

The Prayer, Meditation, and Dream Journal

Helpful Tips

12 Techniques For Recalling Dreams

1. Buy or create something beautiful (like this Journal) in which you can record and study your dreams. This lets both you, and the dreaming parts of yourself know that you are serious about remembering your dreams. Keep in mind, the more you put into anything (including dream journals), the more you will get out of it.
2. Take time to make the notebook you have chosen to record your dreams in "special" to you. Paste meaningful pictures and/or drawings in it. Inscribe uplifting quotes or prayers. Make it a holy place—one that contains your deepest hopes as well as your expectation that your dreams will help you achieve those heart-felt longings. (Some people like to use tape recorders to record and later transcribe their dreams from, but personally, I have found tape recorders to be more trouble than they are worth.)
3. Try to maintain a healthy diet (lots of fresh fruits and vegetables) and get sufficient exercise. Weak, sickly bodies make dream recall more difficult, while overly toxic bodies tend to create chemical imbalances that can generate unusually fragmented and wacked-out dreams.
4. Try to go to sleep before you are completely exhausted. When we are unusually tired it is more difficult to remember our dreams.
5. Place your notebook (or tape recorder, if you decide to use one) beside your bed and get it ready to record your dreams.
6. Before going to sleep, take a moment to review the days events and focus on those things that you are most concerned about. This is immensely helpful in releasing trivial thoughts that might otherwise weave their way into your dreams. It is also exceedingly helpful to write your days events down in your dream journal and then make a short list of the things you are most concerned about. Not only does this help clear your mind, but it also leaves you a permanent record of what was going on in your life and thought processes when you fell asleep—which can be very helpful when the time comes to try and understand what your dreams are talking about.
7. Before falling asleep, sincerely ask God/Jesus/Spirit /Your Higher Self to help you in your efforts to remember and use your dreams.
8. While falling asleep give yourself **"The Four Dream Suggestions"** listed at the end of these dream recall techniques.
9. Whenever you awaken, whether in the middle of the night or in the morning, write down whatever you remember--no matter how

fragmented, insignificant, or ridiculous what you remember may seem. This is very important. Not only does it help you train yourself to remember your dreams, but it also helps you learn how to identify dreams that can be especially helpful. Dreams that seem unusually ridiculous or evoke strong emotional reactions are often very important. The reason for this is simple: The dreaming parts of us want to be sure we remember the message they are giving us. They also want to be sure the dream in question gets past our meddlesome ego which tend to "alter" or "recast" more subdued dreams to better suit our conscious preconceptions.

10. After writing down whatever you remember, take time to think about AND APPLY the dreams you have received. Remembering dreams, and then ignoring them, or studying them, and then not bothering to act on their messages, allows both you and your dreaming selves know you are not really that interested in receiving, and/or acting upon their help.

11. Whenever possible, share your dreams with like-minded friends. This affirms, again, your interest in dreams and is also an excellent way to unravel their messages. There are, in fact, few better ways to make dream work a consistently helpful part of your life than by joining together with other dreamers who share your interest in and commitment to working with dreams.

12. Along with remembering your dreams, writing them down, studying them, and applying them, always take a few moments to thank God/Jesus/Spirit/Your Higher Self (and the other dreaming parts of yourself) for whatever dreams they have given you.

The Four Dream Suggestions

After you have laid out your dream notebook (and/or tape recorder), done your clearing session, and said your prayers, let yourself drift off to sleep repeating the following pre-sleep suggestions:

1. I Will Remember My Dreams

This suggestion is given simply to remind yourself to remember your dreams (and we all dream several times every night, whether we remember our dreams or not—so there is always something to remember).

2. I Will Have Only Those Dreams That God/Jesus/Spirit/My Higher Self Wants Me To Have

As strange as it may sound, the fact is we can program ourselves to have dreams, and other dream experiences that are not really in our best interest. This suggestion, then, is a reminder to us about "why" want to remember our dreams (so they can help us become better people) and an attempt to support the Higher Forces within ourselves as they seek to orchestrate our dreams and penetrate the many levels of our consciousness with helpful information.

3.
I Will Record My Dreams Clearly and Accurately,
As Soon As I Remember Them

The first part of this pre-sleep suggestion is an affirmation to ourselves that we want the truth, whatever it may be, not some doctored version our conscious minds have cooked up. And the second part of this pre-sleep suggestion helps program us to follow through on writing our dreams down when we remember them (and not waste time and sleep trying to drag them through the entire night until morning comes, and/or forget or change them somewhere along the way).

4.
I Will Interpret
and Apply My Dreams
As They Are Intended To Be

This is another affirmation to ourselves that we want to see and understand the truth of our dreams, as well as a suggestive nudge that helps us follow through and do something about whatever we receive.

A Few Techniques For Interpreting Dreams

1. The single most effective thing we can do to help us understand our dreams is to spend time, daily, praying and meditating—especially before we fall asleep at night and after we wake up in the morning. In a general sense, praying and meditating regularly helps us stay attuned to God's abiding Presence which is always, in one form or another, seeking to lead us to ever-increasing wholeness. And in a specific sense, there is no more effective way to unlock the messages of individual dreams than to take them with us into our quiet times and prayerfully mull them over in our minds. Almost without exception, as we quietly probe our dreams for their meanings, their meanings will begin to reveal themselves to us.

2. As effective as prayer and meditation are at unlocking the secrets of our dreams, there are still many meanings we may miss if we rely solely on our own inner process. In this respect, others—especially others who know us well and who are familiar with dreams—can be very helpful. Not only will they tend to see aspects of our dreams that we overlook, but the very process of sharing our dreams (of speaking them out loud and listening to how we describe them to another person) often helps us see and understand our dreams more clearly than if we keep them hidden away in the solitary, often narrow-minded realms of our own beliefs, perceptions and thought processes. Sharing dreams with groups of people who see things from different perspectives than we do, can also be remarkably helpful.

Working on our dreams on the inside through prayer and meditation, coupled with working on our dreams on the outside through sharing them with other human beings, are exceedingly effective ways to unravel even the most bewildering of dreams.

3. Other, more specific things we can do to help unlock the meanings of our dreams include:

Trying to identify what area or aspect of our lives our dreams are talking about before we start working on specific symbols. If you wrote your days events down like I suggested earlier and also wrote down those areas of your life that you are most concerned about, you will be able to look at your dreams and see if your dreams "feel" like they are talking about any of the areas you recorded. Almost always, they are.

Reducing our dreams to themes is also very helpful. Themes help us get the main gist of the dream, and once we have identified the dream's main gist, it often becomes obvious what the dream as a whole is talking about and makes it easier to break down specific scenes and symbols.

Taking time to think about and talk to the various parts of our dreams (the people, place, things, and emotions in our dreams), and asking them what they mean, as well as acting them out in some fashion and seeing what kinds of insights come to us.

4. If these, and other techniques for interpreting our dream(s) fail, we can always ask for more dreams to help us unravel the ones that are eluding us. If our desire to understand our dreams is sincere, and if we are making a sincere effort to work with them, **we will eventually understand what they are talking about.**

Dream Incubations and VisionQuests

After we have spent some time learning the basics of remembering and working with whatever dreams come to us, we are ready to begin working with dreams we specifically request. Instead of simply watching and recording dreams that come to us, we can begin to ask for and receive dreams about specific issues in our lives.

"Dream incubations" can be done alone, or in small or large groups. They can be modeled after ancient visionquests (which might include all night vigils, fasting, sweat lodges, and other ceremonies), or be created by ourselves. They can be undertaken as a major life event that is spread over the course of several days in an isolated, natural and protected setting, or done one night in the privacy of our own home.

Although the more intense, involved, and carefully planned a dream incubation is, the more help we will receive from it, a great deal of help can also come from simpler one-night incubations.

The Main Ingredients of all Dream Incubations & VisionQuests, large and small, are:

1. Choosing a concern or concerns that we feel a deep and abiding need for help with;
2. Spending a significant amount of time thinking, praying and focusing on that concern;
3. Opening ourselves to the Higher Powers to receive guidance, direction, and help with our concern(s).

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Once we have chosen a concern that we would like to receive help with, we begin looking for ways to clarify and crystallize that concern. We spend time thinking about its past and present history, as well as the ways we imagine it might affect us in the future. We ask ourselves questions about it. We look for all the ways that it has affected our life. And then we crystallize everything we have come up with (everything we know and believe about our concern) into some kind of concrete image.

In my own experience, I have come to call these final crystallized images, "Dream Charms." Dream Charms can be anything: Pictures we have drawn of our concern. Something we have carved, or sculpted. Something we may have seen. A song or a dance we have created. The particular form we chose isn't as important as the reason behind why we are doing it. And that reason is twofold: First, to gather up all the loose ends of our concern into some kind of cohesive picture (so ourselves and God both know exactly what we are seeking help with); and second, to keep our mind prayerfully focused on what we are doing and what it is we want help with.

While the clarifying and crystallizing process is underway, dream incubations and visionquests almost always have an element of purification associated with them. You not only think,

work, and pray about your concern, but you also begin to prepare yourself to receive guidance about it. Fasting, bathing, meditating for longer periods than normal, taking quiet walks out in nature, removing yourself from the normal clutter of televisions, videos, radios, perhaps not speaking for a period of time, are all ways you can help begin to prepare yourself for an encounter with the Divine.

After all this, you are ready. You finish whatever preparations and purifications you have chosen to do and then go to sleep.

Although dreams are usually very responsive to the process I have outlined above, and tackle the highly focused concerns we bring them with abandon, occasionally they don't. Instead, they aggressively tackle some other, unexpected area of our lives. Since dreams, like God, are more concerned with our overall development, they are always seeking to draw our attention to the core, or foundation concerns of our lives upon which all the rest of our troubles rest. Most of the time, the concerns we have are intimately connected to these more fundamental concerns and, because of this, our dreams focus on them. When, however, they aren't, our dreams will seek to re-direct our attention. And when they do, it is important that we listen. We must, in other words, always remember what it is we are really seeking. And that is not simple answers to specific concerns and difficulties. Rather, it is consciousness-wide health, wholeness, peace and happiness. If the particular concern we are seeking help with is distracting us from dealing with the larger, more central needs of our lives, then it is time to make adjustments. Significantly, once we redirect our attention to whatever other issues our dreaming selves may present to us, the concern we initially chose begins to lose its power. We discover that working with the deeper issues of our souls is, in effect, a more effective way to work with whatever smaller issues we initially chose.

In a similar vein, we must be open to the possibility that some other kind of help, apart from dreams, may be more suited to our current needs. Maybe, in other words, we won't be able to remember any dreams and the answers we are seeking will come to us from somewhere else, possibly an intuition, a vision, an inner Voice, a sign, an unusually clear thought, or something we see or hear that deeply affects us.

Once we have set the dream incubation/visionquest process in motion, the only thing we can be sure of is that God will answer our prayers (our deepest prayers for true healing). When and how those prayers will be answered may, however, take us by surprise. So as we proceed with preparing ourselves for dreams, it is important to pay attention to everything and not be overly attached to God speaking to us only through our dreams. And it is also important to try to maintain a "not too tight, not too loose" attitude. Trying too hard to receive guidance, as well as not trying hard enough, will both inhibit God's efforts to penetrate our minds and hearts.

With all this said, dream incubations, if done as I have described, are still remarkably effective ways to receive guidance from God through dreams. More often than not, our dreams rise to the calling and offer us the help we are seeking. And more often than not, once we have launched a dream incubation process, help also comes in many other, often refreshingly unexpected forms as well.

Common Dream Pitfalls *And How To Avoid Them*

1. THINKING DREAMS ABOUT OTHERS ARE DREAMS ABOUT OTHERS.

Most dreams, most of the time, no matter who appears in them, are talking about us. A good rule of thumb is to always look over our dreams, and their contents: 1st, as if they are talking about us; 2nd, as if they are about the person we dreamed about; and 3rd, as if they are talking about both.

2. THINKING DREAMS ABOUT OTHERS ARE NEVER DREAMS ABOUT OTHERS.

Dreams frequently offer us very penetrating insights into the workings of other human beings, in spite of the fact the other human beings we are dreaming about may often deny, to the death, the perceptions our dreams are offering us. If we do dream about others, it is, however, important to keep in mind that our dreams, as always, are undoubtedly exaggerating things to make a point. Likewise, since the insights we glean from such dreams are almost always meant more for us than for the person or persons we may be dreaming about, we should resist the tendency to coerce others to agree with our perceptions of them—especially when those perceptions are negative ones.

3. BELIEVING THE EXAGGERATED IMAGES OF OUR DREAMS ARE ACCURATE.

Dreams are masters at presenting their cases in the most dramatic and over-blown manner possible. We should, therefore, do our best to take to heart the essential message of our dreams while not getting too carried away with their over-zealous presentations.

4. INTERPRETING DREAMS LITERALLY.

99% of the time dreams are speaking in symbolic, not literal terms. Thus, when we have dreams that appear to be delivering some kind of literal message, we should consider the probability (however unlikely it may feel to us in the heat of the moment after we have the dream), that the dream is really talking about something other than what grabbed our attention.

5. IGNORING LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS IN FAVOR OF SYMBOLIC ONES.

Sometimes dreams are literal and trying to squeeze symbolic interpretations out of them might prevent, or delay us from doing what we need to do.

6. THINKING WE CAN IGNORE DREAMS AND RELY SOLELY ON OTHER FORMS OF GUIDANCE.

So long as we need to sleep and, while sleeping, loose consciousness and dream, dreams are an important part of the tools God has given to every human being to find his or her way back to Him.

In many ways, dreams are like one of our five senses (along with intuition, rational thinking, paying attention to signs, listening to others, etc.). We can, if we are foolish enough, decide not to use a particular sense and, instead, try to over-compensate with our other ones. But in the end, this is not a very wise course of action since each type of guidance has some unique perspective, or form of perception that the other ones lack. The best course of action is, therefore, to use all the faculties we have—until we no longer need them and they cease to work for us.

7. THINKING ONE GOOD DREAM CAN FIX EVERYTHING.

Although dreams are exceptionally adept at giving us sweeping overviews of complex problems (and also highly skilled at nailing simple problems on the head), complicated problems usually require many dreams before we finally come to a place of fully understanding the situation in question. In the scope of a given night, several dreams may, for instance, tackle the same issue from different vantage points, while larger issues may require YEARS, MAYBE EVEN LIFETIMES OF DREAMING before things are fully understood and resolved. And the reason for this is simple: Dreams, again, are interested in shaping us into the most perfect beings we can be. They are Perfectionists of the Highest Order and leave nothing undone about us.

if our understanding, or application of anything is imperfect, they will return (when the time is right and we are ready) again and again and again reminding us about it and encouraging us to work it out.

8. TRYING, INAPPROPRIATELY, TO FORCE OUR DREAMS TO DO OUR BIDDING.

Although I have already pointed out (in the Dream Incubation and VisionQuest section), that dreams can be consciously directed to help us with our problems and concerns, they can also be used inappropriately. People who go to sleep programming ourselves to have flying dreams, for instance, or happy dreams, or sex dreams may well end up having flying, happy and sex dreams that do little to promote their overall development as people. Likewise, people who go to great lengths to have lucid dreams (dreams in which we become aware that we are dreaming) may also be inadvertently interfering with main purpose of their dreams, which is to bring healing to their overall consciousness.

The question before us must always be, "What is our purpose?" "What is that we are hoping to do with our dreams?" If the answer is, "Become better people," and we are willing to go and do whatever we need to to accomplish this end, then all is well and we can develop a very satisfying relationship with our dreams. If, on the other hand, our purpose is to control our dreams for our own selfish and misdirected purposes, we are in for a rather rude awakening. For even though our dreams may, in the beginning, accommodate our selfish programming it won't be long before they begin to move us into deeper, more wholistic dreams—deeper, more wholistic dreams that can turn into nightmares if we insist on trying to force them to go against their own helpful, healing natures. In short, the vast and overwhelmingly benevolent forces of our dream life cannot be forced to serve the tiny-minded and ill-conceived pursuits of people who want to use them for self-destructive purposes.

With respect to lucid dreams, the question must again be, "What is our purpose?" If our purpose is to increase our conscious participation in our dream life, to become more fully involved in the healing process our dreams are bringing to us, then lucid dreams can be very helpful. If, on the other hand, we are attempting to become lucid in our dream state for selfish or misguided purposes, including as a way to force a spiritual awakening from all dreams (both nighttime dreams and the dream of life), then we are asking for trouble. For although the end purpose of all dreaming (both the dreams we have when we go to sleep at night as well as the dream of life) is to help us wake up, the only way this great awakening can take place is by going into the dreams of life (within and without) and making peace with the many parts of ourselves we encounter there. Heaven, in other words, cannot be taken by storm. The often difficult labor of developing and expanding our consciousness, step by step, through learning to love all the people, places, and things we encounter in the dream of life cannot be side-stepped, or avoided.

9. FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON DREAMS, AND DREAMING, AND NOT ENOUGH ON GOD AND LIVING IN THIS WORLD.

Dreams are given to help us find God, not become, or replace God. In time, dreams, like all other limited forms of guidance, will pass away. Thus, we should use them for all they are worth while we need them and, while doing so, not get too attached or puffed up about them. Similarly, although dreams are a remarkable form of guidance—one that can speak to us through multi-million dollar productions in virtually every way imaginable, they also have their limitations—not the least of which is the fact that we have to lay down and lose consciousness to access them. Likewise, dreams are given to help us live our lives on earth, not avoid our lives on earth by spending excessive amounts of time working with them.

10. THINKING ALL DREAMS COME STRAIGHT FROM GOD TO US.

Dreams, like all other forms of guidance, NEVER come straight from God to us. They pass through layers upon layers of personal and social conditioning, as well as the dense fabric of our own bodies, minds, and emotions. Similarly, dreams also come from many different levels, or parts of ourselves: From the Higher, or Super-Conscious parts of ourselves, as well as from the lower, or subconscious parts of ourselves. Sometimes they are filled with lofty images and inspiring messages, while other times they are primitive and down-right brutal. It is, in fact, often difficult to figure out what level of ourselves a given dream is coming from. Often, dreams seem to come from many different levels at the same time. The one thing that all dreams share, however, regardless of where they come from, is a movement toward creating a healthier, happier consciousness and experience for us. And on this count, we can take comfort. For although we can't claim any dream, even those that shake us to our core and initiate major changes in our lives, have come to us "straight from God," there will be those special times when the Highest Parts

ourselves will speak to us, and there will also be something in every dream we have, whatever its origin, from which we can benefit.

11. WAITING FOR DREAMS TO CONFIRM OUR ACTIONS BEFORE WE ACT.

Again, although we should spend time paying attention to our dreams, our lives shouldn't revolve around them. If we have some decision to make, and can't seem to get any help from our dreams about it, then we should make the best decision we can using the other forms of guidance God gave us. Yes, we might miss something and make a mistake. But if dreams don't come, and we need to act, then act we must. All we can do is our best. And our best is always good enough, even if it isn't good enough to avoid making a few messes along the way.

12. THINKING SOMEONE, OR SOME BOOK, KNOWS BETTER THAN WE DO WHAT OUR DREAMS ARE TELLING US.

Others may know more about dreams than we do, and even have enough insight into our make-up as a person to understand what some of our dreams are talking about better than we do. But in the end, only we know for sure. We should, therefore, always trust our own judgement and intuition about what our dreams are telling us above what others might say, or think.

13. FORCING OURSELVES TO DO WHAT WE "THINK" OUR DREAMS ARE ASKING US TO DO WHEN WE DON'T REALLY FEEL SETTLED ABOUT IT.

One of the best indications we have that we have understood our dreams correctly, is that when we do pretty much every part of us feels good about it—there is a consciousness wide sigh of recognition and relief. When, on the other hand, there is something off about our interpretation, at least some parts of us know it and let us know about it by producing feelings of anxiety. At such times, it is best to dive in and find out why we are feeling uneasy, rather than blasting ahead and later regretting it.

14. THINKING WE CAN MASTER THE DIFFICULT ART OF DREAMS AND DREAMING OVERNIGHT.

Even when we are fortunate enough to discover Journals, like this one, that are full of ideas and suggestions that can save us YEARS of grueling trial and error work on our own, we are still faced with the fact that there are no short cuts. It is still going to take us a lot of time, and experience, to become adept at using our dreams. Likewise, the learning process doesn't seem to end. Just when we think we have learned the ins and outs of working with dreams, some new, as yet unexplored dimension presents itself. So be patient. Relax. Enjoy your discoveries. And take a moment to ponder what a remarkable gift dreams really are—and how fortunate you and I are to have such a marvelous form of guidance, inspiration, and healing to draw upon.

A Final Word About Using This Journal

Although I have done all that I can think of to make this Journal a special place to record your experiences with the Divine, it still has two main drawbacks: It is expensive (because each copy is, at the present moment, made by hand), and its space is limited. Because of these two factors, and because I would like your Journal to last you a long time, I suggest that you record your dreams and other inner experiences somewhere else first. Later, after you are sure they are something you want to keep around for awhile, you can enter them into this Journal. In this way, your Journal can become a repository of your most meaningful encounters with God and stay somewhat above the torrent of "here today, gone tomorrow" guidance that is mostly given to deal with day to day and passing concerns.