

BECOMING LUCID

*In forming a bridge between body and mind,
dreams may be used as a springboard from which man
can leap to new realms of experience lying outside
his normal state of consciousness.*

- Ann Faraday

Dream writer, advocate for personal dream interpretation

On July 20, 1969, a machine with legs like a spider detached from the command module and touched down on the surface of the moon. If they had been able to survive without their helmets on, the astronauts would have heard the complete silence of outer space. Commander Neil Armstrong's foot reached the surface, but because of the constraint of the suit he was wearing, he was not able to see the historic footprint that he made. He described the surface as having a powdery feel. Buzz Aldrin joined him, looking out at the empty landscape, finding that double kangaroo jumps were the most effective way to get around.

Hundreds of thousands of miles away, the Earth listened to the men speak. In an attempt to describe this strange place, Aldrin used the words "magnificent desolation."¹



If you've ever wanted to reach out into the mystery of outer space yourself, lucid dreaming is not far off. In this chapter we'll finally arrive in our dreams, using the tools we've collected over the last few chapters. Houston, we're about to touch down.

The word "typical" is nowhere close to describing the profound experience of being conscious in the dream state, but there is a typical way to become lucid. In fact, an average 72% of lucid dreamers tend to awaken in this way,² with a technique the lucid dreaming community calls a DILD or a "Dream Initiated Lucid Dream". Acronyms aside, a DILD is simply "a dream where you become lucid after the dream has already started."

The spontaneous lucidity of this technique usually stems from some sort of trigger: an inconsistency, a dream sign, anything that makes the dreamer stop and question, "Am I dreaming?" *while* in the dream. This chapter will focus on this method as we've found it to be the easiest way to experience lucidity.

If you've set an intention before bed, performed reality checks throughout your day or trained yourself to recognize dream signs, perhaps you've become lucid already. These waking world techniques will be helpful in this chapter, and we'll crank it up a notch by adding another killer technique to the mix. Just like Aldrin and Armstrong, soon enough you'll be taking your first steps onto a strange landscape.

THE PROBLEM

Remember Rapid Eye Movement (REM), that stage of sleep where your brain is completely active yet your body is asleep, the time in which we dream? To learn lucid dreaming this stage is incredibly important. The goal is to direct all your energy at REM, to focus your intention on those open windows of time when you're actually dreaming.

Here's the problem.

When we set an intention before bed, we don't hit a substantial period of REM for nearly an hour after falling asleep. There are four stages of sleep you go through before even getting to REM. Your intention has to wait in line for light sleep and deep sleep to pass by before it gets its chance to shine.

Often enough, as we enter REM, we've forgotten our original plan: to have a lucid dream. Your goals to see a dream sign or to perform a reality check will continue to fade as you progress through additional sleep cycles.

If only there were some clever, simple solution to this problem, a way to go to sleep right into a dream, bypassing the amnesia of deep sleep! Don't panic, there is a way.

WAKE-BACK-TO-BED

The last two windows of REM occur at the end of our sleep cycles, in the early morning hours. Although we dream on and off throughout the night, lucid dreamers tend to focus on these last two stages for a couple reasons:

- ✖ **They're the Longest:** As the night progresses, the amount of time you spend dreaming increases. The last two stages of REM are the longest—nearly fifty minutes each—giving you a great chance to have long, vivid, conscious dreams.
- ✖ **No More Deep Sleep:** Since you've already gotten your deep sleep over with earlier in the night, the only thing that lies between the last two stages of REM is a small sliver of light sleep. Your body is still tired, but your mind is primed for dreaming.³
- ✖ **Easier to Remember:** Subjects waking up directly out of a dream have better dream recall. Focus on these last two stages of sleep and it's likely that you'll remember your lucid dreams directly after waking.

Armed with this knowledge, let's trick Mother Nature by catching our last two REM cycles. This feat is done with a technique known as *wake-back-to-bed*. Simply put, it involves waking up after six hours of sleep, staying awake for twenty minutes, then going back to bed. This thrifty solution sends you "back to bed" *right before* you enter the last windows of REM.

The first lucid dream I had was spontaneous. It was one of the most memorable moments of my life. I was camping at the time and had spent the day by my tent reading a book. I had felt quite meditative all day but other than that I had not tried any technique either during the day or as I was falling asleep, it just happened out of the blue at about 4 a.m. Like I said it was one of the most amazing experiences I ever had, waking up in a 'dream world' being fully awake in that world, spinning and jumping around in excitement, unbelievable excitement.

Jack G.

HOW TO CATCH YOUR LAST REM CYCLE

By waking up just before your last REM cycles begin, you're essentially putting your sleep on 'pause'. When you go back to bed a few minutes later, you'll be diving right into a nice, refreshing swimming pool of your own dreams. With wake-back-to-bed, setting an intention, looking for dream signs and focusing on becoming aware in your dreams becomes very effective. Here is the step by step technique:

Step 1: Set Your Alarm For Six Hours After Bedtime

Wake up around six hours after you go to sleep. This tends to be a reliable number, but results may vary. If your early morning wake-up time isn't working, try variations. For example, if you're sleeping for a total of eight hours, maybe you'd want to try to catch the very last REM cycle, so you'd want to set your alarm for seven hours after your bedtime, not six. If you have difficulty returning to sleep after a wake-back-to-bed, stick with six hours; it will be easier to fall back asleep with this option.

Step 2: Wake Up for Twenty Minutes

Wake up and stay up for around 15-20 minutes. Staying awake for this span of time awakens your *left brain*, the analytical half of your mind that is essential in realizing that, "Whoa, this is a dream!". Without your active left brain there to help, your creative *right brain* will happily get carried away in the whimsy of the dream. In other words, you don't want to simply wake up for a few seconds and fall back to sleep. We know, your bed looks so cozy you could just cry. But this technique is basically pointless unless you stay up, get your brain thinking clearly and logically and then go back to bed with a strong intention.

THINGS TO DO IN THE 15-20 MINUTES WHILE AWAKE:

- Read past dreams from your dream journal
- Look over your list of dream signs
- Read this book (or another book about lucid dreaming *if you must*)
- Take a pee
- Draw a picture of a dream you'd like to have
- Get up and walk around
- Write a letter to your subconscious
- Continuously ask yourself "Am I dreaming?" until you go back to sleep

Step 3: Go Back to Bed

Now you can get back into bed and ooze into a state of comfortable relaxation. Sleeping on your back seems to help with lucid dreaming, so we recommend that you try this position. As you fall back to sleep, you want to focus your mind on your intention: "I will realize that I'm dreaming."



1. **Affirmation:** Tell yourself over and over, "I am aware that I'm dreaming." Let this be your dominant thought as you fall asleep.
2. **See It:** Behind your closed eyelids, visualize yourself inside a dream. See yourself becoming lucid and realizing that you're dreaming. See yourself noticing a dream sign or doing a reality check. Imagine it with all of your five senses. The stronger the visualization the better.
3. **Feel It:** Feel the excitement and emotions that come with being lucid in a dream, when you stop and perform a reality check only to realize that you are in fact dreaming. Feel the incredible freedom of being aware—without boundaries or limits—inside a dream.
4. **Expect to Arrive in the Dream:** As you repeat the phrase, "I am aware that I'm dreaming", you will begin sinking into sleep. Remember, you're not simply turning off like a robot, you're an explorer on a journey to your own inner universe. An incredible adventure awaits you. Remember, the next place you'll find yourself in will be a dream.

CAT NAP

Naps can be a really effective way to perform a wake-back-to-bed as well. During naps, our bodies are tired but our minds are relatively more awake than in normal sleep. Some nappers fall right into REM or start dreaming soon after they fall asleep, so your chances of lucid dreaming are pretty good. Much more research needs to be done in this area, but experts suggest to nap for 20 minutes, 40 minutes or 90 minutes.



EUREKA! YOU'RE IN.

Welcome to Wonderland! You're Alice and you just hit the floor of the rabbit hole. The moment that you recognize that you're dreaming will be an exciting one so you give yourself a big pat on the back for such an accomplishment. If this is your first lucid dream, then it's likely you now know what all the fuss is about. The experience is profound—you've just discovered a completely uncharted terrain.

Quite often, the amateur lucid dreamer's early exploits in lucidity only last a few moments. If you've become lucid already but lost your awareness very quickly, don't worry. This is as common as a cold. In the next chapter we'll look at ways in which you can stabilize the dream and stay lucid for long stretches of time. If you haven't become lucid yet, do not fret. There's plenty of time to practice.



After Aldrin and Armstrong's lunar module landed, they were supposed to sleep for five hours before leaving the cabin and venturing out onto the surface of the moon—they'd been awake for a while after all. The astronauts ignored this plan and left as soon as possible. They were just too excited to sleep. Wouldn't you be? Charles Conrad Jr. was the third man to step on the moon that day, or ever. "Whoopie!" he said. "Man, that may have been a small one for Neil, but it's a long one for me!"⁴ We know just how he feels.

SUMMARY

- ◆ The most common way to have a lucid dream is to become aware during a regular dream.
- ◆ The most effective way to accomplish this involves performing the waking techniques that trigger awareness such as reality checks, finding dream signs and setting intentions to become lucid before bed.
- ◆ To maximize results, catch the last (or second to last) REM cycle by waking up 6 hours after you go to sleep and going back to bed.
- ◆ Before going back to bed, stay up for 15-20 minutes and get your brain active. Go to sleep with the intention to become lucid, see a dream sign or perform a reality check.