

# DreamSpeak

## An Interview With David Melbourne, PhD

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Questions by Robert Waggoner

*Lucid dreamer and hypno-therapist, David Melbourne, PhD, has authored a number of books on dreaming, such as **The Dream Oracle: Using the Alphabet Dream Code, with Dr. Keith Hearne. An interesting and original thinker from the Orkney Islands of Scotland, the LDE welcomes David Melbourne.***

**David, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for the LDE. As I recall reading, in April 1975, Dr. Keith Hearne at the University of Hull was the first researcher to show scientifically that a lucid dreamer (Alan Worlsey) could signal with their eyes from the sleep state. When did you first hear about lucid dreaming? Were you aware of lucid dreaming before this research?**

No, I only began researching dreams in 1974, after having a near death experience, during my service with the London Fire Brigade - I was trapped on a burning roof in Whitechapel in London. Shortly after, I had my first of many out of body experiences, which convinced me that I had a soul that existed separately from my physical body. This set me on a quest to understand what "consciousness" is, and dreams, being closely linked with the unconscious, seemed a good place to start.

I think it was during the early eighties I saw Dr. Keith Hearne on television discussing his invention of the dream machine and how it can induce lucidity. After that, I made it my business to try and follow his career and I read, conscientiously, nearly everything he wrote on the subject. At this point it is worth mentioning that I feel disappointed that he still has not received the acclaim or public recognition he deserves in this field, as LaBerge's work, which followed Hearne's efforts, echoed and confirmed many of Hearne's discoveries. In truth, it would not be inaccurate to regard Dr. Hearne as the father of lucid dream research.

**Can you tell us a bit about your first lucid dreams? How did they come about? What did you make of them?**

Like so many others, I had my first lucid dream when I first grasped the concept of what becoming conscious within a dream actually meant, which was a day or two after watching Dr. Hearne on television. I was running through a field of statues of granite pigeons, when they took flight. Stone pigeons cannot possibly fly, was my thought at that time, which made me realise I was dreaming. In other words my lucidity was initiated by recognising an anomaly within my dream. The clarity and verisimilitude of the event was astounding and I woke up feeling elated. Fantastic!

### **Was there something about those experiences that intrigued you?**

Unlike my out of body experiences, the golden rule of lucid dreaming applies, “What you think, you will them dream.” However, my out of body experiences differed in that only a tiny proportion of each experience seemed to follow that rule, the rest was as if controlled from a higher consciousness, which could have originated from me, yet felt as if another mind, millions of moves ahead of me, was in control – it’s virtually impossible to put into words. I know I wasn’t alone, though.

However, becoming lucid is amazing when we consider that, at the first moment of lucidity, we have our full identities restored, including our consciences, and long and short-term memories, too. From that moment, our behaviour appears to be governed by the same rules as so-called reality. For example, many people have reported to me that in message bearing dreams they can act totally out of character and, on occasion, can be horrified upon waking at the things they had done within their dreams, like committing murder or rape. Once lucid, though, those acts become unthinkable to the average individual.

**A few years ago, the LDE ran your article about a scientist, Mark Creed, you met at a social function, who could not conceive of the idea of being consciously aware while asleep. Nonetheless, a few days after talking with you, he had his first lucid dream. Many of us have noticed this same phenomenon: after talking to a person about lucid dreaming, they report their first lucid dream. What do you think is going on here?**

My own research into dream interpretation might reveal the answer to this question. During my studies, I became aware that, in the West Indies, there exists a small community who all believe in the same set of dream meanings. For instance, they believe that if a woman dreams of a fish, it means she is pregnant. The astonishing thing is that it seems to always hold true. In the West, however, there is such a hotchpotch of different ideas that no individual dream dictionary or belief can be viable unless everyone has studied all the previously stated meanings and believes the same thing. And this is exactly how the Dream Oracle works. (See answer to question 13).

Nevertheless, it also made me realise that the unconscious mind responds very well indeed to conscious beliefs, wishes and desires and also makes sense of the power of positive thinking. Therefore, if we believe, wish for or desire something that the unconscious mind has grasped and is within its power to provide, it will often oblige and is keen to do so. It is as if the unconscious has discovered a new way in which to communicate or prove its existence to us, and it seems to revel in the opportunity of doing so. In other words, the unconscious mind responds very well to conscious beliefs and can then provide appropriate dreams, whether it be dreams that carry clear messages, lucid dreams, or any other dreaming condition, and it seems that this is exactly what is going on in somebody who has recently heard of lucid dreams and fully grasps the implications of what it could mean.

**Deeper into your article, Mark relates how lucid dreaming has deeply altered his perspective on the nature of reality, the possibility of life after death, etc. Playing the devil’s advocate here, how can lucid dreaming be so transformative? After all, as people say, it’s only a dream, right?**

Mark Creed is unusual in that, sometimes, he was able to prolong lucidity for around twenty minutes. In addition, perhaps his analytical mind enabled him to become an extremely accomplished lucid dreamer and examiner of the phenomenon – from within. During one of his dreams it occurred to him that if it were to continue indefinitely, then he would have no way of

knowing that it wasn't reality. In other words, it presents that unanswerable question: Is the dream state another level of reality, or is so-called reality just another dream state? In Mark's case, some of his lucid dream experiences were so profound that he said it made him realise that life transcended death in that he, too, became a believer in a mentalistic universe. In fact, he said that it was the only thing that made sense of everything. (See next question).

*“While men are dreaming they do not perceive it is a dream. Some will even have a dream within a dream. And so when the great awakening comes upon us, shall we know this life to be a great dream. Only fools believe themselves to be awake now.” (Chuang Tzu – ancient Chinese sage).*

**So you suggest that perhaps lucid dreaming indicates how a mental universe could exist? Would this be something that a person's awareness enters after their death, like the Buddhist idea of bardo? Or does it exist now, like some (new age) version of Jung's collective unconscious? How do you think of the mental universe?**

Indeed I do harbour similar beliefs to Buddhists, but coloured differently from my own researches. Studying some of Dr. Parnia's work at The Southampton University Hospital, England – in the heart unit – he has uncovered established cases where consciousness exists after physical brain death. It also seems likely that, in accordance with my own discovery concerning how the unconscious mind often can hardly wait to prove its existence to us, it responds to conscious beliefs, wishes and desires.

To explain, Parnia has uncovered cases where, during a near death experience and after physical brain death has been declared, Christians sometimes claim to have seen Christ, Muslims have seen Muhammad and children have seen Father Christmas, and so on. This suggests to me, strongly, that, after or during death, we will see what we expect or want to see – similar to the golden rule of lucid dreaming: What we think, we will then dream. This ties in very well with the theory of a mentalistic universe or a universe of interactive minds or a collective consciousness. I believe them all to be one and the same. A universe created by interactive minds and lived out through spectacular, living illusions. Wonderfully mind boggling, isn't it?

Having said that, if we do exist in a mentalistic universe, then things like miracles, premonitions, plus all manner of paranormal activity would be possible. Indeed, even astrology would work. Not because distant planets could affect our behavior, but because the concept would exist in our minds – a sort of, “We think, therefore it can exist or work,” sort of thing. In this regard, it is interesting to note that astrology has a long track record of examination and might surprise your readers to know that Guaquelin's scientific study of the subject revealed a connection between birth dates and professions pursued by individuals. This is laid out in his book *The Cosmic Clocks*, (Paladin, 1973).

In the same vein Dr. Hearne discovered that out of all love saboteurs - people who deliberately or unconsciously, sabotage love affairs, usually after a set period of time has elapsed - some 90+% had their moon in the sign of Libra. This can be considered too statistically significant to be regarded as mere coincidence.

This suggests to me that scientists should not be in such a hurry to readily dismiss such notions. In fact, even now, most scientists refuse, categorically, to consider premonitions as being possible, which, in itself, is a most unscientific stance. The fact remains, though, that around 85% of people claim they have experienced a premonition or know somebody who has had one.

In a physical world we are forced to acknowledge that premonitions are indeed impossible – an affect cannot possibly precede a cause, yet they happen! This statement on its own throws up an obvious question: If premonitions are impossible in a physical universe, do we therefore exist in a physical universe, or a universe of the mind where anything could be possible, especially precognition?

**In your writings, you point out what many lucid dreamers experience, which is, lucid dreaming appears to have levels of depth from slight lucidity to full blown lucid dreams. Since full blown lucid dreams lead to more profound experiences, is there anything a lucid dreamer can do to encourage full blown lucid dreams?**

I don't think I can add to the numerous offerings put forward previously by many writers on the subject, although, during my experiments with Mark Creed, I used to hypnotise him and suggest that he would indeed experience extended full-blown lucid dreams, but that could prove to be somewhat expensive, as the power of suggestion can sometimes wear off and, from time to time, need replenishing.

**Any full blown lucid dreams that you would like to share – ones that blew your mind, altered your concepts of the possibilities of lucid dreaming?**

I found one of Mark Creed's lucid dreams of particular interest. He was standing in the sea and the waves were lapping around his ankles in "Quick time" almost as if a film were being played on fast forward. However, he was moving at the normal rate of speed. This could have fascinating implications of how we perceive time and motion, especially remembering that, for the most part, dreams do take part in real time and are not over in a flash.

**You have written a number of books and articles on many aspects of dreaming. You mention having discovered the "trigger mechanism" in sleep which identifies message-bearing dreams. Briefly, can you tell us what you mean by that?**

Briefly is not a word that fits with my explanation of the trigger mechanism, but I will endeavour to answer in as few words as possible or will end up writing another book on this topic alone.

Freud believed that dreams are the guardians of sleep. In other words, he thought that one of the primary purposes of dreams was to keep us asleep, to prevent us from waking, prematurely. Indeed earlier research appeared to confirm his notion, as it proved more difficult to awaken sleepers from REM sleep as opposed to other stages of the condition.

However, over the years I received literally hundreds of letters from people who required dream analysis, who reported their dreams and concluded with words to the effect of, "At which point I woke up." It also occurred to me that nightmares invariably wake dreamers and they are themselves dreams, albeit unpleasant ones. This set me to thinking that perhaps the unconscious mind wanted us to wake from a message bearing dream so that we could remember and ponder it. This has since been established to be the case with my invention of the Dream Oracle. The entire system would simply fail to work if the "Trigger Mechanism", or perhaps more appropriate, the "Trigger Effect," or the unconscious mind deliberately waking us up, were not the case.

In addition, bear in mind that most people are in REM, dreaming sleep for approximately two hours a night – that's six years in an average lifetime - yet the typical person only remembers a fragment of a dream every other day. Indeed it is harder to waken dreamers from REM sleep, but we can all remember waking up and remembering a dream or being startled awake from a nightmare. Also, the only dreams we are able to remember are those from which we wake up, or

are triggered by a coinciding thought a day or two later. The exceptions are those containing conscious thinking like lucid dreams, experiencing a false awakening, sleep paralysis, hypnagogic and hypnopompic imagery. All remaining types of dreams perhaps serve other purposes and do seem to keep us asleep.

Simply put, we now know, beyond doubt, that dreams that wake us carry messages from the unconscious mind – the Dream Oracle demonstrates this, beautifully. If we do not respond by giving these same dreams some thought and consideration, they can sometimes intensify and mutate into nightmares. In other words, it would seem that unless we either get the message or ponder the possibilities of the dreams that we remember, then the unconscious mind can end up shouting at us in the form of nightmares, which, incidentally, rarely translate into unpleasant messages. Therefore, when asked why we dream, we can now reply, with some confidence, that we know that one purpose of dreams is to bear messages, and they are the ones that wake us up, hence the trigger effect.

**Any examples of a message bearing dream? I ask that since some people might say all dreams are a message from the unconscious.**

I refer you to my previous answer. However, I have learned that it is unwise to attempt to interpret dreams containing conscious thought: lucid dreams, false awakenings and so on, because, remembering the golden rule in conscious dreaming, “What you think you will then dream,” it becomes clear that these dreams become contaminated and manipulated by conscious thought. I believe that dreams we cannot remember serve many other purposes, one being desensitising us to hurtful memories and so forth. I say this because dreams can be invoked using hypnosis and I have occasionally stumbled across such dreams in others that would invariably not have been recalled and reported under normal circumstances.

**You and Dr. Hearne have investigated lucid dreaming deeply. What areas have you focused upon in your investigations?**

Healing, precognition, lowering of stress levels and consistent laws of dreaming such as the light switch effect, the scene shift effect, gravity and so on. Remember Dr. Hearne’s discovery that dreams flow along verbal and visual associative pathways by a law of least effort. This is crucial to understand when researching any area of dreams, especially dream analysis.

For example, if it were put to your readers that somebody dreamed that they were unable to turn on an electric light during a dream and wanted to know what that meant, you might get varying answers. A Freudian, for instance, might tell you that it signified a level of sexual impotence, which, on the surface, seems reasonable. However, a follower of Jung might suggest that you are not “seeing the light”, another realistic answer. A Gestalt practitioner, however, would be likely to suggest that it is the dreamer who is represented by the light, and had to question him or herself as to why they are failing to function properly. All three explanations seem to be fairly rational, but they are all wrong. I can say this with absolute confidence, because of the consistent law of the light switch effect in dreams. In other words the imaging process in the brain is unable to change a dream scene from dark to light in an instant of time. It may, however go from light to dark and back to light again. Thus one could successfully dream of turning a light off then on again. In this regard the study of the laws of dreaming have become very important to me. It is also interesting to note that I have encountered two individuals who claim to have successfully activated a light in a dream, but they seemed unable to recall whether the light was bright or simply glowed fairly dimly. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that this is a crucial area of research.

**One thing that has surprised me is that lucid dreamers rarely seek out unknown information, e.g., precognitive, clairvoyant, in their lucid dreams. Lucid dreamers seem to get caught up in manipulating objects and dream figures instead. Are you aware of lucid dreamers who have sought out unknown or conceptual information?**

I was once approached by a television company who were making a series of programmes concerning the paranormal, with a sceptical slant, who asked if I could provide them with any predictions or information of which I could not possibly have prior knowledge. I hypnotised Mark Creed and suggested to him that he would have a lucid dream in which he would gather such information.

The next day he phoned me to report that in his lucid dream, he had been walking along outside a row of shops and various buildings when he spied a man in a white coat and a stethoscope draped around his neck walking towards him. Mark said to him, "You must be the doctor I'm supposed to ask," to which the man gestured him into a building. They sat opposite sides of a desk, then Mark asked him for some paranormal information that he couldn't possibly know under normal circumstances.

The doctor then named the host of the proposed television series – a name well known and highly respected in the UK – and pointed to his own head, shook it and tutted saying that he had had a mental breakdown and was an alcoholic.

I phoned the television company, who seemed delighted and excited by my revelation. Funny thing, though, it was never shown on that series. If the information had been false, I would have thought they would have jumped at the chance of decrying it. Having subsequently pondered this, I have to add that I would think twice before taking willing part in such a biased production again.

**You and Dr. Hearne have a very interesting book, entitled *The Dream Oracle*. Could you briefly tell our readers a bit about how you employ dreaming to assist you and how the idea came to you?**

Over the years, I became extremely disappointed with so-called dream dictionaries and other books that claim to interpret the meaning behind dreams. Clearly they were not founded on any intelligent research, if at all. One of my ambitions was to make dream interpretation available to all, but, as we have seen, it is a minefield of pitfalls. I then devised the Melbourne Cross Reference, Flow Chart System of Dream Interpretation, which could be learned. However, it still relied on individuals studying all aspects of dreams both past and present, and keeping up with the latest discoveries.

Then, one amazing morning I awoke with the idea of the Dream Oracle floating around in my mind. Although I was unable to recall a specific dream, it seems very likely that the idea came to me in a dream, or, more specifically, from my unconscious mind.

Simply put, The Dream Oracle relies on the trigger effect to wake dreamers with clear and unambiguous advice from their wise unconscious mind. People simply put a question to themselves upon retiring for the night and wake up with the answer. No prior knowledge of dream interpretation is necessary. Having said that, as I mentioned earlier in this interview, it does rely on individuals programming their minds – something like a computer – prior to using the Dream Oracle. In other words, by reading the entire book first, the unconscious mind is then able to understand the system and pre-programme itself with set meanings associated to letters of

the alphabet (the alphabet dream code) that should apply to any and all eventualities life might throw at them. I had achieved my goal.

Interestingly, the Dream Oracle could easily be used in the field of psychiatry to great effect. A patient, for example, could be instructed to read the system then come back and report significant dreams. Perhaps more noteworthy, though, the psychiatrist could suggest that the patient's conversation could be affected by the Dream Oracle, in which case their dialogue might be heavily stilted towards certain letters of the alphabet, which might provide extremely important clues as to their condition.

**Any questions you would like to pose to our lucid dreaming readers? Any challenges? Advice?**

Dr. Hearne and I would be interested to know what happens when lucid dreamers attempt to pass through solid objects: Bricks, concrete, metal, wood, glass, plastic and so on. Mark Creed had to make his experiments top priority else he would become sidetracked by the verisimilitude of the lucid dream. Carry out your experiment as soon as you become lucid. In itself you may discover that this prolongs the period of lucidity.

In addition, remember that sometimes the harder you try to induce a lucid dream the more difficult they can become to achieve. Be respectful to your unconscious mind and ask its permission and allow it to decide if a lucid dream is appropriate or not. Even better, give your unconscious a reason beneficial to yourself and others for producing a lucid dream. You might be surprised at the rapid response. Like you, it seems to thrive on stimulation by carrying out tasks that are likely to help you, which also serve the purpose of proving its existence – almost like shouting out, “Here I am, over here!”

**When you imagine the future, what impact could lucid dreaming play in that future world?**

People seem very slow to catch on to the most amazing things like lucid dreaming. It is an anathema to me that everybody in the world isn't pursuing the subject. However, as time goes on, no doubt it will catch on, it's just that sometimes a snowball as huge as the lucid dream or even The Dream Oracle, for that matter, can take a Herculean push to overcome its inertia and get noticed. I have little doubt that, long after I am dead, people will recognise the value of lucid dreaming and The Dream Oracle, so that everyone will have a dream machine and a copy of The Dream Oracle next to their beds.

However, as a consequence, it seems a reasonable assumption, therefore, to speculate that an ever-increasing number of the world's population will come to realise the sense in understanding the possibility that we exist in a universe of the mind. What then becomes of a materialistic world? Perhaps there is hope for humanity after all.