

Mind does not shut off when you sleep

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Ms Roseborough's school studies dreams as part of its examination of levels of human universal consciousness.

She believes many dreams are the product of our minds trying to unload the pressures of the day.

"When people have nonsense dreams with a lot of strange or weird occurrences, it's a cleaning out, it's a dumping. We're detoxifying all the time."

But Ms Roseborough argues there are times when dreams are more meaningful.

"We heal through dreams. We're taught through dreams. It is a time for internal teaching," she said, adding people on a journey of personal discovery are more likely to have meaningful dreams.

"Dreams may be the soul trying to teach you through pictures. You learn a lot in your dream state. It is a way for the soul to communicate with the personality."

Pointing out all people dream, even though they may not remember them, Dr. Daiter said dreams have been a source of fascination for cultures around the world, from ancient Greeks to native Canadians.

Most people believe dreams occur only during REM (rapid eye movement) portions of sleep.

But Dr. Daiter said while REM

dreams are the bizarre visions that seem to make no sense, he said people can also dream more reality-based images in non-REM sleep.

"There's no question you can work out problems in your sleep."

"Sleep is anything but rest. Your brain is highly active. Actually, your brain is more active than when awake."

The periodic table was discovered during sleep. Some people write songs in their sleep," he said. "People often can't figure out a problem (during the day) and wake up with the solution. 'Sleep on it' is good advice."

According to the website for the Association for the Study of Dreams, all cultures and religions have looked to dreams as a source of guidance, healing and creativity.

The association said many people dreamed of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 before they happened.

Harriet Tubman dreamed of safe routes for slaves to escape on the Underground Railroad.

Albert Einstein and Thomas Edison both credited dreams with

some of their scientific breakthroughs, while Billy Joel dreams of his music and writers Stephen King and Robert Louis Stevenson have dreamed of ideas for their books.

Dr. Daiter said any notion the mind shuts off during sleep is inaccurate.

"Sleep is anything but rest," he said.

"Your brain is highly active. Actually, your brain is more active than when awake."

Admittedly fascinated with dreams, Dr. Daiter pointed out many interesting facts including:

- In REM sleep, the body is generally "paralysed" with no muscle tone so people don't act out their strange visions.

- Babies acquire this muscle paralysis at about one year of age, roughly the same time they learn to walk.

- Infants dream about half the night, adults about a quarter.

- Dreaming is important for consolidating memory and learning.

- If you want to retrieve simple "tip of the tongue" information for a test, it's better not to sleep the night before. If you need to remember complex concepts for a big exam, get lots of good sleep the night before.

- Dreams, which get longer as the night progresses, are in colour and real time.

- If you have to get up during the night, to go to the bathroom for example, and want to get back into a really good dream you were having before you awakened, try turning over to your other side and it may come flooding back.

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- It is a myth you will die in reality if you see yourself die in a dream.
- In "lucid dreams" people can knowingly influence their dreams.

"From a medical point of view, dreams can be explained as activation of the brain," Dr. Daiter said.

"But they do serve meaning. They do have some insight. They do open up a window into a world we wouldn't otherwise see."

From an intellectual point of view, Dr. Daiter accepts the medical explanations.

"But from a fun place, I want to believe the other side."

Ms Roseborough feels it is important to look at the symbolism of dreams.

"There is both universal and individual consciousness. There are common themes in dreams like falling or flying but you also must look at what these dreams mean for the individual."

Ms Roseborough advises looking for symbolism, especially in repetitive dreams, rather than literal interpretations.

"A lot of people anxious during the day will continue that into the dream state. You have to look at what you are running away from," she said.

"It's not that boogey man or the monster in the bushes. It's a symbol of what you're running away from in life."

Similarly, flying happily above the clouds could indicate the dreamer is trying to escape life's problems.

People who are grounded, happy in their body and world are less likely to have flying dreams, Ms Roseborough said.

"If somebody is very happy flying and doesn't want to come down, you have to look at whether they are not happy in their lives," she said.

"Why are they so happy out of this world? Why can't they integrate happiness in this world?"

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