

How do I get a lucid dream?



Before learning how to get a lucid dream, it is important to understand what a lucid dream is. Simply put, lucid dreaming is when we recognize we are dreaming and continue the dream with this recognition.

Lucid dreaming has captured the attention and imagination of more and more people within the last few decades. New-age followers herald lucid dreaming to be an avenue for astral projection, for instance.

But interest and the practice of lucid dreaming has been around for centuries. For example, Tibetan Buddhist tradition claims that the lucid dreaming is the primary skill that one must master in order to escape the terrors and seductions of the "after-death-world"- which is also known as the Bardo Thodol. Similar to a symbolic experience of a vertical ascent in a dream, lucid dreaming has been associated with increasing spiritual awareness in virtually all the world's religious traditions.



I take a more Jungian approach to lucid dreaming and dream work overall. Symbology plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting the dream. When mentioning C.G. Jung, it is important to note that at Jung's onset in his career, he denied believing in lucid dreaming- claiming it was an 'impossibility'. However, his contact with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and his own experiences later in life with lucid dreams, changed his mind. Jung mentions this realization when conveying his experience that he had in a dream. He had this dream during the last years of his life. In the dream Jung says he entered a church, and he observed a meditating yogi sitting in front of the church. Upon closer inspection, Jung

saw that the yogi had his face, and Jung then realized that the yogi was not Jung's dream, but that he was the yogi's dream.

In the Jungian sense, when we achieve lucidity in a dream, we realize that person we are imagining that we are, the so called dream ego, is being dreamed by a deeper part of ourselves. When we become lucid in a dream, we don't "control" what happens in the dream. Instead, we change our relationship to the dream. We find ourselves flowing with the dream and within that flow, we are able to "co-create" the dream.



Becoming aware of the nature of our situation and becoming lucid, we can realize that the apparent externalized dreamscape, the universe we were experiencing as outside of ourselves, is actually a mirrored reflection of our own inner landscape. In essence, it is our own unconscious part of our selves communicating with the true conscious part of us.

From my perspective, there are different degrees of lucid dreaming. For instance, if you have just had a moment during the dream where you stopped in the dream and realized you have dreamed this dream before- thereby, realizing you are in the dream state, you have achieved a lucid state, however brief it might be. It is quite possible to have a high degree of lucidity and still find yourself identifying with a certain fixed perspective which is itself fundamentally insubstantial and has no inherent reality. If one is fully lucid in a dream, one realizes that there are no separate "others" but rather, that all of one's dream characters were reflections of parts of one's self. When experiencing a full-blown lucid dream, the barrier dissipates and ultimately dissolves between inner and outer, between waking and dreaming, between matter and spirit, and between Self and others.



It is quite clear though, that lucid dreaming is something that cannot be forced. There is not a clear recipe, like baking a cake. The following are a few things I suggest that you can do to enable lucid dreaming:

- 1.) **Meditation**- one of the first things I would recommend is to start meditating. By truly meditating, you start to come in contact with the true essence of yourself. Of course there are many ways to meditate and you need to spend time trying different methods out and finding one that works for you.
- 2.) **Breathwork**- I further encourage people to do some type of breathwork. We cannot live without breathing. However, it is something that most of us do unconsciously every day. Becoming aware of that and combining that awareness with some type of meditation will increase your overall self-awareness.
- 3.) **Setting Intention**- as you are falling asleep, you concentrate on your intention to remember to recognize that you are dreaming.
- 4.) **Through reflection**- a person is advised to regularly ask himself/ herself whether he or she is dreaming while awake and scanning the environment for incongruences that indicate dreaming. The mechanism of this technique is based on the hypotheses that awake experiences are reflected in dreams. Reality checks performed throughout the day can make their way into dreams and serve as a trigger for lucid dreaming.

Examples of reality checks:

Breathing: Do you find yourself able to breathe with your fingers tightly sealing your mouth and your nose shut?

Light switches: Can you switch a light on / off?

Mirror: Do you look "normal" in the mirror?

Powers: i.e. Are you able to fly? Can you change the shape of your body?

You should try to carry out more than one reality check. If you find that it is not a dream, look around you and think of what would be different if it were a dream. If you do this it will make it more likely that you will do a reality check in a dream.

- 5.) **Auto suggestion**- involves the dreamer suggesting to themselves that they will have a lucid dream right before falling asleep while lying in bed and relaxed.

- 6.) **Wake-up-back-to-bed (WBTB)** involves the dreamer awakening from sleep during the early morning hours, remaining awake for between 30 and 120 minutes and then returning to sleep.
- 7.) **External stimulation-** Some external stimulation applied during REM sleep has been used to trigger lucid dreaming. During REM sleep, an external cue could be presented to the dreamer and this could trigger a lucid dream. The most popular form of external stimulation is a sleep mask that produces light stimuli. Various iterations of these sleep masks are commercially available.
- 8.) **Use of imagination-** This involves the dreamer imagining before falling asleep that they are in a dream situation and recognizing the dream. This technique may be particularly helpful for people who suffer from recurrent nightmares. By triggering a lucid dream, the nightmare sufferer can switch to a less distressing dream.
- 9.) **Counting-** Another technique is to count up to 100 in your head, optionally adding (for example) an "I'm dreaming" between each number. Alternatively, you can imagine stepping down stairs and reading each floor number, from 100 to 0. Try to make this image as vivid as possible – include not only what you see, but also what you hear, feel (touch the banister), and smell. At some point this image should continue into a dream or you might begin to get sleep paralysis. If this happens, as soon as you rationalize what is happening you should lose any fear by the temporary loss of muscular control and contextualize any hallucination.

Note, it is easy to lose count, especially with counting up to 100 with an 'I'm dreaming' with each number. But stay focused: you are not going to sleep; your body is, and you must concentrate fully.

When starting out and attempting any of the above, I always suggest my clients put a notepad or journal near their bedside, along with a pen. Upon waking up, I recommend to instantly reach for the pad and pen and try to write as much as you can remember from the dream. Do not get out of bed and put your feet on the floor when doing this. This will disrupt the dream/ wake state you are in and you can instantly lose most, if not all of the dream.

In conclusion, lucid dreaming is something that takes practice. You just have to try out the various methods, journal and see what works for you.

