

EXPAND YOUR DREAM LIFE:

PART I

By Penney Peirce



Do you remember when you had your first dream? Special dreams you dreamed as a child? Did they fuel your early crayon drawings or fill your head with fantastic stories? Perhaps they even laid a foundation for what was to come later in your life. In my family, we talked about our dreams and perhaps that's why dreams have always been my best friends, bringing me adventure, romance, learning, nurturing, guidance for solving everyday problems, and prophetic visions about my future and the future of the world.

When my nieces were very young and I visited them at holidays, I made a point to ask first thing every morning, "What did you dream last night?" I was there when my youngest niece, Julia, came bursting from her bedroom with her first real dream: "A big orange elephant with red eyes came out of the wall and I was real scared and I yelled for my dad and he came and killed it with a sword!" Her excitement was palpable, as was her pride in herself for her role in vanquishing the monster that lived in her wall. Perhaps if we grow up valuing dreams as an important part of our life, we will maintain more of our precious childlike innocence, which keeps us open to inspiration, exploration, and growth.

DREAMS CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY AND HEALTHY

The Senoi tribe in Malaysia has one of the most sophisticated and sensible systems in the world for working with their dreams. They begin by discussing their dreams each morning at breakfast. The parents gradually teach the young children to catch and describe their dreams, then to control them. Children learn several important dream principles, like developing dream helpers, calling for help in dreams, turning on a dream attacker and killing it (then absorbing its vitality back into oneself), advancing toward pleasure in dreams, asking for gifts from dream characters, and always making sure dreams end with a positive outcome.

**Dreams are real activity
happening at a higher level
of your awareness.**

By honoring their dreams as real activities occurring at a higher level of their awareness and by developing the habit of confidently influencing their dream experience through positive imagination, Senoi children develop faith in themselves and life. They learn that for each event in their dream world, there is a parallel event in their waking world. If you can positively affect one, you will reap benefits in the other.

The Senoi don't stop with an individual focus on personal, psychological work with dreams. They extend dream guidance to the community level. Once the family's dreams have been shared and compared in the morning, the parents take their family dreams to the tribal council, where all the family dreams are put together and interpreted, and the tribe's projects and actions are then determined from the dream indicators. The Senoi have virtually no neurosis or mental illness in their society—they are phenomenally well-adjusted, harmonious, productive, and emotionally mature. Could working constructively with dreams have contributed to this?

EVERYONE DREAMS

Whether you dream in glorious Technicolor detail or whether you're one of the many people who claim they don't dream at all, one thing's for certain—science tells us that everyone dreams, and for as much as one third of our time asleep. Even animals and birds dream! Robbed of vital dreaming activity through sleep deprivation, disturbances, and stress, both we and our animal kin become irritable and disoriented—and we will catch up and balance ourselves by dreaming excessively the first chance we get.

Every night you rotate through four basic phases of sleep. In the first phase, your brainwaves slow from their waking frequency, called *beta*, to the more relaxed *alpha* state, where you may experience a feeling of floating. Imaginative pictures or scenes from the day may drift through your mind. Your muscles relax, and your pulse, blood pressure, and temperature drop slightly.





In phase two, your brainwaves slow to the level known as *theta*. You are now in a light sleep state characterized by many bursts of brain activity. Most of our dreams occur at this level, during which your eyes move back and forth rapidly beneath your eyelids. This is known as Rapid Eye Movement, or REM sleep. If you are awakened during this period, you'll easily remember your dreams. The longest uninterrupted period of dreaming occurs in the early morning and may last an hour.

About twenty to forty-five minutes after you fall asleep, your brainwaves begin to show the ultra-slow frequency known as *delta*. These long, regular waves produce a dreamless sleep. At phase four, sleep deepens even more and is dominated by over 50 percent delta waves. This is the state many refer to as "dead sleep." If you are awakened at this point, you'll feel fuzzy and lost, resist waking fully, and drop back to sleep almost immediately. The whole cycle can repeat 3-4 times per night, depending on how many hours of sleep you get.

WHY DREAM?

There are many great reasons to develop an active, conscious dream life:

- You'll have more interesting, fun things to talk about with your friends and family!
- You'll have firsthand contact with the fascinating mystery: Who am I? What's happening under my surface? What am I actually doing at night?
- Dreams can show you and help you release the subconscious beliefs and fears that interfere with your happiness.

- You'll learn to recognize your inner wisdom. Dreams provide accurate advice from your higher mind, the part of you that always knows the truth.
- Dreams can expand your confidence and sense of self. You'll start thinking of yourself as more than a physical body; you'll have access to many realms of experience.
- You'll realize how naturally intuitive and creative you are. Dreams help you open your intuition.
- Dreams can assist in real ways: with problem-solving, decision-making, improving communication, healing yourself and others, even materializing the help and resources you need.
- You'll discover you have the capacity to know things that are in the past, the future, in other locations—even to know what it feels like to be in someone else's shoes. Dreams can help you develop expanded perception.

REMEMBERING YOUR DREAMS

The most powerful way to make sure you bring your dreams back when you wake is to *want to know what you're doing at night*. Dreams are not just wild, fantasy thoughts caused by random firings in your brain. You are actually expanding your frequency at night to higher levels—moving from the physical, into the emotional levels, to the mental levels, to the spiritual realms. And you will move from your awareness of your personality to an awareness of global and universal information. This is what the brainwave shifts I described before are all about. So get clear with yourself that you really truly want to work with your dreams.

If you don't remember a dream in the morning, make one up!

Then get a dream journal and a pen, put them next to your bed, and every night before sleep tell your body: “We’re going to remember our most important dreams in the morning.” Upon waking, write something in your journal. If you don’t remember a dream, make one up! Your body’s consciousness is waiting for you to complete the cycle by making your desire physical—by writing something, even if it’s just the first thought you had upon waking. This validates your original request. After a few times, your body and subconscious will bring back the real dreams. Sometimes you need to regenerate your body’s faith in you—that you mean what you say.

There are many other ways to “program” your subconscious, or reptile brain, to bring your dreams into your conscious mind. You can place a note under your pillow for the “dream fairy,” the way you left your baby teeth for the tooth fairy. You can put a glass of water by your bed, drink half before sleep with the message to your dream-self to have a meaningful dream, and when you drink the other half in the morning, that you’ll remember it. You can experiment with a dream crystal, or a Native American dream catcher, or an herbal dream pillow. You might try dreaming during a cat nap, or remembering a dream when you meditate

the next day, or dreaming with a friend—see if you can meet in a dream or have similar imagery in a dream that you set up beforehand.

If you’ve repeated a dream recall ritual 3-7 times without results, there may be a reason.

- Are you sure you want to do what you say you do? Do you understand what you’ve asked for? *Clarity of focus produces dreams.*
- If you’re successful at achieving your dream goal, will you have to look at something you’re not ready to face? *Clearing fear produces dreams.*
- Are you resisting an internalized authority figure, in conflict with yourself? *Body-mind cooperation produces dreams.*
- Have you already received a dream insight, but in a form you haven’t recognized? Perhaps the answer came as a situation in your life, or a song lyric you noticed, or a story your friend told you. *Recognizing the way dream insights come to you facilitates increased dreaming.*
- The method you tried may not suit your personality. *Honoring your own preferences and quirks increases success with dream recall.*

Keep an eye out for my next article—Part 2 in this series. I’ll dip more deeply into the world of dreams to help you recall and interpret your dreams—whether they’re night dreams or day dreams.



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