

The conundrum of dreaming

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Multiple vivid dreams infect the human mind in a single night. Nightmares leave the recipient flustered and scared, and they have even been known for causing the dreamer to do things that they normally would not do out of confusion, or fear. This has fueled the burning question, what is the purpose of dreams? Regrettably, due to the difficulty of safely studying the psychology of the human brain while it is active without causing harm, dreams remain one of Earth's many mysterious conundrums. We cannot know if our dreams contain messages, if they're just an accidental biological effect, or if they help or harm us. I hope to reveal the controversy between a few different scientific theories so we can come to understand how seriously we should take dreams and what they mean. One theory has been around for thousands of years.

It is the thought that dreams are messages from the Heavenly being that put us on this Earth. John Paul Jackson, Dream Expert and Streams Ministries Founder, states, " what if the answer to a problem at work was revealed to you in a dream last night but; you didn't know it? Understanding dreams can give answers to life's problems, if you learn to grasp their meaning" (Wise and Kiel). He goes on to explain that a divine dream can protect you, or even foretell the future. A Second theory, not unlike this one, believes that dreams are not messages from God, but from our inner psyche, or our inner desires and subconscious. Interpreting our dreams could teach us the truth to who we are.

This theory revolves around two principles. One, " Every dream is about the dreamer," and two, " that every person place or thing in the dreams is the dreamer". Both of these theories agree that we receive these revelations in

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our dreams for it is only then that our mind and logic is stilled enough for God, or our inner Psyche, to speak directly into our souls. Contradictory to the previous opinions, there is a theory declaring that we do not receive hidden messages from dreams, but instead use them to sort out emotions. This is The Contemporary Theory.

The Earnest Hartman explains it thus, " Activation patterns are shifting and connections are being made and unmade constantly in our brains." It goes on to explain that when we dream we make these connections most insecurely. Yet even in this relaxed state our brain still guides these connections, except instead of with logic, we use emotions. This is also why some dreams are more complicated than the rest. " When one clear-cut emotion is present, dreams are often very simple... When the emotional state is less clear, or when there are several emotional or concerns at once, the dreams are more complicated" (Hartman).

Although dreams are scary or confusing at times this theory trusts that without these dreams our emotional state would be jeopardized. It would be depressing, in my opinion, to know that the nightmares we are occasionally plagued with have no purpose at all. This is what some scientists suggest. The National Sleep Foundation writes, " There is a great deal of neuronal activity occurring while we sleep, especially in REM, and it has been suggested that dreams may just be a meaningless by-product of this biological function". (The REM -Rapid Eye Movement- is the time of night where your eyes twitch inside your eyelids. It is also when you are in the deepest stage of sleep and when most dreams occur.

) Other scientist believe that when the brain is creating connections with logic and reality in our sleep, the connections might not be guided by emotions like the Contemporary Theory suggests, but instead is completely random. Naturally the Contemporary Theory objects, stating that without dreams not only our mental health, but physical health would be impacted. A study to prove this was carried out by William C. Dement in 1960. He would arouse various subjects as soon as they entered a dream of any kind for days.

He perceived that their tension, anxiety, and irritability increased as well as an increased appetite that resulted in weight gain. They gained feelings of emptiness, depersonalization, and even began initiating hallucinatory tendencies. " The results of this study clearly indicate that dreaming has a profound importance and that dream deprivation can have very serious consequences". So far it is the bulk theme that dreams are helpful. They either help us with our emotional stability or grant us with info that could save our lives.

Nevertheless, there is one alarming article by Frederik Joelving from Scientific American. He writes that physiologists aren't so sure that dreams truly reduce our tension. " Although some continue to believe nightmares reduce psychological tension by letting the brain act out it's fears, recent research suggests that nocturnal torments are more likely to increase anxiety in waking life" (Joelving). A survey was taken on 624 high school students concerning their lives and nightmares during the previous year. Assessing their stress levels, it was discovered that the children who testified being distressed about their dreams were more likely to suffer from general

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anxiety than those who experienced upsetting events like the divorce of their parents or the death of a loved one (Joelving). Then a scientist by the name of Tore Neilson, who took part in this experiment, surprisingly cemented previous declarations regarding the extensive variables which thwart conclusive findings towards the full purpose of dreams, for he said, “ It is possible, however, that some-thing is going wrong in the brains of the individuals who experience a lot of anxiety, so that normal emotional processing during dreaming fails.

” It is now clear that it is impossible, yet vital, that we fully understand the purpose of the scenes that flash before our eyes in the dead of night. We, as human beings, should not be left wondering if our dreams have a hidden message that is vital to our survival, when perhaps they are nothing more than an accidental biological affect that we would be better off without. Too long have we jumped at our shadows due to uncertainty. And too often have we slept during school, or failed a test, because of nightmares that we have had during the night that deprived us of our required sleep. We need to know if we would be better off facing the anxiety that follows nightmares, or the consequences that come from not dreaming at all.

It is our duty, as living creatures, to take care of our wellbeing. We must detangle the mysterious knot that is dreaming.