



Explore the messages received in your dreams

A dream led to the invention of the sewing machine, after the maker dreamt of natives shaking spears with holes in their points. Einstein's Theory of Relativity was the result of a dream in which he was riding a sledge at the speed of light.

Ever been curious about what your dreams can reveal? Dream coach and author Leon Nacson says they are vital to our existence and our happiness.

'Dreaming is therapeutic. Whatever is bothering us in our waking life can be dealt with in the dream state. Answers to problems are often buried in our subconscious, and when we dream we allow them to come to the surface.'

Everybody dreams, even if you think you don't. You just may not recall them.

'When people are sleep deprived they hallucinate – they have their dreams while they're awake,' Leon says.

Dreams aren't just for entertainment. It's a physiological process that's as important to us as breathing and eating.

It's the process we use to learn survival techniques and understand who we are. It can help us create our future and see where we'll end up if we don't fine tune our method of living.

Dreaming also creates memory. We review what we've done during the day and put it in our memory bank, leaving our mind free to experience new things.

Scientists recorded the brain activity of mice during their dreams after they tried to find their way through a maze, and found that they went over and over the maze in their dreams so that when they woke they would be able to get to the cheese quicker. And zebra finches perfect their song in their dreams.

'We do so much in the dream state it would boggle the mind. Importantly, we go over future events while asleep and work out how to handle them,' Leon says.



sweet dreams

When we dream we will do anything to stay in that state. 'You create a scenario that will allow you to stay asleep. If you're tangled up in the sheets, you may dream you're being squashed by a python.'

So how do you decipher the confusing messages? We dream in symbols, and the meanings are different for each of us.

'To a person who works on a reptile farm the meaning of a snake is different to a person who's only seen one coming out of a basket at the circus. For one it's work, for another it's entertainment.'

To help, Leon's created a journal which encourages us to explore our dreams. There's space to draw the main symbols, for a visual memory, and to record the main plot. You also write down what time you went to bed, what you did before that, what you ate and how you felt, as these things can influence your dreams.

'If you ate a large pepperoni pizza and watched *Star Wars*, of course Darth Vader will be chasing you. Those dreams aren't as important to analyse,' he grins.

But Leon says to pay close attention to recurring dreams as your subconscious is trying to get through to you.

'It's important that you take the literal meaning first. If you keep dreaming that your teeth are falling out, check with the dentist. Then if that's all fine, go deeper.'

'Teeth can symbolise words, so does this mean you should choose your words better? Are you gossiping too much? Or do you feel that you're losing face?'

'The most important thing with dreams is to put a value on them. If you remember them and analyse them and pay attention to their meaning, you'll become happier, more abundant and more at ease with yourself,' Leon says.

WHY NIGHTMARES?

Everyone's had a nightmare, where you are so frightened that you wake up shaking, heart thumping, terrified to close your eyes again.

'It's usually due to an emotional issue you need to deal with. It boils down to fear, frustration, anger, those emotions locked inside you,' Leon explains.

By playing out your biggest fear in your dreams, you are able to find solutions to the problem or release the tension you feel for when you have to face the situation in real life. Often a nightmare will repeat, with slight changes, until you are no longer afraid in your dream or in waking life.

Before a new movie, director Ron Howard dreams he doesn't know which end of the lens to look in, because his worst fear is not being able to direct.

'You live out your worst fear in your dream state. It's your way of facing the fear and dealing with it – then you can handle the situation in your waking life.'

So nightmares are actually good?

'They're your best friend. They alert you to a problem. It's like saying the road signs with flashing lights that go "danger danger" are bad – they alert you to the mudslide around the corner. Don't ignore nightmares, actually delve into them. You'll emerge stronger and more in control of your life.'

HOW CAN WE BETTER RECALL OUR DREAMS?

- 1 Make sure you're not dehydrated.
- 2 Ensure you're not too hot.
- 3 Put a value on your dreams.

TO FIND OUT MORE

➤ Leon's website: www.dreamcoach.com.au

– record your dreams, find out meanings and have Leon analyse them.

➤ *Dream Journal* (Hay House, \$24.75), to see patterns emerge.

➤ *Interpreting Dreams A-Z* (Hay House, \$28).



NEXT WEEK What your dreams mean.