

Lucid Dreaming Benefits

A Review of Modern Scientific Evidence

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Lucid Dreaming (LD) is a *scientifically validated* state of *metaconsciousness* where dreamers' brain state resembles a distinct superposition of the waking and REM-dreaming states [Voss 2009]. In this state, dreamers are able to bend the laws of the physical "*waking*" world and to *invoke* and *experience any situation desired* in a powerful, natural virtual reality simulator (Hobson 2000; LaBerge, 1990). There are many benefits of lucid dreaming which are currently hotly explored areas of modern scientific inquiry. Key areas include (I) **enhanced physical performance**, (II) **improved cognitive abilities** and (III) **promoting personal development** for those who experience lucid dreams.

Mental practice such as *visualized rehearsal*, which allow trainees the ability to elicit sensory experience through heavy concentration, are practiced widely in sports training. Elite athletes are turning to lucid dreaming as an effective *performance enhancer* due to recent scientific findings linking athletes who visualized a desired outcome to more likely achieve that outcome (Schmidt & Lee, 2005, Driskel, Copper, & Moran, 1994). Lucid dreaming provides athletes with a visualized body in an environment as vivid and realistic as experienced in waking life, and reported practice during this state has been shown as beneficial to performance (Erlacher, 2007, 2010). Other promising areas of study are exploring the similarity in brain regions activated when performing *actions*

during dreams to those activated when performing the same actions awake (Erlacher, Laberge, 2003).

New evidence continues to corroborate the associations between *lucid dreaming* and a distinct *cognitive advantage*. Lucid dreamers exhibit *improved cognitive performance* on tasks demonstrating *independence in problem solving* (Gackenback 1985), as well as *greater control over reactions* (Blagrove, 2010), as well as improved cognitive performance when *solving complex problems* (Nieder, 2011). Interestingly, lucid dreamers also exhibit an increased ability to think *positively* of themselves and to be confident in their own abilities; particularly to believe that *events in their life derive primarily from their own actions* (Blagrove and Hartnell, 2000, Patrick & Durndell 2004).

Modern scientific research also suggests that lucid dreaming could be an effective treatment in reducing the frequency of *nightmares* (Spoormaker 2006,2102; Kuiken 2006; Gavie 2010). Nightmares evoke *adverse feelings such as anxiety or fear*, which can *interfere with sleep patterns* and cause *insomnia* and they are one the primary symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Up to 60-80% of PTSD patients suffer from them, indicating that lucid dreaming could be an effective aid in managing the symptoms of PTSD, though more research is needed. Levels of stress and depression are also influenced by dreams – researchers showed that emotionally intense dreams

might assist individuals undergoing *stressful situations* by helping them to processing negative emotions more quickly [Armitage 1995; Cartwright 1991].

The growing body of evidence for lucid dreaming shows promise for the practice as a sleep therapy with wide-reaching benefits. The exhilarating ability to explore one's fantasies appears a *fortunate byproduct* of the ability to unlock key personal insights, promote general wellbeing and provide a measurable cognitive and physical advantage. Lucid dreaming will continue to benefit humanity in the years to come, and as we continue to understand the cognitive processes at play, will uncover exciting new benefits.

Citations

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