

What are your dreams trying to tell you?

Can you remember a time when you woke up from a fantastic or strange dream? Maybe you were afraid and turned on the light or the dream was so good you wanted to sleep longer. But do you think your dreams are telling you something?

Can you see the future in dreams?

For hundreds of years, people thought dreams were messages from gods or spirits. Today, too, many people can remember a time when they saw a place or person in their dream and then, later, the dream happened in real life. Maybe that's not surprising because we dream a lot but we probably only remember the times when something happens in a dream and then happens for real. Most people have four to six dreams every night after the age of ten. That's as many as 2,000 dreams per year. So, an 80-year-old person has probably had 140,000 dreams. Maybe we forget 95–99 per cent of our dreams, but that's still thousands of dreams that might 'come true'.

Are dreams recycled thoughts?

Around the 18th and 19th centuries, there were two popular ideas about dreams. One said that the things we see in our dreams are things we keep in our subconscious because we don't want or need to think about them when we're awake. The opposite idea said that while we're sleeping, the brain organises memories and thoughts from the day. Dreams are just random thoughts from our day but we try to make a story from them when we wake up.

Are dreams messages from our brains?

But perhaps both ideas are a little bit right. Maybe dreams are made from the thoughts we have during the day, but we see them as symbols. For example, a dream of flying might be a symbol for an exciting new job. When we're awake, we think in words most of the time. But when we're sleeping, the part of our brain that helps us with language sleeps, and the part that makes us happy or sad or angry is awake and busy. So, maybe our thoughts come to us in dreams as feelings and symbols instead of words. If you can understand these symbols, you have a window into your subconscious. If you want to understand the messages, you have to match them to what's happening in your life.

How can you understand the messages?

One way to help you do this is to keep a dream diary. As soon as you wake up, write down everything you remember about your dreams. Use pen and paper, not your phone or computer because the light might wake you up and you'll forget faster. Sometimes your eyes will be half-closed and your writing will be difficult to read.

Now you can match your dreams to your daily life. Think about the people and place where the dream happened, as they might mean something too. Also, how you were feeling in the dream is important. If you were afraid instead of happy in the flying dream, maybe it means you are worried about the new job. Are you ready to find out what your subconscious is trying to tell you?

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