

Dreams: Can they be a meaningful experience?

How often do you remember your dreams? Do you ever wake up in the morning and feel as if you have been through something meaningful, powerful, or frightening but just can't remember what happened? So begins "The dream capabilities assessment test" in a book by Dr. Richard Corriere and Dr. Joseph Hart called *The Dream Makers*.

According to the authors, "...the normal dream is typically passive, apprehensive, and somewhat unpleasant.." They say, "Usually the normal dreamer is not aware he is dreaming and he is not active or expressive in his dreams; often he is merely an observer."

They suggest that there is a different way to dream that causes the dream to become more meaningful. These "breakthrough dreams" are different from the typical dream because the dreamer is "...aware that he is dreaming. Second, the dream is full of feeling. Third, the dreamer fully expresses the feelings he has. And, fourth, the dream shifts from a symbolic, unreal mode to a real representation of the dreamer's life."

The goal is to be able to make dreaming a positive experience and to use dreaming as a tool to help make the hours when we are awake better too. The first step they say to empower dreams is to "pay attention" to dreams and to learn how to remember them.

Famous anthropologist Margaret Mead had a simple method for remembering her dreams. When she wanted to remember, she would go to sleep with her hand resting on her forehead. That worked for her, but *The Dream Makers* suggests some other things to try:

- Remind yourself that you are trying to remember your dreams and talk with others about their dreams
- If you wake up at the same time every day, set an alarm to wake up a half hour earlier, or about 4 hours after you normally go to sleep
- When you wake up, write down or record *what you think* or, more importantly, *what you feel*.

What they say is that dreams, whatever the details, really come from our feelings about ourselves, those around us and the things that are happening to us in our waking life. "By remembering your dreams you will begin to alter your awareness." When dreams are working for us, there is no reason to "interpret" them—they are clear when we dream them and clear when we remember them.

When awake, we are constantly confronted with choices and we choose to do what we think is best. The authors tell us that the day should be whole, through waking and sleeping hours, and that we should also be active in our dreams and make choices that are best for us then too. This means not just letting a dream



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happen, but being aware of it when it happens and entering into it in active ways to change it to help to overcome fears and make it end in good ways.

If the next time a dream goes badly and we are able to change it so that things go better, the authors say that we will feel better when we wake up and that it may even possibly help us solve real-life problems and give us insights for better living.

Successful dream management may not solve all of our problems, but it does promise to help us relate to our lives in a different way.

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