

Abstract somnambulism

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Somnambulism, commonly known as sleepwalking, is a parasomnia that has six diagnostic criteria that must be met according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV. It is marked by inappropriate physical behaviors that disrupt sleep. Upon awakening the individual is confused and has no memory of the episode. Sleepwalking peaks in childhood and usually resolves itself in adolescence. Adults that experience sleepwalking are more likely to have had episodes as children. The disorder is most prevalent in females during childhood and men in adulthood.

Individuals with mood disorders such as anxiety or depression are more likely to present symptoms of somnambulism. Genetic predispositions are very important when determining whether an individual will develop the disorder. However, it is essential to remember that environmental influences like stressful events are usually needed to galvanize the genetic predisposition. The use of medications can both trigger and correct somnambulism. Along with medications, hypnosis, and anticipatory awakening have also been shown to relieve the symptoms of sleepwalking. Somnambulism can be a dangerous disorder.

While asleep individuals have been known to put their own lives, as well as the lives of others at risk. There have even been reports of a people who suffer from somnambulism committing murder while asleep. Courts have acknowledged the excuse of somnambulism to declare an individual innocent of their crime. However, this proposes several dangers. How are we supposed to control these individuals from committing another crime? Also, there have not been enough studies on successful treatment, so how will we know that these individuals will be corrected with treatment?

It seems as though the consequences for crimes committed while sleepwalking are inadequate. Somnambulism and the Dangers Sleep disorders are separated into two categories, parasomnias or dyssomnias. Dyssomnias are those that produce extreme sleepiness or difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep. Parasomnias are those inappropriate physical behaviors that happen during sleep. Somnambulism, or more commonly sleepwalking, is a parasomnia. What do you picture when you think of a person sleepwalking? Waking up in the middle of the night and aimlessly without consequence aimlessly walking around their room?

I bet you didn't think of a person committing murder. The latter is the least known aspect of somnambulism. This paper will address the dangers, and consequences of somnambulism and whether these consequences are appropriate. According to the authors of the DSM IV, to be diagnosed with somnambulism the patient must meet six specific criteria. The individual must have multiple episodes of rising from bed during sleep. Since sleep walking episodes occur during slow-wave sleep, the somnambulism must take place during the first third of the night (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

During the incident the individual will have reduced alertness and responsiveness (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). They will also don a blank stare and be unresponsive to the efforts of others to wake them up (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Upon awakening the individual will not remember the events from the night before and will suffer from confusion and disorientation (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

However, after the confusion and disorientation the individual will regain full cognitive processes (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Most importantly, the sleepwalking must cause some sort of distress and or impairment in different aspects of their life (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Sleepwalking cannot be diagnosed as the formal diagnosis if it is due to substance use or medical conditions (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The individual must meet all of the criteria above to be properly diagnosed as an individual with somnambulism. ree because they were sleepwalking. More precautions need to be taken before somnambulism can be used as an excuse for murder.