



## Excerpts from *Be the Dreamer Not the Dream and Dream Dictionary for Dummies*

### Chapter 2: Building the Dream Habit

When action grows unprofitable, gather information.

When information grows unprofitable, sleep.

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In ancient Greece, dreams were highly respected as a means of receiving guidance from the gods, foretelling the future, and finding cures for illnesses. Prophetic dreams often led to key turning points in Greek military and political history. The

Greeks believed dreams enabled them to speak with the dead and witness events happening at great distances. They raised the act of seeking, remembering, and interpreting dreams to a high art.

Greek doctors commonly sought healing remedies and surgical instruction in dreams, and Asclepius, the famous physician who is believed to have lived in the eleventh century BC, and who was later deified, listened to the words uttered by his dreaming patients to help determine the cures he needed to use. The practice of seeking healing dreams became so popular that hundreds of sleep temples were built, 420 to Asclepius alone, where the sick and infirm could go to concentrate exclusively on their inner world.

To prepare to receive a healing dream in those days, you first made a pilgrimage to the shrine, on foot, thinking about your hopes for contact with the healing gods and a healing dream with every step. When you arrived, you entered buildings of great beauty occupied by priests and a variety of snakes, the symbol of Asclepius, living peacefully throughout the temple grounds. Before finding your special sleeping spot in the temple, you would be required to bathe, fast, and perform purification rituals and sacrifices to prepare your mind and body to receive a vision. As you cleansed and dedicated yourself, you were surrounded by other seekers, and by a priest specially trained in the art of dream interpretation. Every detail was aligned to open and focus your mind, body, and soul on the dream world.

### Creating the Dream Temple Attitude Today

Seeking dreams in ancient Greece was serious business, not just a frivolous desire to have fun at night. Though we no longer have the luxury of checking into the downtown Asclepion, there are many elements from the ancient Greek dreaming tradition that can help build a strong positive attitude and dream habit today.

## Believe in the Power and Reality of Dreams

Dreams are more than just a curiosity. They offer useful insight and help in living a more successful life, as well as providing a means for you to increase your spiritual growth. To convince yourself of this—in case you have any doubts—do more research. Read books and articles, visit websites, join a dream group, take a dream seminar. Surround yourself with active dreamers. Listen to their testimonials. Be affected by their sense of conviction.

## Get Jazzed and Talk Often About Dreams

Nothing convinces your subconscious mind to do something like enthusiasm. When you want to begin remembering your dreams after a long dry spell, for example, try talking to your friends and family about their dreams, about dreaming in general, about the dream books you're reading. Listen for the word "dream" on the radio and on television. What are other people saying? Keep the topic active and in the front of your mind.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### Your Energy Level Influences Dream Recall

Dream recall decreases when you're stressed and anxious (fear-based high energy), yet increases with enthusiasm (love-based high energy). Similarly, recall decreases with depression (fear-based stillness) and increases when you're calm and centered (love-based stillness). Use your intuition to stay positive and achieve an equal balance between stillness and high energy.

## Remove Any Doubts

You may think you want to dream, but your subconscious mind may be holding onto a few "yes, buts." "Yes, I want to remember my dreams, but if I do I'll have to face my suppressed anger about my father." "Yes, I want to dream, but if I remember everything, maybe I'll find out how preoccupied I am with sex and I won't be able to think of myself as being a 'good girl' anymore." "Yes, dreaming will be fun, but what if I dream my sister is going to die? I don't want to know 'bad' things."

It stands to reason that you won't let yourself remember your dreams if doing so makes you scared or unhappy. True, it's uncomfortable at first to face your "dark side," but uncovering and clearing subconscious fears will give you permission to get more out of life and it produces an immediate increase in dream range and recall.

### JOURNAL EXERCISE

#### Discover Your Dream "Yes, Buts"

- I. Quiet your mind and get centered. Make a list of responses to the following statements:
  - I do not want my dreams to bring me information about \_\_\_\_.
  - I do not want my dreams to make me have to feel \_\_\_\_.

- I do not want my dreams to change my waking reality by \_\_\_\_.
- I do not want my dreams to cause me to lose control by \_\_\_\_.

2. Look through the above lists and for each response, ask yourself “Why not?” Why not have information about monsters? Why not feel what it’s like to fall? Why not change my waking world by quitting the job that bores me? Why not let go of controlling the formal way I speak to colleagues? See if you can find the real reason for your resistances. If you allowed each thing you’re afraid of, what might you learn?

## Determine Your Need

Why do you want to dream? How might you apply your dreams to round out your experience in life and feel more successful? Be specific. It’s OK to start with a single dream goal. You might simply want the thrill of increasing your flying dreams. Maybe you need to make a decision about whether to move across country. Perhaps you want to understand why you keep attracting prospective marriage partners who are bad with money so you can turn around a ten-year debilitating pattern that’s kept you single. Talk to yourself convincingly about your need to dream.

## Set Your Focus to Dream

Get serious, but not “heavy” or too parental with yourself. You don’t need an internal authority figure standing over you with a whip to force you to remember your dreams. A simple, sincere, enthusiastic desire will do. One of the most common sabotages to a healthy dream habit is the internal conflict that results when one part of you resists another part of you. The inner authority figure says, “You WILL dream tonight, and you WILL do an excellent job, and you WILL like it!” The dreaming part says, “Oh, YEAH? I don’t have to do what you say. I’ll dream—but I won’t remember it. Ha! So there.”

### MEDITATION EXERCISE

#### Align Your Body and Mind for Dreaming

1. During the day before the night you want to start dreaming, think enthusiastic thoughts: “Dreams are SO wonderful! It’s really going to be fun to dream freely and imaginatively tonight.” Get your anticipation juices going. “Falling asleep tonight is going to be a fantastic adventure! I’m going to pay special attention to flying in my dreams tonight.”
2. As you prepare for sleep, sit up for a moment on the side of your bed and close your eyes. Talk to yourself about your intentions for dreaming. “I’m so happy that I’m about to enter my dream world. I feel relaxed and ready. My body (pat or hug your body like it’s a puppy dog) knows exactly how to enter the dream state and come back with my dreams in tow. My intuition is functioning perfectly to help convey my dreams accurately to my mind. My conscious mind knows exactly how to recognize my most important dreams, remember them, and describe them in detail. My soul knows what I really need to know in my dreams and guides my dream movements. I trust all my parts. ‘We’ are all cooperating to enjoy and benefit from the dream

world.”

3. When you feel at ease, happy, and confident, lie down and go to sleep, smiling.

## Expect Results

Let yourself fall asleep expectantly. Dreaming is a normal human ability, and you're entitled to have dreams and remember them easily. You're good at this. It comes naturally. Of course you'll wake up with a dream! Expectancy, without a shred of doubt, is a powerful force. Think of your dog or cat, who expects to be petted often, or of the beaming toddler, who expects to be loved and played with. Their innocent expectations actually elicit the outcome they expect.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### Other Cultures Have Interesting Dream Practices

**EGYPT:** The Beatty papyrus, written around 1350 BC and discovered at Thebes, is the oldest dream dictionary existing today. It lists the interpretations of many dream images, as well as incantations and rituals to prevent nightmares. Special dream-interpreting priests were called “Masters of the Secret Things” or “Learned Ones of the Magic Library.”

**BABYLONIAN TALMUD:** Fasting was highly valued as a method for seeding dreams, and especially for obtaining prophetic dreams. The Talmud pays special attention to the individualized aspect of dream symbols, taking into consideration the dreamer's personality and life situation in interpretation.

**CHINA:** Ancient Chinese visited temples, slept on graves, and performed dream rituals, often to obtain political guidance. They believed the soul could become cut off from the physical body if the dreamer were awakened suddenly, so even today some Chinese do not trust alarm clocks.

**NORTH AMERICA:** Native American tribes believe dreams bring healing, especially when a bird or animal appears. Among the Sioux, guidance dreams obtained while fasting on a solo wilderness outing called a "vision quest" were considered part of a rite of passage for young men. The vision, interpreted by a shaman, determined the seeker's future path in life.

**AUSTRALIA:** The Aborigines believe the dream world is a real place, called the “Dreamtime,” and that the soul must travel to meet with wise ancestors who live there. Dreams from the ancestors are considered gifts and often inspire art, songs, and dance.

**TIBET:** The Dzogchen practice of “Dream Yoga” is focused on spiritual dream work, on being and experiencing dreams rather than interpreting them. The practice differentiates between “karmic” dreams and “clarity” dreams.

## Dedicate Your Bedroom to Dreaming

Do you read or watch television in bed? Entertain friends in your bedroom? Work on your laptop while you're watching TV and reading and talking on the bedside telephone? Instead of using your bed as an office, you might think of your bedroom as your personal sleep sanctuary and use the bed as a kind of altar on which you place your requests for dream assistance. Try quieting your bedroom by removing noisemakers like television, radio, phones, and computers. Move your bookcases to another room. You might try meditating in bed, sitting upright so you don't go unconscious, before you fall asleep. As you develop the habit of working with a dream journal, this would also be a good time to do some quiet writing.

## Dream Dictionary for Dummies

In this unusual dream dictionary, each symbol is defined on three levels. What might it mean if it represented your physical process? What about your emotional process? How might it pertain to your mental and spiritual process of growth? This way you discover a deeper intuitive meaning for what experiences the symbol represents—something you can actually feel into and understand personally. Here are a few samples.

### **detour:**

- *Physical:* You're looking at a problem with your energy flow or circulation. You are focusing on a blockage in your body, or an obstacle in a project or your personal growth process. You aren't ready to deal with something yet and must "go around" or seek a different course of action.
- *Emotional:* You are afraid to confront something or someone directly and are seeking a way to avoid a conflict. You're making excuses to distract yourself from feeling uncomfortable emotions.
- *Mental-Spiritual:* You must revise your plans. You've reached an impasse where a way of thinking isn't getting results anymore, and you must improvise and use your imagination to reinvent yourself. Your soul is moving you in a new, surprise direction.

### **teeth:**

- *Physical:* You are grinding your teeth or there is a potential tooth problem. You are examining the subtle balances in your body and life that maintain health. You are focusing on confidence, competence, assertiveness, aggression, and your ability to cut through or bite through tough or confusing situations. You are looking at your ability to engage and accomplish things: "I can sink my teeth into it," or I've "bitten off more than I can chew." Loose teeth or losing your teeth indicates you're losing power, courage, your grasp on a situation, or the ability to succeed. A gleaming white movie-star smile indicates you are putting on a show, or someone is too seductive.
- *Emotional:* You're self-conscious about your appearance and self-worth. Losing teeth means you fear looking foolish, being embarrassed, unattractive, getting older or impotent, or you refuse to face reality and are retreating to infancy. You've lost self-respect. Biting or being bitten means you feel angry and defensive.
- *Mental-Spiritual:* You are looking at how you articulate and express yourself. Rotten, yellow, or

decaying teeth link to lies, insincerity, lack of character, and untrustworthiness. Swallowing a tooth means you may have to "eat your words."

**mirror:**

*Physical:* You are examining yourself and your image. The way you appear indicates the way you think you look to others, or something you need to admit to yourself. The image in the mirror represents your secret, inner self.

*Emotional:* A fogged mirror means a hazy self-concept and questions about goals, identity, and purpose. A cracked or broken mirror means a fragmented personality, a disturbed and distorted sense of self. Breaking a mirror means you are shattering an old image of yourself or ending an old habit. If you're being watched by others through a two-way mirror, you may feel criticized or scrutinized unfairly, or you are highlighting a behavior in yourself that you want to change.

*Mental-Spiritual:* You're focusing on your imagination and the link between your conscious mind and subconscious. Seeing images reflected in a mirror is a safe way to work with information from your subconscious. If you're looking through a two-way mirror, you're seeing the hidden dynamics of an issue that concerns you.

**wall:**

*Physical:* You are encountering obstacles, barriers, and boundaries to your progress. Jumping over or breaking down a wall means you can overcome difficulties and succeed. You need to stop, pay attention to your path, and possibly shift your direction.

*Emotional:* Building a wall means you need more privacy and introspection, or you are protecting yourself from danger or from people you don't like. You are stubbornly refusing to move forward or express your feelings.

*Mental-Spiritual:* A hole in a wall means you can see through a limited way of thinking, old habits, and resistance. You are becoming aware of the boundaries and transitions between possible realities. Walking through a wall means you can use your intuition, faith, and positive attitude to turn obstacles into opportunities.