

Can we train ourselves to control our dreams?

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Credit: xiaphias/Wikipedia

A new national study at the University of Adelaide is investigating how people can mentally prepare themselves to influence their dreams.

Australians are now being sought for the study, which aims to gain a deeper understanding of how people can learn to have "lucid dreams".

"Lucid dreams are rare events in which people know they are asleep and [dreaming](#) while the dream is still happening. This makes it possible for people to affect or control what occurs in the dream," says Psychology PhD student Denholm Aspy.

"Dreams can be incredibly realistic at times – so realistic that it can be hard to tell the difference between a dream and waking life."

Mr Aspy became interested in researching [lucid dreaming](#) after learning how to have such dreams himself.

"For many people, lucid dreams might only occur once or twice in their lives, but there is a growing

body of evidence that suggests it is possible to train people to experience lucid dreams more often, and to have greater memory recall of those dreams," he says.

The new study involves several techniques designed to promote lucid dreams, such as a "reality testing" technique, which involves doing a [simple test](#) several times per day to determine whether someone is awake or dreaming.

"By making reality testing a regular habit in waking life, it becomes likely that people will also perform reality tests while they are dreaming. Hopefully, when this happens they will realise they're dreaming and then find themselves in a lucid dream," Mr Aspy says.

"Not only does lucid dreaming tend to be fun and exhilarating, it also has a wide range of potential scientific and therapeutic uses. For example, previous research suggests people can improve their waking life motor skills by practising them in lucid dreams, which could be valuable for stroke victims or people recovering from physical trauma.

"Lucid dreaming could also be useful as a treatment for chronic nightmares, allowing the dreamer to alter the course of the nightmare or even deliberately wake up from it."

Provided by University of Adelaide

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