

New study finds systematic change in dreams after Sept. 11, 2001

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The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, changed our lives in a number of different ways, not only socially and politically, but also in the way in which we dream, according to a study published in the February 1 issue of the journal SLEEP.

The study, authored by Ernest Hartmann, MD, of Tufts University and Newton-Wellesley Hospital in Boston, Mass., focused on 44 people (11 men and 33 women) living in the United States, all between the ages of 22-70 years, and who had been recording all their dreams for at least two years. Each of the subjects provided 20 consecutive dreams from their records, with the last 10 recorded before 9/11/01 and the first 10 after 9/11/01.

According to the results, dreams after 9/11 showed more intense images, but were not longer, more dreamlike or more bizarre. In addition, they did not contain more images of airplanes or tall buildings. In fact, not a single dream involved planes flying into towers, or anything close to that, even though all participants had seen those images many times on TV.

“The more intense imagery is very consistent with findings in people who have experienced trauma of various kinds,” said Dr. Hartmann. “The idea is that we all experienced at least some trauma on 9/11/01.”

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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