

# DREAM WORK

(from the *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, Harvest House, 1996)

## INFO AT A GLANCE

**Description.** Dream work is the attempt to explore and interact with dreams for psychological insight in psychotherapy; for spiritual insight in “Christian” dream work; or in manipulating dreams for occult revelations or “spiritual growth” in New Age practices. Dream work may also be used as an adjunct to physical healing.

**Founder.** Unknown; dream work practices and techniques extend into antiquity.

**How does it claim to work?** Dream work claims that our dreams powerfully reflect or influence spiritual, psychological, and even physical realities. In New Age practice, dreams can be explored and even manipulated (as in lucid dream work) for occult revelations, spirit contact, astral travel, and to induce altered states of consciousness. In psychotherapy, exploring dreams may open doors to the “unconscious mind” to reveal and help resolve hidden emotional conflicts or other problems. In “Christian” dream work, dreams are seen as signs or even personal messages or revelations from God; therefore, exploring dreams may be seen as the equivalent to “studying” God’s Word. In physical healing, dreams may be seen as a means to reveal hindrances to the healing process and assist in the proper treatment

**Scientific evaluation.** Considerable research has been done on the nature, purpose, and meaning of dreams; however, much still remains tentative or uncertain. There is a legitimate science of clinically investigating dreams and the influence they have. Nevertheless, scientific research into dreams must not be confused with New Age dream work.

**Examples of occult potential:** Dream work can be used to foster many New Age goals, from altering consciousness and developing psychic powers to spirit contact. It is used in many occult disciplines, such as astrology, and in shamanism and other forms of sorcery.

**Major problems.** The value of dream work to healing is unsubstantiated. In psychotherapy, dream work interpretation is often subjective and contradictory. In psychotherapeutic and Christian dream work, or in New Age occult manipulation of dreams, the practice may have unexpected or unforeseen negative consequences.

**Biblical/Christian evaluation.** Divinely inspired dreams are relatively rare and are given by God for His purposes to accomplish His will; they cannot be induced or manipulated by men. Normal dreams are not to be given a spiritual significance they do not possess. God’s use of dreams in the Bible stands in contrast to their use in psychotherapy, Christian dream work, and occult dream work.

**Potential dangers.** Unintended occult influences. Some researchers have speculated as to possible harmful psychological consequences from personal dream exploration.