

DREAMS

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Volumes have been written on the subject of dreams by poets, philosophers, dreamers and others. Dreams have been exploited by magicians, both ancient and modern, for various ends, and often to an extent wildly beyond the usual significance of this very natural physiological process.

Dreaming after all is as natural as waking, or sleeping, or eating, or drinking, or walking. True it is not easy to control one's dreams, but neither is it easy to control one's digestion, heart beat, or a host of other bodily functions.

An occasional dream may have significance. History and experience seem to confirm this, but in the main the dreams of the night are but passing sensations and well forgotten with the dawn of fresh awaking.

Consciousness is usually conceded to be a state of awareness of sensation and of thoughts, images and ideas. This awareness may be factual, related to the waking state, or fanciful, related to the dream state, or absent, when deeply asleep. It is possible to speak of active consciousness, passive consciousness and unconsciousness.

Active Consciousness

This is the waking state. There is full awareness of sensory perception and accurate interpretation of the stimuli that reach the brain from without and from within the body. There is also, or should be, full control of thought and of behaviour. Activity is actual, related to immediate needs, events and opportunities. Thought is factual, related to concrete matters which demand consideration and call for decision. Conduct in relation to matters and men is directed by reasoned thought and deliberate will. Active thinking or doing fills every moment.

Passive Consciousness

This is the dream state. The mind is no longer in full and active control of its faculties. It is capable of receiving

stimuli and impulses, but its interpretation is not factual but fanciful. Its awareness is not full and accurate but partial and distorted. Sensory impulses received from various parts of the body are mixed into a stream of impulses flowing uninhibited from the subconscious—that encyclopaedic repository of facts and fancies, of fears and desires, of hopes and ambitions. The over-spill from this seemingly bottomless well creates a series of images on the screen of dream-consciousness. These images, lacking the full directional control of waking thought, vary from a vivid clarity of a kaleidoscopic medley of phantasmagoria, usually, however, with a persistent though elusive central theme.

The dream scenes can usually be related to or linked with either the intellectual or the emotional content of the subconscious, impressions received from recent or remote events or intelligences, haunting phobias that are forgotten or pushed aside in the light of day, shades of childhood hopes and disappointments, and so on. The list is inexhaustible. In other words one dreams of things which one has seen, or heard or consciously desired, or even of things not consciously seen or heard or desired, but nevertheless registered in the subconscious as if recorded on an endless sensitive film-strip. One may even dream of things which have not happened at the time of dreaming, but which mayhap one had envisaged consciously, or unconsciously, as possible or even probable future events.

All this is probably the frequent and common experience of every day, or every night, living, except in the case of those deep sleepers who never dream, and thus miss a lot of fun. But there are occasions when dreams of exceptional content and significant import cannot be explained on the basis of the passive reception of impulses from within the body, either physical or psychological. They may be dreams of prediction or of synchronous events of which the dreamer has no direct knowledge, but "the dream is certain and the interpretation thereof is sure." There can be only

one explanation of this type of dream or vision, namely that in the state of passive consciousness there is a capacity for the reception of extra-sensory telepathic impulses from outside the body. Moreover such impulses are apt to reach awareness in a more vivid and more rational form than the usual type of dream, and the details of the dream are more readily remembered on waking. This may be because of the unusual, perhaps startling, nature of the dream scene or message, or because when such impulses from without are received in the dream state, or trance state, they are less likely to be blurred and confused in interpretation by admixture with purely somatic or emotional impulses from within the body. The dream image is therefore more clear in its details and more coherent in its sequence, and it remains vivid even in waking consciousness, perhaps for a life-time. The essential requirement for dream-awareness is, therefore, a state of passivity or cessation from active thought and action which block the upflow of subconscious ideas and the inflow of extra-sensory impulses from without. This state may occur in the normal transition between waking and sleeping, or it may be induced by deliberate ritual or by drugs. The capacity for such receptivity varies greatly with the individual, with race, temperament and training. The genuine phenomenon is liable to exploitation and false representation by the misguided or the unscrupulous, but the weight of evidence that such telepathic receptivity does exist is overwhelming.

Unconsciousness

This is the sleeping state. There is no conscious awareness at all. Every form of stimulus and impulse is temporarily cut off, or blocked, and unable to reach conscious perceptive level. There is complete ignorance of both the outside world and the inside and the result is bliss, the bliss of nature's sweet repose. There have been a great many theoretical explanations of sleep which have been put to rest each in their turn. The most recent theory is that the

question to be answered is not "Why do we sleep?" but "Why do we waken?" When wakeful stimuli are cut off or cut down the natural sequence is to fall asleep. It has been demonstrated that the brainstem contains a "waking centre" and that impulses from the soma or from other sources act on this centre which is "constantly prodding the cortex of the brain into activity" and thus maintaining or restoring consciousness. Sleep therefore is due to "fatigue of the waking centre" coupled with an absence or a diminution of those incoming stimuli which tend to stir it into fresh activity. Given ease of body, peace of mind, repose of spirit, normal fatigue of the 'waking centre, and diminished stimulation sleep is bound to ensue. Waking results from an increase in the quantity or the intensity of wakeful stimuli, external such as light, cold, noise, or internal such as pain or violent emotional surges, of sufficient strength to rouse the waking centre into fresh activity.

Waking from the dream state into full consciousness is often brought about by the emotional stimuli provided by the dream substance itself, especially if the emotion is of an intense variety, either pleasurable or the exact reverse. Unfortunately in the first case, and fortunately in the second, the intensity of the emotion reactivates the waking centre and full consciousness is restored.

The transition from all full consciousness to deep sleep may be instantaneous, or may be a merging from one extreme to the other by way of the dream state. Some seem to remain in the dream state throughout the "hours of sleep". Day-dreaming is also not unheard of, but is probably rare in this age of noise and rush.

Dreams and Homœopathy

The three more or less distinct states of waking, being fully alert, dreaming, being in more or less of a thought-haze or thought-maze, and sleeping, being blissfully relieved of the onus of thinking at all, are undoubtedly normal physiological phenomena. They are associated with alter-

ations in the circulation and with biochemical and biophysical changes in, at any rate, some of the cells and tissues of the body.

Just what these changes are and how brought about, whether by oxygen lack or in some extremely complicated manner, are still almost entirely a matter of hypothesis or complete mystery. It is, however, relevant to note that aberrations of thought processes and of sensory perception, resulting in certain types of dream pattern can be brought about by drugs.

Logically, therefore, it should be possible to correct these aberrations and disturbances by the "similar remedy", provided that no irreversible cell damage in the tissues involved has taken place.

When one turns to Kent's repertory on the subject of dreams one finds nearly 300 different types or sub-types of dreams mentioned, and in relation to some of these a list of possible remedies running into many multiples of ten. Result, rather dream-like in itself, if not a positive nightmare.

Of course dreaming at night is the normal habit of many, and provided that the dreams are pleasant and entertaining there would appear to be no need to interfere. The habit of recounting dreams at the breakfast table is, of course, to be firmly discouraged.

But when dreams are distressing, disturbing or of the nightmare or night-terrors variety the assistance of corrective medicine may well be invoked. Sedatives and narcotics, notably the barbiturate drugs, are not a satisfactory answer. Many of them tend to cause depression and psychological disturbance themselves, and the sleep they induce may leave unpleasant after-effects, to say nothing of the ever-present risk of drug-addiction.

Relief obtained by the homœopathic method is more natural, is likely to be more permanent, and is usually associated with better health all round. But the selection of a suitable remedy in such cases is by no means easy,

and will involve more than a mere study of the dream content. Constitutional, environmental, and other factors will have to be taken into account. The emotional maladaptation or other psychological factors at the back of the dreams may need to be sorted out and skilfully corrected, especially in the case of children, and quite apart from remedy prescribing.

In this latter connection a few remedies may perhaps be mentioned with indications, a nightly dose of the 6c potency to be given for a short period and the result carefully observed :

ACONITUM, anxious nightmarish dreams; talks in sleep and constantly tosses about; seems clairvoyant in dreams; wakes in terror; suffering perhaps from effects of sudden fright or shock.

ARNICA, sleep full of anxious and terrifying dreams, especially about animals; dreams of death or corpses; wakes with start in fright; groans, snores, talks in sleep; restless tossing because bed seems hard and uncomfortable; condition may follow injury or operation.

ARSENICUM ALBUM, frequent dreams, anxious, unpleasant, full of cares, threats and indecisions; sleep interfered with by surges of heat or cold, or of fear, with agitation and jerking of limbs; frequent waking with difficulty in getting to sleep again; the excessively tidy, over-anxious, fastidious type, must always be occupied, cannot relax.

BELLADONNA, dreams are anxious, terrible, frightful, vivid, of falling, fires, robbers, violence of one sort or another; groans or talks in sleep; may sleep-walk; jerks awake when dropping off to sleep; on closing eyes starts seeing images or jerking in limbs; head hot with coldness of hands and feet.

CALCAREA CARBONICA, fantastic, frightful dreams of night-mare variety; night-terrors in children; much tossing about with frequent waking; talks, groans, cries, starts while asleep; head sweats at night and soaks pillow; wakes

exhausted as if had not slept at all; fat, flabby, phlegmatic type, full of fears, timid and irresolute.

NUX VOMICA, continual, fantastical, horrible dreams, of cares and perplexities, of cruelties and mutilations, of vermin and insects; actual nightmare; cat-nappy sleep with great flow of wakeful thoughts; wakes early feeling fairly fresh, but after further drowsy sleep wakes with lassitude and pain in limbs as if they were bruised; lean, intense, sallow, tends to be critical, over-zealous, irascible, and generally frustrated.

PHOSPHORUS, vivid, distressing, terrifying dreams, of animals which bite, of robbers, fire, unfinished tasks, quarrels, bloodshed, death, creeping things; tendency to talking or walking in sleep; frequent waking with starts and fright; wakes feeling too hot, but without sweats; tall, slender, sensitive, highly strung, affectionate, artistic, enthusiastic type, fidgety and given to easy flushing.

PULSATILLA, anxious or terrifying dreams, of quarrels, of the affairs of the day, of spectres, of the dead; cries and moans in sleep and starts awake in fright; wakes frightened, confused and disorientated; changes posture in sleep; puts hands behind head; gets too hot in bed and pushes covers off; placid, pleasant, pliable, portly type, given to easy tears and variability of symptoms.

There are a great many more remedies listed in connection with disturbances of sleep and distressing types of dream. By and large these latter show a good deal of similarity, the differences being in the individual rather than in the dream content. This points to the need for careful assessment of the total symptom and personal picture in each case.

—*Homœopathy, July 1955*