



What Are Dreams?

Dreams are a composite of the images, thoughts, sounds, voices, and sensations (happiness, fear, excitement) that we experience when we sleep. They can be composed of bits and pieces of what is going on in your life on any given day, or they can be about places, people or situations that seem to be entirely products of the imagination. You can dream about things that you wish for, or things that you are afraid of. Often anxiety is also expressed in dreams, represented in an ability to find or accomplish something which, in the context of the dream world, is important. Stress you feel in your life can be represented in your dreams by disturbing imagery like being chased by something fierce, or by a sense of helplessness, such as being locked in somewhere and unable to get out.

You do your most dreaming during the rapid eye movement (R.E.M.) state of sleep. During this deepest sleep, your eyes move rapidly, your heart rate and breathing become inconsistent, and you experience muscle paralysis; all of these things are the body's way of making sure that we don't get up and act out whatever we are dreaming about. The R.E.M. state of sleep, which can last from a few minutes to half an hour, is rich with dreams. This is why dreams can seem very long and detailed, though the actual dream itself may take up no more than a couple of minutes. R.E.M. sleep takes up only about twenty to twenty-five percent of the amount of time that we spend sleeping.

There are many theories about the significance of dreams. In the late nineteenth century, the famous psychiatrist Sigmund Freud postulated that our dreams give us a glimpse into our subconscious mind, and more recent scientific studies have supported the idea. For example, in a study of people suffering from amnesia, the participants reporting dreaming about things that they had done before they had gone to sleep, even though they had no conscious memory of having done those things.

1. Which word in the article is a synonym for *combination*?
 - a. composed
 - b. done
 - c. composite
2. If you feel *anxiety*, then you feel _____.
 - a. irritable
 - b. stress
 - c. anger
3. What is an antonym for *disturbing*?
 - a. comforting
 - b. annoying
 - c. frightening
4. If something is *inconsistent* then it happens:
 - a. regularly
 - b. irregularly
 - c. infrequently
5. What does *paralysis* mean?
 - a. flailing arms and legs
 - b. unable to move
 - c. failure
6. *Significance* means:
 - a. importance
 - b. consequence
 - c. history