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Publisher's note

Research has shown that establishing a habit requires 21 days' practice. That's why Hay House has decided to adapt the work of some of its most prestigious authors into these short, 21-day courses, designed specifically to develop new mastery of subjects such as decoding dreams.

21 Days to Master Decoding Your Dreams draws from Leon Nacson's bestselling *A Stream of Dreams* (Hay House, 2004).

Other titles that will help you to explore further the concepts featured in the 21-day program are listed in Related Resources at the end of this ebook.

Author's note

In order to decode your dreams, you need to be able to remember them. I therefore recommend that you keep a recording device, such as your cellphone, by your bed, so that you can record your dreams by retelling them immediately after you wake up. (If your phone does not have the facility to record voices, check on the Internet to see if you can download an app that can do this.) If you do use a cellphone, ensure that it's switched off—nothing interrupts a wonderful night's sleep more than our smartphones. You may prefer to jot down your dreams in a notebook (your Dream Journal), or type them up on your computer. Whichever method you use, the important thing is to ensure that you record your dreams as soon as you awaken in the morning. It's important to recount the dream in the first person as accurately and in as much detail as possible, using phrases such as "I am . . ." "I feel . . ." "I hear . . ." and "I desire . . ." to help you experience the dream in the moment and capture the emotions.

Introduction

Why do we dream? The truth is that all forms of research, both scientific and intuitive, are still in the process of working this out. All I'm certain of is that if it wasn't a useful and vital experience, we would have stopped dreaming thousands of years ago. Once we came down from the trees, we got rid of our tails and our extra thumb. When we needed to chase food, we developed longer legs. The point I'm making is that through adaptation we got rid of any organs, body parts, or bodily functions that no longer served us in everyday life. Surely we would have done the same with dreams if they didn't serve a useful purpose?

Everything that you're about to read is my personal hypothesis. These thoughts and perceptions have been critiqued by thousands of individuals who have either read my books, or seen me at live events or in the media. I have had the good fortune to work with some of the leading lights in the field of personal growth and self-empowerment. They have had an enormous influence on my work and what I'm presenting here in this book. I like to call myself a dream coach because I'm not interested in interpreting or analyzing people's dreams for them. Rather, I'm writing this book to ensure that within 21 days you'll have all the tools you need to decode your own dreams.

I've also deliberately left out the scientific background on sleep, how often we dream, and information about rapid-eye-movement (REM) sleep and brainwave patterns, because scientific data changes constantly—for example, new research suggests that we do, in fact, dream continuously outside the REM sleep phase, even though it was generally accepted until recently that we only dreamed during REM. What I find particularly interesting is that one could conclude from the latest research that a lot of our dreams are there simply as entertainment—to keep us asleep while our bodies recuperate and repair themselves. After all, if you were minding children and you wanted to keep them occupied while you went about your work in the background, it's likely you would either put on a DVD or turn on a television program to capture their attention. So, what if a lot of our dreams are merely distractions to keep us quiet and fast asleep while our bodies rejuvenate themselves? It's an interesting premise.

But enough of science and back to dream coaching . . . I am like any other coach, whether it's in music, sport, or acting. We can give you the basic skills, but it's up to you—the student—to play in tune, kick that goal,

or recall the right lines on stage. I believe that the best dream dictionary you will ever read is the one you compile yourself, so what follows is my “coaching manual” for dreamers. The purpose of this information is to inspire you to interpret your dreams easily and to your own satisfaction. (However, please note that anyone who has painful recurring dreams or dreams that are medically related should not try to interpret the dreams themselves, but should instead seek professional advice.)

Dream on, my friends . . .

DAY I

The Language of Dreams

Before we can start to decode the meaning of our dreams, we first need to be able to understand their language, which is our topic for today. And here's the good news—this will be the easiest language you'll ever learn because you are the creator, the editor, and the proofreader of the language of your dreams.

One of my favourite sayings is “A picture paints a thousand words.” If you accept this, you have accepted the reason why we dream in symbols. When we're awake, symbols are universal, immediately recognizable, and easily communicated. Anyone on the planet knows that if they see a cross, or a Star of David, or a crescent moon on top of a building, the sign denotes a place of worship for Christians, Jews, and Moslems respectively. If you see a golden, archlike “M” on the high street, you instantly recognize the logo of a global fast-food chain and know you could get some takeaway food there. If you come across the symbol of a large tick on billboards, you immediately realize it represents a famous brand of sportswear and sneakers. We can grasp the significance of a symbol in a second, whereas it takes much longer to comprehend written words describing exactly the same thing.

When we're awake, we have the facility of rational thought. While sleeping, we prefer to use a type of visual, artistic language to express ourselves because images have the unique ability to satisfy all our five senses at once. When we are in the dream state, it's economical to use an image to describe a situation—similar to opting to watch the movie rather than to read the book.

As with any language, it takes time and effort to understand and translate the symbols in our dreams. And just as our spoken languages evolve over time, so do the meanings of the symbols in dream language. For example, if someone sent you spam in the '70s, it would have been a can of processed meat; these days, receiving spam is related to technology and means finding unwanted e-mails in your inbox. Similarly, if you heard a “tweet” years ago, there would have been a feathered friend nearby; today it means a personal status update on a social networking site.

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In the language of dreams, there are few truly universal symbols because every symbol has subjective meaning. Let's take a common symbol like an apple. Imagine in a dream you saw a young maiden hand you a big, juicy apple. If you are a religious person, the symbol may represent forbidden fruit, temptation—and the possibility that you're going to get kicked out of somewhere really nice very soon. For many of us, the apple would be related to a desire to have someone give us an iPhone, an iPad or perhaps a shiny new Mac computer. Then again, maybe the symbolism could be all about inspiration. An apple hit Sir Isaac Newton on the head and he worked out that whatever goes up must come down. Or it may be that the maiden who gave you the apple is warning you that you are hanging around with a dubious individual—"one bad apple spoils the bunch." Perhaps someone is "rotten to the core" . . . So there can be a big difference in meaning between a symbol that you see when you are awake and the same symbol that appears in your dreams. When we're awake we have the good fortune to be able to use words to accompany the symbol, so that we can make its meaning crystal clear. But since the language in dreams is based purely on symbolism, the meaning associated with the symbol varies from individual to individual.

Dream language and its symbols also change constantly according to what is happening in your waking life. A perfect example is the symbol of a police officer. If you dreamed about the officer on the day you got a ticket for a traffic infringement, you would probably feel that your dream was about poor decision-making and diminishing finances. However, if you dreamed about the same officer after you'd walked home through a deserted park at night, you'd be more likely to interpret the dream as being about security and protection: same policeman, two different interpretations depending on what had occurred recently while you were awake. No matter what dream dictionaries say about an image you saw in a dream, I strongly advise you to create your own interpretation. The dream image is only as useful as it is meaningful to you at the time it appears.

Dreams have a very powerful ability to solve the everyday dilemmas we face between our conscience and the need to survive and achieve. Let's look at a simple example. Say you are running late one morning and you need to get to work on time. The coffee is brewing away, but you discover there's only a little bit of milk left at the bottom of the carton. What should you do? You decide to use up the milk and rush off to work. Part of you feels guilty because someone else in the house will now have to go out and buy more milk before they can have their morning coffee. But you justify your action

by telling yourself that your need takes priority and, of course, you can't afford to be late for work. Perhaps you forget all about this incident during the day—on the surface it's no big deal—but that night your dreams offer their own solutions to rebalance the situation. You see imagery in which you are milking lots of cows and you're surrounded by buckets of milk. Everyone who lives in the house with you carries buckets of it away and starts bathing in it. This dream image helps you to resolve your guilt by emphasizing that the milk you used up was not the last drop of milk in the world. The presence of milk in the dream also reminds you to buy extra milk on your next shopping trip. And finally, the dream suggests that you wake up a little bit earlier—the symbol of cows is one of animals that rise early and need to be attended to almost at the break of dawn.

Once you get into the habit of decoding your dreams, you will be amazed at how good they are counterbalancing waking events in this way. Look out for such balancing experiences and symbols in your dreams, especially when you know you've done something unthoughtful or out of character in your waking life, as the dreams will remind you to make amends.

DAY 2

Emotions

Today we're going to explore a topic that is fundamental to the interpretation of dreams—our emotions. It's often difficult to find the time to truly sit down and appreciate our emotions in the rush of everyday life. Yet, at night, we get the opportunity to slow down, to sleep, and to dream. And it's in our dreams—and the change in rhythm of our minds—that we often tap into the emotions that may have been trying unsuccessfully to get our attention during the day.

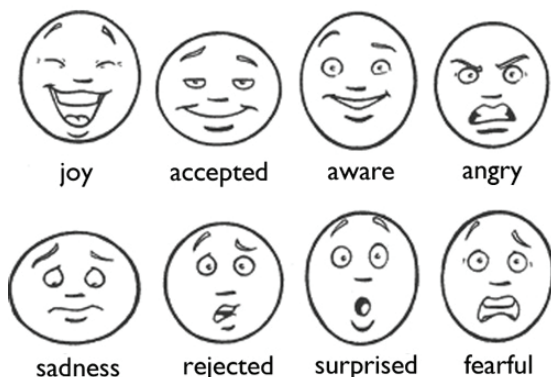
Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." When it comes to dreaming, I believe that emotions are certainly more important than the knowledge we can acquire from our dreams. Identifying the emotions that pop up in our dreams provides a wonderful opportunity to connect with how we feel, and so better understand where we're at and what is happening in our lives. Our dreams may reflect difficult times but, equally, they can reflect joy and happiness.

So what exactly is an emotion? Most of us have an intuitive sense of what an emotion is, but let's get a true definition. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines emotion as "a conscious mental reaction, subjectively experienced as strong feeling, usually directed toward a specific object . . ." Feelings, on the other hand—though the words are often used interchangeably—commonly describe the sensate experience of the emotion: *feeling* sad, angry, joyful, fearful, and so on. Put simply, an emotion is a state of feeling, and a feeling is the sensate experience of the emotion. Phew!

I am fascinated by the approach to the classification of emotions put forward by the theorist Robert Plutchik in 1980, even though it can be regarded as simplistic. He suggested that there are eight primary emotions: joy, acceptance, surprise, fear, sorrow, disgust, expectancy, and anger, and that all other emotions are made up of different combinations of these.

It's not surprising, then, that we often feel confused when we are emotional, which is why it's important to ask yourself: "What exactly am I feeling?" when you wake up from a dream. To assist you, below are eight faces showing the eight primary emotions that form the basis of identifying the

feelings we have while dreaming. (Facial expressions were used to identify emotions as far back as 1884, when William James identified them as behavioral changes.)



When we identify a feeling, we become aware of what brings a particular emotion— joy, peace, wonder, and so on—into our lives. And identifying a particularly difficult emotion can help us to find out what (if anything) we need to do to “work through” it. Often, the best way to work through an emotion is to simply allow it to be, to accept its presence. But it is also often helpful to define the emotion and to grasp what it actually means. For example, if you are feeling jealous, it’s helpful to know that jealousy is intolerance of a perceived rivalry or advantage. You can then explore the feeling in the context of the dream by asking yourself what might have triggered it. By getting in touch with the emotion in this way, you can often discover the reason behind the emotion.

It’s helpful to remember that every so-called negative emotion has the potential to be a positive one. An emotion is only energy. Like a magnet, with positive and negative ends, we all have a mixture of positive and negative emotions. We don’t judge each end of the magnet as good or bad; similarly, it’s counterproductive to judge an emotion as good or bad.

To help you work better with the emotions that accompany your dreams, I encourage you to spend a few minutes each morning to sit and think about them before you get up. Often, we’re not quite sure how to label or define a feeling or an emotion. To assist you, I suggest that you familiarize yourself with the alphabetical list of commonly experienced emotions, below. Sometimes, we can’t identify an emotion because it is a blend of two or

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more feelings. For example, if you see yourself not getting the job that you were hoping for, you may feel anger, disappointment and, at the same time, relief. The emotion you feel is a blend of all your feelings. Use the list in the same fashion as you would approach a buffet: you're not certain of what to eat, so you browse what's offered; then you make your selection and decide what ends up on your plate. By exploring the different combinations of feelings that make up the emotions on the list, you can gain a much better understanding of your own emotions.

Getting in touch with your emotions will help you to clarify your dreams, so that you can center your thoughts and begin your day with insights that bring self-empowerment.

List of Emotions

Acceptance	Genuineness	Paranoia
Agitation	Gloominess	Passion
Alertness	Gluttony	Patience
Altruism	Gratitude	Pessimism
Ambition	Grief	Pity
Anger	Guilt	Pleasure
Anxiety	Ignorance	Positive feelings
Apathy	Ill treated (feeling)	Praise
Arousal	Impatience	Protection
Attachment	Innocence	Rationality
Blessings	Insensitivity	Reassurance
Bliss	Inspiration	Relaxation
Boredom	Intuition	Resentment
Calmness	Invincibility	Respect
Charity	Irrationality	Sadness
Cheerfulness	Irritation	Secretiveness
Clarity	Jealousy	Selfishness
Compassion	Joy	Self-pity
Composure	Judgment	Serenity
Confidence	Lack	Sin
Confusion	Laziness	Strength

Contentment	Lethargy	Success
Cursed (feeling)	Liberation	Suspicion
Depression	Loneliness	Teariness
Detachment	Luck	Tension
Disappointment	Lust	Thoughtfulness
Dissatisfaction	Miserliness	Trust
Empowerment	Moderation	Vagueness
Failure	Modesty	Vanity
Faithfulness	Negativity	Victimization
Fear	Negligence	Vulnerability
Flexibility	Obsession	Weakness
Forgiveness	Obstinacy	Worry
Frigidity	Optimism	Worthlessness
Fulfillment	Pain	

DAY 3

Popular Expressions

Today we're going to look at how popular expressions appear in our dreams. No matter what language we speak, we all use popular expressions, metaphors, and anecdotes to assist in getting our message across. It's often much easier to make a point if there is a thought-provoking statement or a humorous story attached to what we're trying to convey. The Scottish poet and writer Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Don't write merely to be understood. Write so that you cannot possibly be misunderstood." That advice is perfect for our waking life, but unfortunately we hardly ever write anything down in dreams. Instead, as we saw in Day 1, we use images because it's far easier and quicker to grasp pictures than words. However, the price we pay for using imagery is that we can misinterpret it, as symbols can be viewed in many different ways. One particularly useful tool that can help us to decipher the symbols in our dreams is to consider whether they are literally visual representations of popular expressions.

Let's take a look at an example. In a dream you see yourself covered in dirt. By running through some popular expressions you may be able to quickly work out why you appeared in this state. Let's say we dismiss the obvious—that you didn't have time to shower before you went to bed and you were actually feeling dirty. You could start by thinking about whether you have been given a difficult or unpleasant task by someone and you feel you got the "dirty end of the stick." Or could it be that someone has "done the dirty" on you, or that you have misrepresented someone and done the dirty on them? Or then again, it may be that you are a little lazy or you've been neglecting your garden and it's time to "get your hands dirty." Or do you feel that someone is currently being dishonest, unfair, or not acting appropriately? If so, ask yourself, "Is someone 'playing dirty' with me?" If you see yourself and all your clothes covered in dirt, it could be an indication that someone is passing on personal information about you or your family—they are talking about things that should be kept within a small group and should never go public. Therefore, you may feel that someone is "washing your dirty linen in public."

I hope you are now getting the idea of how popular expressions can appear in a literal way in dreams. Let's do one more to make sure that we all understand the value of popular expressions and how they relate to dreams.

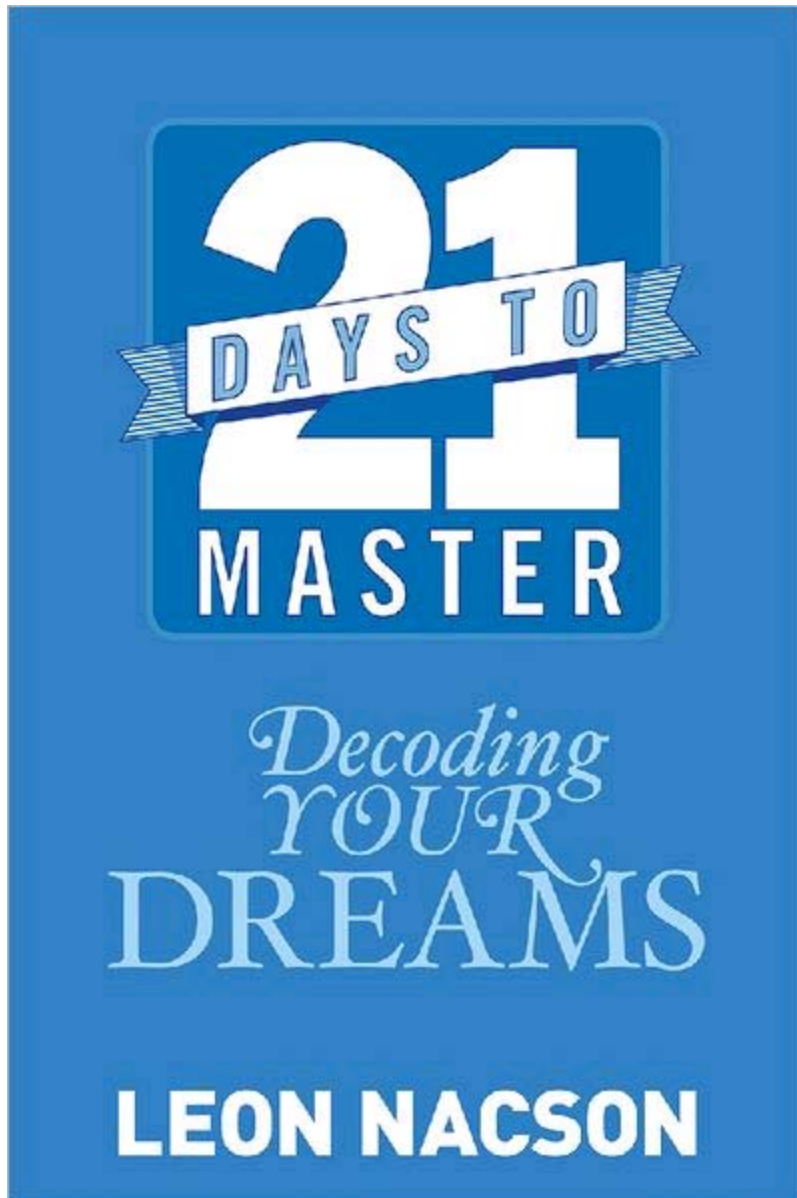
Let's imagine you saw a vinyl record in your dream. This would be really unusual in this age of iTunes, MP3 players and iPods. It seems such a

long time ago that we used to buy our music on vinyl or even on CDs. These days, downloading our favorite tunes is so much simpler and more convenient. The record in the dream could have career implications if you are a DJ—it could be telling you that you're out of touch. But for the rest of us, it could mean many different things, so we'll try referring to some popular expressions. For example, it could be that you want something to be noted and recorded as a true fact—that you have a desire to put something “on the record.” Or perhaps it signifies a wish to keep things private between you and a small group of trusted individuals—publicly you have an opinion that you need to stick to for certain reasons, but privately you have a different opinion, so you confide in them “off the record.” Or it may be that recently some injustice has been done to you. You know the truth and this particular situation is annoying you. You are hesitant to act because you feel there could be more repercussions, but your dream is telling you to “set the record straight.” Finally, do you have a desire to achieve something and be recognized for it? This could be in the field of sport or endurance, knowledge, or creativity. If so, perhaps you have a desire to hold a “world record.”

By using “dirt” and “record” as examples of symbols that come up in dreams, we can see that there is a huge range of potential interpretations, feelings, and conclusions that we can come to if we search for popular expressions.

When decoding your dreams it's very important not to be bound solely by the language you speak in your everyday waking life. Because of the Internet, movies, and television programs, popular expressions from many different languages and countries seep into our everyday experiences. For example, most of us have come across *bon appétit*, a French phrase we use to wish our fellow diners enjoyment of their meal; and “hitting a home run,” an American baseball term used globally to describe someone who is having a successful streak. Anyone who has an ethnic background should be particularly aware of foreign expressions that they may have heard from their parents or grandparents. I come from a Mediterranean background and my grandparents always used to say, “*L'occhio del padrone ingrassa il cavallo*,” which, translated from the Italian, means “The eye of the owner fattens the horse.” This indicates to me that if I keep a close eye on my business and my relationships, they will grow larger and stronger. So, if I see a skinny horse in my dream, it tells me that I'm not paying enough attention to my business affairs or to my family and friends.

Through exploring popular expressions, idioms and metaphors, we can reveal so much more than the obvious. This makes them very useful tools in our quest to decode our dreams.



ORDER *21 Days to Master Decoding Your Dreams* from your favorite bookseller online.

