Lucid Dreaming Basics

Lucid Dream: a dream in which you become conscious and aware of the fact that you are in a dream, and then can control your actions as well as influence the dreamscape

First Step: Remembering Dreams

Keep a notebook next to your bed to use as a dream journal so that you can write dreams down in the morning after you wake up. Writing down any part of a dream that you can remember, no matter how small the fragment is, will help your recall tremendously.

Even if you’re not remembering dreams all the time, as long as you have an intention to remember them and you write down whatever you can remember, your recall will improve. Doing things like reading about lucid dreaming or reading over old dreams are especially helpful in getting you to remember more, particularly just before going to sleep. Simply having an interest can get you far.

Second Step: Approaches to Lucidity

Confidence – you may struggle to attain lucidity for awhile, or you may have great success immediately. Whatever the case, do not feel discouraged; eventually you will reach lucidity and have great experiences, and your level of confidence in this fact can greatly affect the outcome of your practice. Feeling discouraged and incapable will only make that true, but this is not true until you believe that it is. Stay positive! It’ll work out.

Reality Checks – do reality checks multiple times a day (10 is the number to shoot for), meaning check to see if you are in a waking or dreaming state. To do this, make the assumption in your mind that you are dreaming; intention/expectation are what allow you to do crazy things in the dream state, so you want to make sure you intend for something out of the ordinary to happen during a reality check, or the reality check might fail and you might not recognize that you are really dreaming. Reality checks can be anything from putting your hand through a desk or a wall (“I expect that when I do this, my hand will go through the wall” and imagine it happening as you do the check), looking at clocks (you might look at the time and see it is 6:45, then look away and expect the time to read 7:30 when you look back at it again), flipping light switches and finding that they don’t work or that weird things happen when you use them, looking at your hands, trying to do things like levitate items (anything that would be impossible in physical waking reality), and lots of others. Anything you can imagine happening can be a reality check; dreams do not rely on physical laws, your mind is in control of your entire experience. There are methods such as keeping a small pebble in your pocket or writing something on your palm, as a means of
reminding yourself to do reality checks throughout the day. The idea is that it becomes habitual enough that you will do a reality check during a dream, and this will alert you to the reality you are in, bringing you to a much higher level of consciousness.

Goals – it can help to have a specific goal in mind regarding what you would like to do once you gain lucidity in a dream state. Literally whatever your mind is capable of conceiving or imagining is made possible by the nature of the mental space you are in during a lucid dream, so just ask yourself “in a world without any limits, what would I do?” You might want to fly, or be a certain kind of animal, or visit the Moon, or breathe underwater (my favorite), ANYTHING. Pick one goal you would like to achieve first, and picture yourself becoming lucid and doing this one thing.

Affirmations – thinking to yourself during the day and especially just before sleep, “tonight I will become lucid in the dream state and take control of my actions” or something along those lines, can be extremely helpful in getting you to a state of lucidity. However, verbal affirmations are even more powerful; when you say something aloud, the unconscious is made much more aware of it, and whether or not your conscious/ego mind has enough focus to recall that intention, your unconscious likely will. Affirmations that are in your own words and very simple and explicit will work the best.

MILD Technique – you may wake up during the night and remember a dream you were just experiencing. A common technique is to recall the dream as fully and vividly as you can, and then imagine yourself back in that same dream becoming lucid. Then, when you allow yourself to fall back asleep, you intend for this to happen, and often it does. What’s most important here is just to imagine it happening as clearly as you can in your mind.

Wake-Back To Bed (WBTB)/Napping to Lucidity – one of the most effective techniques, especially early on in practice, is one where you wake up earlier than you otherwise would have, stay up for a period of time (usually 20–50 minutes), reading/thinking about dreaming/consciousness while you are awake, and then going back to sleep giving yourself at least 90 minutes (one full sleep cycle) of time asleep. As you are falling asleep, imagine yourself becoming lucid in a dream state/affirm to yourself that this will happen. You may need to leave yourself some extra time depending on how long it takes you to fall asleep; the worst thing ever is to push it and then wake up to your alarm after just having become lucid seconds earlier. The idea is that while you are awake, your level of consciousness is increased to prepare you for the day, and you carry that elevated consciousness back into sleep. It takes some determination to pull yourself out of bed early and stay up for that period of time, but it’s worth it.

Critical Mind – the most important approach to lucid dreaming and conscious experiences is simply to be aware and mindful of your environment as much as possible. The more you recognize what is happening around
you instead of mindlessly going about your life and experiences, the more likely it is that you will recognize the
differences between a waking reality and a dream reality (or any other state of consciousness).

Meditation - we will discuss this more as a group, but meditation can be a great help toward achieving
lucidity; having a clear mind and less emotional distractions allows one to more precisely direct their focus within a
dream, as well as more easily achieve the lucid state. There are many approaches to this.

**Third Step**: How to proceed once lucidity is achieved

Emotion - one of the most important things to remember once a lucid state is reached is to stay calm.
Though it sounds unreasonable to expect one not to be extremely excited after becoming conscious in an alternate
state and while doing things that are normally impossible (flying), it is important to regulate one’s emotions. If you
allow your emotions to get too strong and overtake you, you will most likely wake up. As long as you keep this in
mind in the experience, with some practice you will know how to do it effectively.

You will need to continually remind yourself throughout the experience that you are in a lucid dream. If you
allow yourself to get too involved with the content of the dream, you will lose sight of the fact that it is a lucid
dream and lose your elevated level of consciousness.

In terms of maintaining your lucid state, it is beneficial to have a specific goal in mind so that you know
what you want to shoot for; you could say this gives your lucidity more purpose, and with this purpose you are
able to maintain the lucid state longer and more fully. Once you achieve one goal, make a new one.