

Fall 12-14-2018

Sleep Paralysis: Dreams, Demons and REM-Atonia

Joshua G. Christensen

Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gj_etds

 Part of the [Sleep Medicine Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Christensen, Joshua G., "Sleep Paralysis: Dreams, Demons and REM-Atonia" (2018). *CUNY Academic Works*.
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gj_etds/295

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstones by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact AcademicWorks@cuny.edu.

Sleep Paralysis: Dreams, Demons and REM-atonia

By Joshua Christensen

Have you ever woken up from a dream only to find you can't move? You're paralyzed and, sometimes, you are even having vivid hallucinations. It's terrifying, but harmless and very common. Regardless of it being so innocuous, Sleep Paralysis has inspired fear for centuries and many still believe it to be a supernatural phenomenon. This is, most likely, because most people who get Sleep Paralysis, don't really know what it is. People just like me.

PART TWO: SCAMMERS AND SMOOTHIES

If you continue down the google rabbit hole of demons and witches, you will also come across something called lucid dreaming. Sleep paralysis is supposed to be a kind of gateway to it. Lucid dreaming is when you can, as I understand it, control your own dreams, which sounds pretty fun, actually. I don't know if this can be any sort of cure for sleep paralysis, but maybe it can help. This led me to the New Life Expo in New York where there is a lecture on the subject. The description for it said, "Heal your mind, body and soul through lucid dreaming." So, I decided to check it out.

Lucid dreaming is said to be connected to the world of metaphysics. You know, stuff like cosmology and crystals. Honestly, I'm pretty skeptical, but all I've ever experienced with sleep paralysis has been negative and fearful. I want to explore the possibility that it could be turned into something positive.

The third floor of the New Yorker hotel, where the expo is taking place, is filled with booths on everything from spirituality to nutrition to homeopathy. I feel a little out of place here. Sort of like being at a church service for a religion you don't belong to. But, as I walk around the showroom floor before the lecture, I start to enjoy myself. I encounter a group of people gathered around a man playing a crystal bowl with a cloth stick and chanting. By "playing a crystal bowl" what I mean is...you know how you can make a wine glass ring by running your finger around the lip? This was kind of like that.

I make my way through the expo, past mung fruit shake stands and rakhi massage tables, into the make-shift lecture hall where I find Geozuwa –the man I'm looking for. He's leading the lecture on Lucid dreaming. Geozuwa is milling about the front of the room chatting with some of the audience in the first few rows of pink upholstered chairs.

The room we're in projects the kind of nondescript-ness only chain hotels can — beige walls, dark, worn rug. There is a terrible hum from a vent blowing neither hot, nor cold air. There are two or three dozen people in the audience filling only a fraction of the chairs as Geozuwa gets people to fill out index cards for a raffle. The feeling of being out of place returns.

"I am ruffling on my hypnosis cd. This is one of my favorite CDs," says Geozuwa as the audience trickles in. "It's perfect to use is to help with everything is perfect to use it. You want to dream control and Lucid Dream."

I know I'm new to this scene, but this was not what I was expecting. Geozuwa is a middle-aged man in a dark suit with a bold, red tie. He's on the shorter side, with jet black dyed hair. He didn't speak in the soothing, ethereal way I imagined he might. Maybe I'm just engaging in stereotypes. Anyways, the lecture begins.

"I've been doing the metaphysical since I was a child, with no training naturally since I'm a child," he explains. "When I say metaphysical, that's out of body, astral traveling, remote viewing, remote healing, dream control. Now as an adult through hypnosis, I'm able to teach you how to do the same things and have similar experience."

He talks for a few minutes, introducing himself and what he does, and it doesn't take long for the subject of sleep paralysis to come up. It seems that most people in this room are here for the same reason I am.

"How many of you have experienced dream paralysis?" he asks, and hands shoot up all around the hall. Geozuwa goes on to ask for how many this is a fearful experience, which elicits a similar smattering of hands raised

"There is nothing to be afraid of," says Geozuwa. "And once you realize that there's nothing to be afraid of, that is a beautiful, beautiful state to energetically leaves your body to astral travel.

Astral travel or astral projection is described as an out of body experience where then your soul can travel across the universe and astral plane. This is starting to make me uncomfortable being a bit outside of the realm of science, but I'm here to learn in any way I can how to cure my sleep paralysis. So, I keep listening. Then, however, the lecture took a turn.

"So, my goal is that anyone who ever comes into my path, you never have to suffer with anything ever again," he says.

Geozuwa claims that, with the help of hypnosis and lucid dreaming, he can rid you of all your pain and suffering — just come take his two-day class.

"I teach you how to connect to the source instantly through self-hypnosis," Geozuwa says. "Not only to heal yourself, but the power to heal others. I've had students who have gotten rid of deathbed cancer, physical deformities, terminal liver disease."

Just to put all this in context, lucid dreaming isn't exactly hard science. While there are some studies out there, they are few and far in-between. Lucid dreaming is classified as a person being aware that they are dreaming and sometimes being able to control their actions in said dream. As far as the potential therapeutic benefits, there is no definitive evidence that it can treat any disorder or disease — sleep paralysis included. In fact, there are even some studies that assert lucid dreaming could have negative effects on a person's well-being. As far as astral projection...that has about as much validity as witches and aliens.

I left the lecture feeling angry, and even scammed. That seemed more like a money-making setup than something that could actually help with this disorder that six percent, possibly more, of all people experience chronically, and as many as half will experience at least once in their lifetime. I still don't know exactly what sleep paralysis is or how to help it. It was time to talk to a doctor.