

Awake within a dream: Lucid dreamers show greater insight in waking life

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(Medical Xpress)—People who are aware they are asleep when they are dreaming have better than average problem-solving abilities, new research has discovered.

Experts from the University of Lincoln, UK, say that those who experience 'lucid dreaming' – a phenomena where someone who is asleep can recognise that they are dreaming – can solve problems in the waking world better than those who remain unaware of the dream until they wake up.

The concept of lucid dreaming was explored in the 2010 film *Inception*, where the dreamers were able to spot incongruities within their dream. It is thought some people are able to do this because of a higher level of

insight, meaning their brains detect they are in a dream because events would not make sense otherwise.

This cognitive ability translates to the waking world when it comes to finding the solution to a problem by spotting hidden connections or inconsistencies, researchers say.

The research by Dr Patrick Bourke, Senior Lecturer at the Lincoln School of Psychology, is the first empirical study demonstrating the relationship between lucid dreaming and insight.

He said: "It is believed that for dreamers to become lucid while asleep, they must see past the overwhelming reality of their dream state, and recognise that they are dreaming.

"The same cognitive ability was found to be demonstrated while awake by a person's ability to think in a different way when it comes to solving problems."

The study examined 68 participants aged between 18 and 25 who had experienced different levels of lucid dreaming, from never to several times a month. They were asked to solve 30 problems designed to test insight. Each problem consisted of three words and a solution word.

Each of the three words could be combined with the solution word to create a new compound word. For example with the words 'sand', 'mile' and 'age', the linking word would be 'stone'.

Results showed that frequent lucid dreamers solved 25 per cent more of the insight problems than the non-lucid dreamers. Dr Bourke was assisted with the study by student Hannah Shaw who has since graduated.

More information: The research, called Spontaneous Lucid Dreaming and Waking Insight, was published in the American Psychological Association's journal, *Dreaming*, Vol 24(2), Jun 2014, 152-159. [DOI: 10.1037/a0036908](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036908)

Provided by University of Lincoln

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