

# DreamSpeak

## An Interview With Tim Post

© Tim Post  
Questions by Robert Waggoner

*Tim Post took his interest and passion for lucid dreaming, and helped found Lucidipedia.com. A student at the University of Twente in the Netherlands, he continues to promote lucid dreaming. LDE welcomes Tim Post.*

### **How did you become interested in lucid dreaming?**

Well, a big question. I was introduced to the art of lucid dreaming by a good friend of mine back in the time when I was attending High School. Though I had had numerous lucid dreams as a young kid, up until High School, I had no idea that those ‘conscious’ dreams were actually called ‘lucid dreams.’ Let alone the fact that one is able to induce lucid dreams intentionally and control them.

During that time I had seen a movie called *The Matrix* which had completely revolutionized my way of thinking about reality and awareness. Almost magically, my psychological (almost spiritual) revelation after having seen the movie, led to a particular week in which my friend introduced me to lucid dreaming. Funnily enough, retrospectively, I completely dismissed his enthusiasm and attempt to inspire me to train alongside him (he was already doing Reality Checks of some sort). I told him that I had had several lucid dreams back when I was just seven years of age. Although I knew what he was talking about while explaining lucid dreaming to me, so knowing, I thought that I already knew what lucid dreaming was all about. “What’s so special about knowing that you are dreaming?” I thought.

What I clearly did not know at that time, was the range of boundless applications one could enjoy while practicing lucid dreaming. During my lucid dreams as a kid, I recall only being lucid in dreams in which I tried to wake myself up from some kind of nightmare. To me, lucidity was related to negative dream experiences rather than enjoyable ones. It took my friend a whole week to finally force me to sit behind a computer, visit LD4all’s wonderful lucid dream site, to read the first paragraph of PasQuale’s introduction and revisit my pre-assumptions about the value of learning lucid dreaming.

Suddenly, while reading, I came to realize three things: one, lucidity enables dream control, two, dreams are hyperrealistic, and three, it is learnable. I just discovered my very own “Matrix” - An immersive limitless dreamworld that I could use to induce any kind of experience that I would ever want to engage in. The mere prospect of learning how to fly in my dreams, to ‘bend my own psychological rules and boundaries’ (as Morpheus would phrase it), to plan for constructive experiences that could support and enrich the things I would like to be or do in waking life, was just absolutely phenomenal - a feeling, I will never forget. A rush of purpose ran through my

veins. As if I had found something true about myself and what I needed to do in life. As if 'lucid dreaming' was mine. In just a week, I had my first intentional lucid dream.

Soon I started to design and develop various websites on the topic of lucid dreaming to inform and educate others. These eventually led to a growing interest in Educational Science and Technology, a university degree at the University of Twente in the Netherlands from which I will graduate soon. On campus, a few years later, I decided to build on a project to acquire students that were interested in collaborating with me on developing a more sophisticated online platform for learning lucid dreaming. I organized and gave several lectures on the topic of lucid dreaming, to promote my project that I called 'Lucidipedia,' and shared my vision of the need for people to start dreaming again. The amount of interest I generated was amazing.

Within a few years, I and my fellow team members had finished the first version of the Lucidipedia.com website that you can visit today. We imagineered a new 'home' for the next generation of lucid dreamers by providing lessons, video tutorials, a shared library, blogs, and an online lucid dream journal for all to enjoy. And we are just starting.

### **What do you recall of your first lucid dream/s? Anything odd, unusual, or unexpected?**

Oh boy, my first lucid dreams were actually all lucid nightmares. I recall being locked up by that awful old witch from Disney's Snow White story. She had this spot, in the middle of a completely deserted endless white space, where she would walk in circles, guarding a small cage that she locked me into. The funny thing was, that it was a recurring nightmare. And so, after been locked up for the third or fourth time that week, I learned to recognize the nightmare while I was still dreaming.

Sadly, I did not know how marvelous and useful that awareness was, because instead of resolving my fear of the old lady, I started to scream for my mother to help me wake up. Screaming to the outside world of my bedroom, hoping she could hear me from her own bed and would rush upstairs to wake me up. When that did not happen (obviously), I tried to shake my head rapidly in the dream, trying to 'snap myself out of' the dream. It felt like I could feel my dream head turn inside my real one. An assuring sensation that seemed to tell me that I was waking up.

It worked, though I wonder whether those awakenings were actually false awakenings. Oh well. I felt safe again, and that's what mattered. Poor kid.

### **What about lucid dreams you intentionally had when you just discovered lucid dreaming?**

Ten years later, when I was seventeen, I had re-discovered lucid dreaming and only knew about its mere existence. I had no fancy techniques like Stephen LaBerge's MILD to help me out. I just recalled dreams, wrote them down and constantly (I really mean 'constantly') thought about lucid dreaming and felt excited by imagining awesome lucid dreams that I could have in the near future. All my friends knew all about it within a few days. There was no doubt in my mind that I was able to revisit my dreamworld lucidly again very soon. And indeed, at the next upcoming weekend, when I had time to sleep longer (funny how I was unaware of these principles back then), I had my first intentional lucid dream:

*The dream started at school, where I saw naked girls everywhere. A nice start I admit, although not sexually charged. Weird thing was how one of my teachers would just walk around like nothing special was happening. The combination of seeing my teacher act so ordinary while all those naked girls were around, made me turn lucid. I shouted out, 'I am dreaming!' and felt my*

*body burst with, what seemed like, 'electric sparks.' I knew that I was actually lying in bed, with my eyes closed. I looked around and saw my father sitting on the floor in front of me. He looked peaceful, almost proud. "I am dreaming, dad!" I told him, and he smiled. I felt like I needed to do something to make up for all the time I had left in the lucid dream. I decided to walk around and explore my dream. I walked up a stairway leading to a common area where many students were studying. I wanted to stand on the tables and transform into a super hero, but felt uncomfortable doing that in front of them all.*

Haha. Clearly, I seemed to be not that lucid. I woke up a few moments later, jumped out of bed, ran downstairs and told my parents and younger sisters what I had just accomplished. I remember calling my friend, my fellow lucid dreamer, on the phone, who had introduced me to lucid dreaming the previous week, to tell him about my lucid dream. Though very happy, he felt frustrated for training much longer than I did and succeeding the least. I think he had his first lucid dream a couple of months later.

### **What made you want to have more lucid dreams and pursue it further?**

Mostly due to this silly idea that lucid dreaming to me, still feels inherent to what I am here for. Practicing lucid dreaming, including teaching others, makes me feel authentic, real and purposeful. I can't help it, it just utterly fascinates me.

More gradually though, I am feeling more passionate about contributing to the community with proper educational support to learn lucid dreaming more quickly, easily and properly. Though there is increasing research material on lucid dreaming, effective educational material is lacking. By improving my own skill in lucid dreaming, I am able to devise more helpful methods to support the techniques that scientific research has generated, and co-host Lucidipedia.com as a place where anyone is able to learn about and enjoy lucid dreaming as much as I do.

### **Did *The Matrix* movie influence your lucid dreaming, or create experiments to try in your lucid dreams?**

Oh yes. The main theme of *The Matrix* centers around a character called 'Neo', who all through the movie (which is part of a trilogy), engages on a quest to free a computer generated reality that had enslaved all of mankind. He learns that life as we currently know it is actually part of one big virtual reality, created by powerful machines that man invented some time ago, to imprison mankind for survival purposes. And so, from the very beginning of the story, Neo is told he is 'the One' who has the unique ability to recreate The Matrix (this virtual world we live in) and to free it from sophisticated machines that had taken over control.

The whole movie to me and many others, is one big metaphor for a psychological, funky, teenage quest for meaning and ultimately self-realization. A story that beautifully embeds tons of mythological, spiritual, and buddhist references about life in a way that teenagers could easily identify with, as I did, when I was seventeen and saw the movie with my dad in Las Vegas. I will never forget.

*The Matrix* movie seemed to have influenced my world of lucid dreaming in three important ways. First, it had already primed me for understanding the meaning of "lucidity" in context of a main character that needed to become aware of The Matrix in order to recreate and free it from enslavement. This clearly contributed to a fascination about awareness and reality that I easily connected with my re-discovery of lucid dreaming soon after. Secondly, The Matrix provided me with two inspiring role-models 'Neo' and 'Morpheus' (Neo's teacher). These characters vividly

came to represent mental models - with which I was able to identify - to learn and teach lucid dreaming. And thirdly, inspired by the idea that 'lucidity,' like what happened with Neo in the story, could somehow function as a means to free my own psychological world from some kind of "enslaving" entity.

The movie gave rise to a craving for self-realization, like the art of Tibetan Dream Yoga, a deep feeling that I have tried to nurture and pursue ever since.

### **What personal lucid dream experiments have you found most interesting? Why?**

The most memorable was one in which I felt fascinated about the "physiology" of the dreamworld - its realism and immersiveness: spending all my early lucid dreams entirely investigating the realism of dreams; feeling textures of doors, of walls, and holding dream objects in my hands, pinching dream characters in the face and having a conversation with them. I still feel it is amazing what our minds are capable of each and every night of our lives.

And so, I decided at one time to hold a dream glass of drinking water in my hand while lucid dreaming, and to intentionally wake up. I was curious how this sensation of a dream body with a dream hand that held the glass, would eventually fade out into the sensation of my real body lying in bed. While waking up I could feel my real hand still holding the glass in bed. But once I moved just one finger, the sensation completely vanished and I discovered that my hand was actually lying under my thigh in a completely unrelated posture. Intriguing.

Another experiment concerned my first WILD (waking induction) of a lucid dream, in which I tried to re-enter a dream lucidly. To witness my mind initiate REM with all kinds of weird sounds and hypnagogic images was just astounding. Again, I felt intrigued by how at some point in the process, the sensation of my real body was transformed into the sensation of a dreamed one. Suddenly, I was standing on a dream street while just a moment ago, I was lying in bed trying to fall asleep. Wow!

These kinds of early experiments will always stay with me as my first explorations of consciousness and imagination. Much later I began to devise challenging exercises to improve my skill in dream control. Experiments like walking across a room vertically (across the ceiling and to the floor again), rapidly teleporting from one location to the next, confronting nightmares, overcoming fears, directing simulated experiences that prepared me for challenging things I needed to do in waking life, and so on.

### **For example, have you ever tried to meditate in a lucid dream? What happened?**

I once tried to sit down and try to count to 100 while keeping lucid. The exercise is wonderfully insightful (and challenging!) because if done successfully, you will actually undergo all kinds of fascinating dream shifts. I began by sitting down on a bench in the lucid dream, but while counting, shifted from rooms, to other cities, to silly parties of weird looking people, beautiful forests, underwater caverns, while counting. Just by sitting on a bench. A great way to just allow the dream generation process to entertain you. It is almost like watching a movie. The challenging part is to remember to carry out frequent movements of the dream body (like rubbing your hands or changing the way you sit), to make sure your 'inactivity' does not unintentionally dissolve the dream and you wake up. Sitting is probably the last thing you should ever do when trying to dream as long as possible. It's a very passive way of engaging the dream and is thus likely to result in an unfortunate awakening.

**Many people conclude that lucid dreaming is simply an expression of expectation and mental models. However, when you read lucid dreams, they often seem to contain completely unexpected developments! Is there more to lucid dreaming than the ‘expectation effect’?**

Absolutely, there is. It is one of the things I always remember to tell my students when giving workshops on lucid dreaming, that lucid dreaming is not like you need to control (or create) the complete dream setting in all of its details. Research has clearly demonstrated that dreams are generated by both psychological and physiological mechanisms that account for the experiences we engage in while (lucid) dreaming each night.

Psychologically, dreams are directed by the psychology of the (lucid) dreamer by law of expectation and habituation. Simply put, it seems like when you expect to meet your mother in your dream, you will. Research on lucid dreaming has clearly shown that one is able to intentionally influence the dream generation process.

That is the whole point of its awesomeness. Lucid dreaming contributed to dream research by providing a psychological model to explain additional mechanisms that are involved in the dream generation process. The ‘expectation effect’ is one of them and is used by all lucid dreamers to control dreams. To learn how to fly, for example. Or to learn how to walk through walls.

Physiologically speaking, the activation-synthesis model, forwarded by Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley and first published in the American Journal of Psychiatry (1977), describes a physiological model in which the dream generation process is explained by, what seems, random brain activity originating in the brain stem that transmits so-called ‘PGO-waves’ to the cortical areas of the brain while in REM. It is said that this random brain stimulation specifically accounts for the often ‘unexpected’ events that seem to occur while (lucid) dreaming (accounting for the occurrence of random emotions, visuals, and sounds), often contributing to wonderful creative dreams, even while we are lucid. As a lucid dreamer, I love to be surprised in my dreams.

It is almost like the function of dreaming is to challenge our personal psychology (our expectations and adaptation to life) with new and unfamiliar situations. A wonderful evolutionary process that overnight attempts to allow us to cope or prepare for life’s unexpected turns and circumstances. If that is truly the case, then lucid dreaming would be a revolutionary addition to our capacity to adapt to and get the most out of our lives.

**When you consider the science and research so far on lucid dreaming, what surprises you?**

Foremost that there is very little continuation in research on methods that educate people in lucid dreaming and teach them how to properly apply lucid dreaming to support waking life experiences. Just devising a “MILD technique,” currently still turns out for many to be insufficient support. I would love to see more experimental research on different methods and learning approaches on how to train lucid dreamers more effectively.

**Do you feel lucid dreaming has a spiritual component? Or does it seem only limited to personal self growth and understanding?**

I very much feel that practicing lucid dreaming has the potential to teach anyone about his or her own spirituality. To me, the spiritual component of lucid dreaming lies in the realization that we all dream continuously, day and night. There is no psychological or philosophical ground upon which to dismiss this fact. Even while reading this text, you interpret this information through a

personal veil of prior concepts, assumptions and expectations based on your own personal psychology and history.

When meeting people or dealing with situations in life, we constantly project our own mental models upon the world to try to explain ourselves and reality. It allows us to construct our own personal meaning in life.

Now, I noticed in myself, and by listening to many others, that a lot of uneasiness, unhappiness, and lack of purpose in life, results from people not knowing that they are constantly dreaming and creating their reality minute by minute each day. Like in dreams, if you expect life to be hard, it will be. And so, I and my associates at Lucidipedia are moving into constructive sessions and online programs to assist visitors on how to use lucid dreaming as a metaphor to learn how to “personally imagineer” one’s own life: transferring insights from lucid dreaming to waking life; to provide simple techniques that allow students to recapture their responsibility in living their lives, and promote more dedicated self-awareness.

### **What do you find enjoyable about lucidipedia.com?**

To see how a project, founded in a tiny room on campus, is steadily growing to become the next international home for a new generation of lucid dreamers around the world.

It is enormously satisfying to read about people’s (re-) discovery of lucid dreaming, to see them share their ideas, to enrich life experiences with dreams of flying or experiments of consciousness.

### **Any surprises along the way?**

It surprises me every time when I hear about their first reaction to lucid dreaming, online or at workshops, to see how easily lucid dreaming connects with people’s desire to better themselves. Like it is something natural, that only needs a small spark. I cannot imagine a time in which I won’t enjoy this drive to get people engaged about their potential in life.

### **Does lucidipedia.com ever get frustrating?**

Hell, yes!

What would you do when you receive a ‘Lost connection to MySQL server’ error and your whole site is inaccessible for a day?

### **As you read about lucid dreams and talked to various lucid dreamers, did you hear any lucid dreams that really blew your mind?**

No not really. Maybe some nice ideas for exercising dream control. I always felt that mind-blowing dreams and lucid dreams are experienced and truly known in the eye of the beholder. Just like I am unable to truly communicate my lucid dreams to another and expect the other to know what I am referring to. No, that is rarely the case in my experience.

Instead I am much more interested in meeting “mind-blowing” lucid dreamers, rather than their stories about lucid dreams they have had. To hear them talk about what interested them in learning lucid dreaming, to what extent they feel lucid dreaming revolutionized their life experiences, etc.

I don't know, I think I respond more to the energy one emanates while talking about lucid dreaming. It is like I can really get a taste of his or her enthusiasm for lucid dreaming. Much more than to merely read about a lucid dream someone had once upon a time. To me, it is the lucid dreamer that is interesting, not the lucid dream.

**Any final thoughts about lucid dreaming?**

I hope I never have any!