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I have re-occurring dreams of tidal waves coming toward me as I’m on the beach that are scary and overwhelming. It is a situation where I could be crushed, drowned or swept away. I may be able to ride them through, swimming against the draw of the current. However, there is no guarantee I will be able to do this. The only thing that is sure is whatever happens; it is not going to be pleasant. I see the waves rushing towards me, and am filled from inside with a wave of fear, then I wake up before the “ dream waves” hit, but still filled with fear from the inner emotional response.   
The problem solving theory of dream analysis provides that my dream is symbolic of my present circumstance. Right now, I am ending a phase of my life. Just like a day at the beach, I have been relatively relaxed and enjoying college life and my present circumstance. However, I know there are changes coming. Just off the top of my head regarding only my academics I can think of exams to take, papers to write, next year’s tuition to deal with and my personal summer study goals. In addition to my educational concerns there are employment responsibilities, I want to take advantage of the additional summer employment opportunities and I need to address those concerns as well. In and around all of this I am trying to have a personal life with family, friends and romance. As I see the wave come crashing towards me, each one could represent just one of these areas of concern. I do not know if I should try to dive through a wave, ride it in to its conclusion on shore, or swim with the current until I can find a safe place to get out of the water and back on shore. Unfortunately, the fear I feel is so overwhelming I wake up before my subconscious has an opportunity to resolve my dilemma and pose a solution to the problem.   
The cognitive approach to dreams theory provides that dreaming cognition is so closely related to waking cognition it can be seen as the “ default” position for the brain. . In this theory, dreams are what happens in the brain when we are not forced to focus on external social and environmental stimuli. This concept is supported by the observation that dreaming can happen when a subject is awake but relaxed in a darkened room that removes much of the external distractions we generally deal with on a moment to moment basis. When looking at dreams from this prospective, there is little difference between waking cognition and dreaming. Then the events that take place in dreams can be seen as symbolic concepts of present circumstances, rather the iconic images developed by Freud and his successors. Under this theory, I can view the individual waves in my dreams as concepts of the different areas of concern in my life. Then I can analyze each one individually and decide if I should dive into my studies, swim with the tide of my course work and employment, and allow my personal relationships to carry me to a high place further inshore.   
Of further note, doing additional research for this article I found an interesting approach to lucid dreaming on one of the web sites I investigated. . As these re-occurring dreams are terrifying and disruptive I am going to try the process of holding on to the dream sequence in my mind, go back to sleep and try to see if I can take it further. By doing this I may be able to constructively use my dreams to work through my waking concerns, instead of have an uneasy night’s sleep give me a less productive tomorrow.

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