



uncommon knowledge

## **Dreams and dreaming**

WHY DO WE DREAM? People have always been fascinated by their 'secret' night-time journeys. Over the years there have been many theories as to why we dream and the function dreams serve.

Countless 'encyclopaedias' of dream symbols and meaning now exist, but these are published on the narrow premise that 'one symbol fits all'. A revolutionary new understanding of dreams shows that this is wrong and that individual minds tailor symbols and dreams to meet individual needs.

### **Dream Breakthrough**

The very latest understanding of why we evolved to dream comes from the groundbreaking research of the eminent psychologist Joseph Griffin. For the first time the biology and psychology of dreaming have been blended into a model that is accepted by many eminent psychologists the world over. (See [review of The Origin of Dreams](#) for more information).

*"Very convincing. Much more acceptable than Freudian or Jungian notions. And Joe Griffin's interpretation of their dreams is entirely reasonable."*

Prof. Hans Eysenck on 'The Origin of Dreams' by Joe Griffin

### **Dreams Get Rid of Emotional Arousal**

It has been agreed for some time that dreams deal with emotion. However, not all emotion causes dreaming. Only emotional arousal unexpressed while awake causes us to dream. So, for example, if you have a screaming row with your partner you are unlikely to dream about it as the emotional arousal was allowed full expression. However if you become angry with someone at work but cannot express it then this frustration will probably be played out during dreaming.

(This gives us an indication why dreams and [hypnosis](#) are interlinked.)

### **How Do Dreams Work?**

The brain will 'flush out' emotional arousal by creating a dream of a scenario that parallels the real-life experience - a metaphor. So, the work colleague from above might be symbolised by a monster and your anger would be allowed expression as you attacked the dream creature.

If you ruminate angrily over the same issues the next day then you may well have a repetitive dream as the brain solves the same problem in the same way.

### **Rumination Causes Dreaming**

One of the most common ways to create unexpressed emotional arousal is to ruminate. Because we do this in our mind, there is rarely a situation where the emotion can be expressed. Depressed people dream much more than non-depressed people because typically, they do much more ruminating. This can result in physical and mental exhaustion. (For more on this, see the Learning Path at [Clinical-Depression.co.uk](http://Clinical-Depression.co.uk))

### **An Example [Dream Interpretation](#)**

A woman had the following dream: she would be at the helm of a ship on a sunny day. Everything would be fine until without warning she would be attacked by a fierce witch with two heads. The witch seemed set on making the ship go off course.

In her dream, the woman would feel outraged but feel her 'hands were tied' because she had to steer the ship. Suddenly the witch would produce a sharp knife and begin stabbing her at which point she usually woke up in a sweat.

The woman was asked if there was anything that made her feel angry or defensive on an ongoing basis in her waking life. The woman at first said that there wasn't but after further consideration said that sometimes her mother-in-law would visit on a Sunday ('sunny day' of the dream). Furthermore when these visits occurred they were always unannounced and uninvited (the attacks in the dream always occurred without warning).

Her mother in law was always polite to her but she knew that she had made many derogatory remarks about her to her husband and was therefore rather 'two faced'.

(The witch in the dream always has two heads). On these visits the mother in law would try and 'take over' what the woman was doing in the house and with the children (the witch in the dream is set on taking over the steering of the ship so it goes off course). The woman would feel she was under attack and be relieved when her husband's mother finally left. She felt unable to say anything (her hands were tied).

*["The Origin of Dreams"](#) makes much more sense than the ideas about dreams of Freud and Jung."*

Dr Andrew Mayes, coeditor of 'Dreams & Dreaming'

## **How to Understand [What Your Dreams Mean](#)**

The symbolism in dreams is often simply 'borrowed' from recent events. The first time the above dream occurred was after the woman had been watching a television programme about sailing. The symbols are rather arbitrary; it is the feelings in the dream which hold the key to unlocking dreams and what they mean.

The feelings in the dream are usually an exaggeration of feelings from the real-life issue which caused the dream. If you feel terror in the dream think of when recently, in your waking life, you felt a little frightened. Or if you laugh hysterically during a dream look for a recent time when you found something funny but were maybe constrained from laughing too uproariously.

When you find the dream's match it often feels like a 'clicking into place' - like a perception rather than an intellectualisation.

In our opinion, anyone interested in dreams or psychology will be fascinated and amazed by this book.

Article by [Mark Tyrrell](#) and [Roger Elliott](#)

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