

“Our dreams must be stronger than our memories.

*We must be pulled by our dreams,
rather than pushed by our memories.”*

-Jesse Jackson

I hardly ever remember my dreams, in fact I could say with confidence that I don't dream very often. Since I began this project and decided to record my dreams, I've been dreaming more frequently, or maybe just remembering them more often. Is it possible to be making a conscious effort to dream? Am I making a conscious effort to not dream? In fourth grade I began going to Score Educational Center to challenge myself outside of the classroom, as I was ahead of the learning curve at school. One afternoon I had a sixth grade level lesson on dreams and I remember the program specifically stating that everyone dreams every night. Maybe not all night, but every person experiences at least one dream every night that they sleep. Is it normal that I remember that? Is it normal that I remember exactly where I was sitting and that the template of the program was a purple-gray color and featured a hideous font? How is it possible that I still remember that exact moment, but I can't remember a dream I had last night? How can I retain small details from fourth grade, but not all information from significant events that took place last year? All of these are questions that surfaced during my investigation and that I seek to provide answers for in the following paragraphs.

I can never decide if I think I have a good memory. Sure, I remember a lot of people's names and within a week or so of Oxbow, I knew everyone's first and last name, in addition to where they came from. My main worry with sharing my knowledge was always that someone would find it creepy, but if my memory is *that* good, why is it that I can't remember to do what my mom asks? Selective recall, or confirmatory memory, is when “someone has sought out and interpreted evidence in a neutral manner, [and] still remember[s] it selectively to reinforce their expectations.” Though my mom and I are rarely in conversations serious enough for any aspect of it to be called evidence, I do believe that the previously stated definition applies to me, at least somewhat, and maybe in just a generally less serious matter. Most aspects of selective memory or confirmatory memory suggest that it is directly associated with the suppression of bad memories, but I wouldn't consider my mom asking me seven times to put away my clothes *that* bad of a memory.

Robin Edelstein, a U-M assistant psychology professor, focuses on social/personality psychology, memories and emotions. She says "While avoiding things can be a helpful short-term strategy, not paying attention to certain things for extended periods of time might be bad for your mental health with consequences for your physical health." I realize that in this quote she is speaking of those who have experienced real trauma and are suppressing their horrible memories. I am in no way saying that my

chores are comparable, but I do believe that my mom would agree with Edelstein and conclude that I'm going to wish I had listened to her when I have horrible cleaning habits in college. Indeed, selective memory does exist and there is plenty of evidence and EEG scans to back it up. That being said, after researching, I feel wrong self-diagnosing and putting myself in the same category as victims of sexual abuse and other things far more severe and important than keeping my room clean. Maybe it's a teenager thing—I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one who doesn't remember everything their parents ask.

I've had an overwhelming amount of dreams that later came true in real life. Granted, not every detail of the dream later occurred, but often times small details, instances or quotes came into reality. My experience with this phenomenon has grown so severe that I've developed a fear of bad dreams. Not because I'm scared to be awakened or because I dream of zombies and clowns, but because I've come to live my life differently due to a fright that my unpleasant and extremely realistic dream just might come true. Through the process of research and self-reflection, I am looking for further explanation of how my own brain works, in addition to filtering through my thoughts, dreams, past, present and future, pinpointing importance and identifying experiences that have made me who I am today.

Essentially, dreams are a collection of our daily memories, what we hope for, what we're scared of and what we think about from day to day. According to Dr. Allan Hobson, we only dream during REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, and we indefinitely dream four to five times a night. During NREM (Non Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, our body's main senses and functions are slowed, our consciousness is reduced and we have inability to dream. Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud's theories on dreams are some of the most widely known and appreciated. Freud believed the dream to be composed of two parts: manifest and latent content. The manifest content can be thought of as what a person would remember as soon as they wake up, or what they would consciously describe to someone else while recalling the dream. Freud suggested that the manifest content contained no meaning whatsoever because it was a disguised representation of the true meaning behind the dream. Effectively, whether or not people realize or remember, they dream. Also, even if people have bad dreams or good dreams, it's likely that what they remember are not even the true facts of the dream. That being known, I still have a fear of dreaming simply because I worry that my bad dreams will come true.

I'd like to call myself a novice lucid dreamer. The way I understand it to work, lucid dreaming has many levels. An advanced dreamer might be capable of consciously controlling exactly what he or she is doing in their dreams, whereas a "novice" dreamer, like myself, simply consciously dreams. For my final art project, I'm exploring the connection between dreams and memory and their preservation. To symbolize my exploration, I'm making a mobile of 36 hanging jars. Each jar will contain items or ideas that resonate with me from a memory or a dream that is stored in my brain. When I began my mobile project, I was determined to be so organized that I desired to pre-write every dream or memory I was to later re-create in a jar. However the idea of recording and recreating dreams I was having during the process of my project was later presented to me and I was intrigued by it, but also hit with a heavy worry. How can I record and recreate my dreams when I don't even remember them when I wake up? Is this just a

way for me to undercover procrastinate? Like always, I started this project with lists. I made a list of 20 life dreams, 20 sleeping dreams and 20 memories that I would later cut down to twelve and recreate in my jars. When I decided to record some of my sleeping dreams as I went, I became stressed and I felt as if my work was unfinished from the start. However, I sat in bed that first night and I told myself that I had to dream, and that I had to remember my dreams, or my project would not turn out the way I wanted it to. And so, I dreamed. Since then, I've had an array of different dreams. Some involving my project itself, some where I'm small, and some where I don't look like me, some where I can only remember one thing, and some where I remember everything.

Though I haven't yet had time to deeply apply my new found information to myself, I do believe that I've come across a plethora of knowledge to better guide me in my real search, finding out who I am and how I work. Yes, many of my questions have been answered, some very well and some not so well, but the more important part is the number of questions that have been raised as a result. I feel as though this topic isn't going to be something that I just "wrote a paper on once", or at least I hope not. Because I feel that this has aided me so strongly in self-discovery, I can only see myself attempting to learn more, and answer more of my posed questions, if not all.

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