistic scenarios, but then something changed, and the method began to produce false awakenings. When I once used this technique to end a mildly distasteful dream, only to find myself awakening in my bedroom just before the arrival of a terrible hurricane, and certain that the experience was real, upon actually awakening I decided to abandon the practice." [L.L., Redwood City, California]

If the secret to preventing premature awakening is to maintain active participation in the dream, the secret to awakening at will is to withdraw your attention and participation from the dream. Think, daydream, or otherwise withdraw your attention from the dream, and you are very likely to awaken.

When five-year-old Alan Worsley called out for his mother in the physical world, he was directing his attention away from the dream as well as possibly activating the muscles of vocalization in his sleeping body, which could awaken him.

But nothing could provide a better illustration of the principle of waking by withdrawing attention from the dream than Beverly Kedzierski's formula "go to sleep to wake up." After all, what does sleep mean but withdrawal of attention from what is around us?

Another way of withdrawing your participation from the dream is to cease making the usual rapid eye movements so crucially characteristic of REM sleep. Tholey has experimented with fixation on a stationary point during lucid dreams. He found that gaze fixation caused the fixation point to blur, followed by dissolution of the entire dream scene, and an awakening within four to twelve seconds. He notes that experienced subjects can use the intermediate stage of scene dissolution "to form the dream environment to their own wishes." [12] Artist and dream researcher Fariba Bogzaran describes a very similar technique called "Intentional Focusing," in which she concentrates on an object in her lucid dream until she regains waking consciousness. [13]

However, the examples here show that using methods to awaken from dreams may lead to false awakenings. Sometimes, the false awakening can be more disturbing than the original dream you were trying to escape. In general, it is probably best not to try to avoid frightening dream images by escaping to the waking state. Chapter 10 explains why and how you can benefit from facing nightmares. An example of a good use for techniques of waking yourself at will from lucid dreams is for awakening while you still have the events and revelations of the dream clearly in mind.

TWO KINDS OF DREAM CONTROL

Before we go on to discuss ways in which you can exercise your will over the images of your dreams, consider the uses you can make of your new freedom.

When faced with challenging dream situations, there are two ways you can master them. One way involves magical manipulation of the dream: controlling "them" or "it," while the other way involves self-control. As it happens, the first kind of control doesn't always work--which may actually be a blessing in disguise. If we learned to solve our problems in our lucid dreams by magically changing things we don't like, we might mistakenly hope to do the same in our waking lives. For example, I once had a lucid dream about a frightening ogre, whom I confronted by projecting feelings of love and acceptance, leading to a pleasurable, peaceful, and empowering resolution in my dream. Suppose I had chosen to turn my adversary into a toad, and get rid of him that way. How would that help me if I were to find myself in conflict with my boss or another authority figure whom I might see as an ogre, in spite of my being awake? Turning him into a toad would hardly be practical! However, a change in attitude might indeed resolve the situation.

A generally a more useful approach to take with unpleasant dream imagery is to control your self. Self-control means control over habitual reactions. For example, if you are afraid and run away, even though you know you should face your fear, you aren't controlling your behavior. Although the events that appear to take place in dreams are illusory, our feelings in response to dream events are real. So when you're fearful in a dream and realize that it is a dream, you fear may not vanish automatically. You still have to deal with it; this is why lucid dreams are such good practice for our waking lives. We're free to control our responses to the dream, and whatever we learn in so doing will readily apply to our waking lives. In my "ogre dream," I gained a degree of self-mastery and confidence that has served me as well in the waking world as in the dream. As a result of such lucid dream encounters, I now feel confident that I can handle just about any situation. So if you'd like to enhance your sense of self-confidence, my advice is that you'd be wise to "control yourself, not the dream."

FLYING

"I read about your work and the techniques you suggested for having lucid dreams. I practiced noticing whether I was dreaming. The first night, after several non-lucid dreams, I suddenly remembered to ask myself if I was dreaming. As soon as I answered "yes," something happened that your article did not mention. Everything in the dream became extremely vivid. The visual aspects were like someone turned up the contrast and the color. I saw everything in great detail. All my dream senses were amplified. I was suddenly intensely aware of temperature, air movement, odors, and sounds. I had a strong sense of being in control. Even though I had not planned to

fly, something in the dream made me think about flying, and I simply leaped into the air (Superman style) and flew. The sensation was the most exhilarating and realistic dream experience I have ever had. I used to have flying dreams when I was younger, but they were more of the floating variety, and never higher than tree-top level. I never had the degree of control that I experienced in my lucid dream. I flew down a canyon of tall buildings, gradually gaining altitude. The buildings gave way to a park, where I embarked upon some aerial acrobatics. It was my last dream of the night, and the feeling of exhilaration lasted all day. I told everyone who would listen about the experiment and the "success I had."
[G.R., Westborough, Massachusetts]

"One night I was dreaming of standing on a hill, looking out over the tops of maples, alders, and other trees. The leaves of the maples were bright red and rustling in the wind. The grass at my feet was lush and vividly green. All the colors about me were more saturated than I have ever seen.

Perhaps the awareness that the colors were 'brighter than they should be' shocked me into realizing that I was in a dream, and that what lay about me was not 'real.' I remember saying to myself, 'If this is a dream, I should be able to fly into the air.' I tested my hunch and was enormously pleased that I could effortlessly fly, and fly anywhere I wanted. I skimmed over the tops of the trees and sailed many miles over new territory. I flew upward, far above the landscape, and hovered in the air currents like an eagle.

How the dream ended I don't recall, but when I awoke I felt as if the experience of flying had energized me. I felt a sense of well-being that seemed directly related to the experience of being lucid in the dream, of taking control of the flying." [J.B., Everett, Washington]

Flying dreams and lucid dreams are strongly related in several ways. First, if you ever find yourself flying without benefit of an airplane or other reasonable apparatus, you are looking at a fine dreamsign. Second, if you ever suspect that you are dreaming, trying to fly is often a good way to test your state. And if you want to visit the far corners of the globe or distant galaxies in your lucid dreams, flying makes an excellent mode of transportation.

If you think you are dreaming, push off the ground and see if you can float into the air. If you are indoors, after you fly around the room, look for a window. Go out the window, and strive for altitude. Curiously, more than a few dreamers (most likely city-dwellers) have reported that they sometimes find an obstacle in the form of electrical power lines that seem to prevent their passage. And some of these oneironauts report a surge of energy, often accompanied by a burst of light, when they fly through the "power" lines. Beyond that barrier, oneironauts have flown around the earth, to other planets, distant stars and galaxies, and even mythical realms like Camelot or Shangri-la.

Flying is fun, and therefore worth doing for the sheer joy of it, even if you aren't determined to reach a specific destination. People seem to be able to fly in just about any manner imaginable, according to the hundreds of reports we have received. Many people fly "Superman style," with their arms extended in front of them. Also common is "swimming" through the air, probably because the closest experience we get to flying in the air, is "flying" in the water. Others sprout wings from their backs or their heels, flap their hands, or straddle jet-powered cereal boxes, or flying carpets, or supersonic easy chairs.

One way to challenge yourself and to begin to fly is to jump off tall buildings or cliffs. Uncontrolled falling is a common theme of nightmares, and the following anecdote suggests the potential usefulness of lucid dream flying as a means for overcoming this terror:

"My attempts at flying lucidly were the most interesting adventures I've had in lucid dreams. I have a great fear of heights, so falling in dreams, while not nightmarish, is common for me. I always wake up before I land. But attempting the exercise I read in your article, I flew over places which would have terrified me in a dream before--open water, snowy mountains.

One night I was soaring in outer space and coming back to earth. No fear involved. But coming eventually to a small ledge in a mountain, I was afraid to land and almost woke up. Using your techniques (especially spinning), I forced myself to deliberately land on the very edge. I could see the mountains below, feel the cold, even smell the fresh air. It was really a great feeling to know I could not be hurt; because if I started to fall, I could just fly away again."
[N.C., Fremont, California]

EXTENDING YOUR DREAM SENSES

"I gained conscious control in one of my dreams. I took a bicycle ride because I decided I'd like to broaden my sensual experience. As I pedalled, I called out the senses: Hearing! And I heard my own heavy breathing. Smell! And I smelled a whiff of cigarette smoke. I touched a big, rough-barked tree, heard the flapping of sparrow wings, saw much greenery, felt the wooden handles of the bicycle. My senses were so alive, just as good as if I were awake. Yet I knew I was dreaming. This excited me incredibly! I pedalled furiously to get back, to wake up, but I woke up feeling refreshed." [L.G., San Francisco, California]

Most people are astonished to discover that they are dreaming. The astonishment stems from the realization that they have been fooling themselves in a colossal way. It is definitely a surprise, especially the first time, to learn that your normally-trustworthy senses are reporting to you an absolutely flawless portrayal of a world that doesn't exist outside the dream. Indeed, one of the most common features of

first lucid dreams is a feeling of hyper-reality that happens when you take a good look around you in the dream and see the wondrous, elaborate detail your mind can create.

First-time lucid dreamers often note a marked, pleasurable heightening of the senses, particularly the sense of vision. Hearing, smell, touch, taste can intensify instantly, as if you had found the volume control knob for your senses and turned it up a notch. Give it a try. Play with your senses, one at a time, as you explore the dream world. During daily life, we all have good reasons for tuning out our senses so we can concentrate on getting our jobs done. In your dreams, however, you can learn how to turn them back on again.

Senses are marvelous instruments for providing continuous data about events inside and outside our bodies. Our brains structure this data into the models of the world we experience. We all have learned how to think, perceive, believe, and model the world in a certain way, and the greatest part of this learning took place when we were infants. The world-modeling process was automatic long before we were able to think about it. Therefore, it comes as a surprise when we discover in lucid dreams that the drama we perceive as real might only be a kind of stage set, and all the people in it but mental constructions. However, once we get used to the notion, it is natural and empowering to begin to take conscious control of our senses in the dream state.

THE DREAM TELEVISION

In the early 1980s, continuing his dual role as lucid dream explorer and researcher (like many in the field), Alan Worsley developed an interesting series of "television experiments." [14] In his lucid dreams he finds a television set, turns it on, watches it, and experiments with the controls to change such things as the sound level and the color intensity. Sometimes he pretends that the T.V. responds to voice control, so that he can ask it questions and request it to display various images.

Worsley reports that "... I have experimented with manipulating imagery, as if I were learning to operate by trial an internal computer video system (including 'scrolling,' 'panning,' changing the scene instantly, and 'zooming'). Further, I have experimented with isolating part of the imagery or 'parking' it, by surrounding it with a frame such as a picture frame or proscenium arch and backing away from it ('windowing')." [15]

EXERCISE: THE DREAM TELEVISION

Before bed set your mind to remember this experiment. When you achieve lucidity, find or create a large, ultra-high resolution, total surround sound, television set. Make yourself comfortable. Turn it on. Find the volume,

brightness, and color saturation controls, and slowly experiment with them. Turn the sound up and down. Tweak the color. When the picture is right, imagine the smell of your favorite food wafting right out of the picture tube. If you are hungry, allow it to materialize. Savor a sample. Conjure up velvet pillows and satin pajamas. Give all the senses a controlled workout. Observe what is happening in your mind as you adjust the color or contrast control on your world-modeling television monitor.

MANIPULATING LUCID DREAMS

"I dreamed of falling down the side of a building, and as I fell I knew I was still unprepared to face the fall, so I changed the building to a cliff. I grabbed onto foliage and shrubs that grew down the side and began climbing confidently down. In fact, when someone began falling from above me, I caught him and told him to think of footholds and plants to support him because 'it's only a dream and you can do what you want in it.' And I enjoyed a totally new excitement and headiness of purposely facing danger and risk. It was a deeply gratifying and proud moment in my life." [T.Z., Fresno, California]

"In this dream I was at my mother's house and heard voices in another room. When entering the room, I realized without a doubt I was dreaming. My first command was ordering the people in the room to have a more exciting conversation, since this was my dream. At that moment they changed their topic to my favorite hobby. I started commanding things to happen and they did. The more things began to happen, the more I would command. It was a very thrilling experience, one of the most thrilling lucid dreams I've had, probably because I was more in control and more sure of my actions." [R.B., Chicago, Illinois]

"Two weeks ago I had a dream of being pursued by a violent tornadic storm. I was on a cliff high above a beach and had been teaching others to fly, telling them that this was a dream and in a dream all you have to do to fly is believe you can. We were having a great time when the storm appeared, coming in from the ocean. Tornados and I go way back in dreams. They are some of my pet monsters of the mind.

When this one appeared, it was announced by exceptionally strong winds and lightning and high waves. A young boy, a puppy, and I were together for some time running and seeking shelter, but then we stopped, poised on the very edge of the last great cliff before the open sea. Panic was bringing me close to the point of losing lucidity. But then I thought 'Wait! This is a dream. If you choose, you can keep running. Or you can destroy the tornado or transform it. The storm has no power to hurt the boy or the puppy. It is you it wants. Anyway, no more running. See what it is like from within.'

As I thought this, it was as though some exceptional force lifted the three of us, almost blurring our forms as we were

pulled toward the tornado. The boy and puppy simply faded out about midway. Inside the storm there was a beautiful translucent whiteness and a feeling of tremendous peace. At the same time it was a living energy that seemed to be waiting to be shaped and at the same time was capable of being infinitely shaped and reshaped, formed and transformed over again. It was something tremendously vital, tremendously alive." [M.H., Newport News, Virginia]

Taking action in dreams can mean many things--you can command the characters, or manipulate the scenery, as in the examples quoted above, or you can decide to explore part of the dream environment, act out a particular scene, reverse the dream scenario or change the plot. Although, as explained above, the greatest benefit from lucid dreams may come not from exercising control over the dreams, but from taking control of your own reactions to dream situations, experimenting with different kinds of dream control can extend your powers and appreciation of lucidity. Paul Tholey mentions several techniques for manipulation of lucid dreams: manipulation prior to sleep by means of intention and autosuggestion, manipulation by wishing, manipulation by inner state, manipulation by means of looking, manipulation by means of verbal utterances, manipulations with certain actions, and manipulation with assistance of other dream figures. [16]

Chapter 3 showed how intention and autosuggestion can influence lucid dreams. Manipulation by wishing is amply illustrated by oneironauts who have written of their ability to transport themselves and change the dream world simply by wishing it to happen. Manipulation by inner state is particularly interesting. Tholey says this about it, referring to his own research findings: "The environment of a dream is strongly conditioned by the inner state of the dreamer. If the dreamer courageously faced up to a threatening figure, its threatening nature in general gradually diminished and the figure itself often began to shrink. If the dreamer on the other hand allowed himself to be filled with fear, the threatening nature of the dream figure increased and the figure itself began to grow." [17]

Manipulation by means of looking plays an important part in Tholey's model of appropriate lucid dream activities. He cites his own research in support of the hypothesis that dream figures can be deprived of their threatening nature by looking them directly in the eye. Manipulation by means of verbal utterances is explained thus: "One can considerably influence the appearance and behavior of dream figures by addressing them in an appropriate manner. The simple question 'Who are you?' brought about a noticeable change in the dream figures so addressed. Figures of strangers have changed in this manner into familiar individuals. Evidently the inner readiness to learn something about oneself and one's situation by carrying on a conversation with a dream figure enables one to...achieve in this fashion the highest level of lucidity in the dream: lucidity as to what the dream

symbolizes." [18]

Spinning, flying, and looking at the ground are two examples of manipulation by certain actions: these are actions that stabilize, enhance, or prolong lucidity. Other dream figures may be able to help you manipulate dreams to find answers, resolve difficulties or just enjoy yourself. Reconciling with threatening dream characters can help you to achieve better balance and self-integration. This application of lucid dreaming is a key topic in Chapter 11.

GETTING PLACES IN DREAMS

On a more basic level, to get the most out of lucidity, you need to know how to get around in the dream world. For many lucid dream applications, you may wish or need to find a particular place, person, or situation. One way to achieve this is by willing yourself to dream about your topic of choice. This is often called "dream incubation." It is a timeless procedure used throughout history in cultures that consider dreams valuable sources of wisdom. In ancient Greece, people would visit dream temples to sleep and find answers or cures.

Dream temples are probably not necessary for dream incubation--although they certainly would have helped sleepers to focus their minds on their purpose. This is the key: make sure you have your problem or wish firmly in mind before sleep. To do this, it is helpful to arrive at a simple, single phrase describing the topic of your intended dream. Since for the purposes in this book, you are trying to induce lucid dreams, you need to add to your focus the intention to become lucid in the dream. Then you put all of your mental energy into conceiving of yourself in a lucid dream about the topic. Your intention should be the last thing you think of before falling asleep. The following exercise leads you through this process.

EXERCISE: LUCID DREAM INCUBATION

1. Formulate your intention

Before bed, come up with a single phrase or question encapsulating the topic you wish to dream about: "I want to visit San Francisco." Write the phrase down, and perhaps draw a picture illustrating the question. Memorize the phrase and the picture (if you have one). If you have a specific action you wish to carry out in your desired dream ("I want to tell my friend I love her."), be sure to carefully formulate it now. Beneath your target phrase, write another saying, "When I dream of [the phrase], I will remember that I am dreaming."

2. Go to bed

Without doing anything else, go immediately to bed and turn out the light.

3. Focus on your phrase and intention to become lucid
Recall your phrase or the image you drew. Visualize yourself dreaming about the topic and becoming lucid in the dream. If there is something you want to try in the dream, also visualize doing it once you are lucid. Meditate on the phrase and your intention to become lucid in a dream about it until you fall asleep. Don't let any other thoughts come between thinking about your topic and falling asleep. If your thoughts stray, just return to thinking about your phrase and becoming lucid.

4. Pursue your intention in the lucid dream
When in a lucid dream about your topic carry out your intention. Ask the question you wish to ask, seek ways to express yourself, try your new behavior, or explore your situation. Be sure to notice your feelings and be observant of all details of the dream.

5. When you have achieved your goal, remember to awaken and recall the dream

When you obtain a satisfying answer in the dream, use one of the methods suggested earlier in this chapter to awaken yourself. Immediately write down at least the part of the dream that includes your solution. Even if you don't think the lucid dream has answered your question, once it begins to fade, awaken yourself and write down the dream. You may find on reflection that your answer was hidden in the dream and you did not see it at the time.

CREATING NEW SETTINGS

"Dreams of this degree of lucidity also let me change the shapes of objects or change locations at will. It's lovely to watch the dream images sort of shift and run like colors melting in the sun until all you have all around you is shifting, moving, living color/energy/light--I'm not sure how to describe it--and then the new scene forms around you from this dream stuff, this protoplasmic modeling clay of the mind." [M.H., Newport News, Virginia]

Another way to dream of particular things is to seek them out or conjure them while you are in a lucid dream. In other literature about dreams you may find some objections to the notion of deliberately influencing the content of dreams. Some believe the dream state to be a kind of psychological "wilderness" that ought to be left untamed. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, dreams arise out of your own knowledge, biases and expectations, whether or not you are conscious of them. If you consciously alter the elements in your dream, this is not artificial; it is just the ordinary mechanism of dream production operating at a higher level of mental processing. Dreams can be sources of inspiration and self-knowledge, but you can also use them to consciously seek answers to problems and fulfill your waking desires.

Changing dream scenes at will can also help you to get acquainted with the full illusion-creating power at your disposal. Seeing that the world around you can switch from a Manhattan cocktail party to Martian canals at your command will be much more effective than the words in this book for teaching you that the dream world is a mental model of your own creation.

The increased sense of mastery over the dream gained by knowing that you can manipulate it if you wish will give you the confidence to fearlessly travel wherever the dream should take you. Your power here is precisely as large as you imagine it to be. You can change the color of your socks, request a replay of the sunset, or segue to another planet or the Garden of Eden, simply by wishing. Here are a few exercises you can experiment with in trying to direct your dreams. Not much is known about the best way to achieve scene changes in dreams, so take these exercises as hints and then work out your own method.

SPINNING A NEW DREAM SCENE

In my dream-spinning experiment, I wanted to go to the setting of a book I'm reading. I wanted to solve the mystery in the book. I reached my target. I started at the point the book began, met the characters in proper sequence, and when I went to the point in the book where I was with another character in the book who is a wizard, he took a running start, leaped off a mountain fortress wall, and turned into a hawk, thereby escaping his enemies, I also jumped off the wall and changed into a hawk. I dressed and spoke in the manner of the characters and took an active part in solving the mysteries in the book. [S.B., Salt Lake City, Utah]

Spinning during the course of a lucid dream may do more for you than merely prevent premature awakening. It may also help you visit any dream scene you like. Here's how to do it.

EXERCISE: SPINNING A NEW DREAM SCENE

1. Select a target

Before going to sleep, decide on a person, time, and place you would like to "visit" in your lucid dream. The target person and place can be either real or imaginary, past, present, or future. For example, "Padmasambhava, Tibet, 850", or "Stephen LaBerge, Stanford, California, the present", or "my granddaughter at home, the year 2050."

2. Resolve to visit your target

Write down and memorize your target phrase, then vividly visualize yourself visiting your target, and firmly resolve to do so in a dream tonight.

3. Spin to your target in your lucid dream

It's possible that just by the intention you might find yourself in a non-lucid dream at your target. However, a more reliable way to reach your target is to become lucid first and then seek your goal. When you are in a lucid dream at the point where the imagery is beginning to fade and you feel you are about to wake up, then spin, repeating your target phrase until you find yourself in a vivid dream scene--hopefully your target person, time, and place.

EXERCISE: STRIKE THE SET, CHANGE THE CHANNEL

Think of this as the opposite of the kind of magical transportation involved in spinning and flying. Instead of moving your dream-self to a new, exotic locale, simply change the environment of your dream to suit your fancy. Start with a small detail and work up to greater changes. Change the scene slowly, then abruptly, subtly, then blatantly. Think of everything you see as infinitely malleable "modeling clay for the mind." Some oneironauts have elaborated on Alan Worsley's example of the dream television. When they want to change the scenery, they imagine that the dream is taking place on a huge, three-dimensional television screen, and they have the remote control in their hand.

DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE

"I dreamed that I was at a party recently and having a boring time when I stood back from the dream and knew it was a dream and then had a great time projecting myself into being whoever was having fun. At first I just tried being women, but then I said, it's a dream, why not be a man and see what that feels like? So I did." [B.S., Albuquerque, New Mexico]

In waking life we are used to restrictions. For almost everything we do, there are rules about how to act, how not to act, and what it is reasonable to try. One of the most commonly quoted delightful features of lucid dreaming is great, unparalleled freedom. When people realize they are dreaming, they suddenly feel completely unrestricted, often for the first time in their life. They can do *anything*.

In dreams you can experience sensations or live out fantasies that are not probable in the waking state. You can get intimately acquainted with a fantasy figure. But you could also become that figure. Dreamers are not limited to their accustomed bodies. You can appreciate a beautiful garden. Or you can be a flower. Alan Worsley has experimented with bizarre things like splitting himself in half, and putting his hands through his head. [19] Many oneironauts pass through walls, breathe water, fly, and travel in outer space. Forget your normal criteria, seek for the kinds of things you

can only do or be in dreams.

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