

Dreamwork and greater wellbeing

Many of our dreams are thematically linked to the emotional content of our day. Professor Sarah Niblock of the UK Council for Psychotherapy and therapist Melinda Powell explore how to use dreams as mirrors that reflect our personal psychology



There is so much we don't know about ourselves, and our dreams can provide insight to help us learn more. Psychotherapists can assist us in examining our dream state to facilitate self-knowledge and development. In this month's podcast, I chat to UKCP psychotherapist Melinda Powell to find out why we dream and how our unconscious state can help us in our conscious lives.



CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy

Author, lucid dreaming instructor and transpersonal dreamwork expert Melinda Powell outlines the importance of dream analysis

Around six years of our lives is spent dreaming. Dreams have different purposes, but we often take them for granted, like breathing. Dreams are fundamental to our neurophysiological development and maintenance as we integrate our experience of the physical world, allowing for perception, self-reflection and emotional growth.

There has been increasing interest in understanding our dreams and how they shape us. Therapists have long recognised the potential dreams

provide for finding meaning in our lives and more people have begun to understand that dreams hold significance for self-understanding. Research shows that dreams also play a role in helping us form memories, rehearse scenarios and process emotions, contributing to our sense of self. Studies suggest that 30 to 50 per cent of our dreams are related to the emotional make-up of our waking hours – a nocturnal therapist, if you like.

Enter the dreamscape

Exploring our dreams can feel unnerving or unsafe and nightmares can be especially confusing or overwhelming. Working with a psychotherapist can be immensely helpful and make the process less daunting. The goal is to understand the source of our fear and move through it.

Lucid dreaming, when we are aware that we are dreaming, has become more

widely known, and we can develop our capacity for dream lucidity. Some musicians, athletes and meditators use lucid dreams to perfect their skills, revealing the potential of the lucid state.

Our 24-hour mind works differently at night, allowing us to process our daytime experience. Sleep and dreaming are crucial to wellbeing and it is recommended that adults get at least seven hours a night. This allows for more rapid eye movement sleep, in which longer, more vivid dreams occur.



The podcast

Have you ever wondered what your dreams mean? We all have the capacity to find meaning, self-knowledge and personal growth in our dream state. Listen to Sarah Niblock and Melinda Powell discuss why our dreams hold the key to deeper awareness and understanding at psychologies.co.uk/what-do-your-dreams-really-mean-podcast-ukcp

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HOW I BECAME A THERAPIST



Melinda Powell shares her path into psychotherapy with a focus on dreamwork

THE DAY MY MOTHER DIED, I turned 38 – the age she was when she gave birth to me. I had many dreams that helped me through my bereavement and led me to take foundation courses in psychotherapy. I also volunteered at a hospice, where many of the patients shared their dreams with me. After I completed a master's degree in the psychology of religion, I trained in psychotherapy at the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education (CCPE), which included transpersonal dreamwork. After qualifying, I ran the charity Help Counselling and co-founded the Dream Research Institute at CCPE to promote research on dreams and wellbeing.

In 2019, I published my book, *The Hidden Lives Of Dreams*, which draws on my personal and professional experience and research. I teach lucid dreaming and continue to write and work therapeutically with dreams.

'The Hidden Lives Of Dreams' (Bonnie, £12.99); dricpe.org.uk

How to reflect on your dreams and their emotional significance

The co-founder of the Dream Research Institute, Melinda Powell, shares four steps to help you start analysing your dreams

1 Think of dreamwork

as developing a relationship with your dream life. We put time into relationships with friends and partners and, similarly, we must cultivate our relationship with our dream state.

2 Record your dreams in a journal when you wake.

Many of us look at our phones first thing, erasing the memory of our dreams. Develop a new morning routine, allowing space for reflection on your dreams.

3 Reread your dream journal before you go to bed and also read about dreams. There are plenty of books on

dreams that can help you explore their meaning and a number on the science behind them.

4 Seek support. If you are interested in exploring your dreams, a therapist can guide you through the psychotherapeutic process.

Find a UKCP therapist at psychotherapy.org.uk

About the UKCP and how to find a therapist

• **The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)** is the leading research, innovation, educational and

regulatory body working to advance psychotherapy for the benefit of all. We have a register of more than 8,000 individual members, who offer a range of therapy approaches for couples, individuals, families and groups. We also have more than 70 training

and accrediting organisations for those who wish to become psychotherapists.

• **To find the right therapist for you,** or learn how to become a therapist, visit psychotherapy.org.uk

