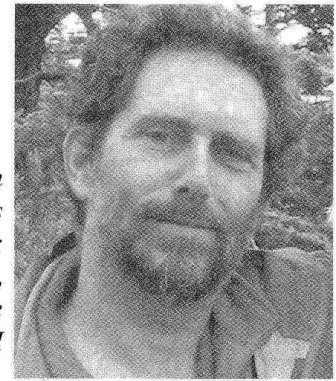

BECOMING LUCID

By Lincoln Stoller



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Lucidity

In August I published *Becoming Lucid, Self-Awareness in Sleeping and Waking Life*. The book is a hypnosis-enhanced tutorial on how to gain control of your levels of awareness. At the end of this article, there is a link where you can download a free digital copy of the book.

As hypnotherapists, we're in the awareness business. The trouble is, we don't really know our business, nor does anyone else. We do know this: with greater awareness, our clients gain greater self-control, balance, and mental health, and we do, too.

Hypnosis has been compared to sleep, which is ludicrous since both sleep and hypnosis are different, complex psychophysical states. They have some narrow similarities in their interface with conscious awareness and they both involve altered states. There is a correspondence between light hypnosis and falling asleep (hypnagogia), dreaming, and waking up (hypnopomina).

The starting point for *Becoming Lucid* is to recognize that waking states are also hypnotic states. That is, depending on what form of trance you're in there are different kinds of lucidity you can gain. No matter what your state, there are other states into which you can expand your awareness. In the book, I teach you how to become more lucid in four states of consciousness: hypnagogic, dreaming, hypnopompic, and awake.

You are not simply more or less aware, you are aware of different things in different states. Becoming lucid means gaining perspective and insight into, and maybe conscious control over your unconscious and subconscious. This gaining of awareness is what we facilitate as hypnotherapists, so the question of how to become lucid is professionally relevant to us.

Learning

Hypnosis utilizes trance states for learning, and this learning goes in various directions: we bring subconscious content to consciousness and affect subconscious content through suggestion, reflection, or insight. Everything we do involves different states, often simultaneously, and there is no reason hypnosis cannot aid in the learning of anything.

In *Becoming Lucid* I use hypnosis to teach lucid transitions between sleeping and waking states. Each of the book's nine chapters ends with a hypnotic induction that takes you into a trance, and leads you through the suggested transitions. These inductions are scripted, but since a written induction is not a real induction they are also provided as audio files available on the internet. In this regard, the book is both read and listened to.

An audiobook version is also available, but audiobooks are entirely aural. Ideally, a combination of awake-conscious read-

ing and subconscious listening covers the material more broadly. I am also concerned that people might listen to the inductions in the audiobook while operating machinery, in spite of my admonitions not to. This is not such a problem with the internet-accessed inductions as each must be downloaded and played separately.

This is a new approach to conveying information. It's not strictly teaching because the information is not put into you, it's drawn out of you. I'm mentoring creativity through the use of hypnotic induction. This could be used to teach anything, especially skills that involve a combination of different states of consciousness, as almost every skill does.

Dreams

Becoming Lucid's primary audience is people interested in lucid dreaming. A lucid dream is a dream in which you become aware that you're dreaming and consciously take control. There is a subculture of lucid dreamers, mostly young people frustrated by the limitations of the reality they're growing into, but also including researchers, psychologists, and spiritual explorers.

To all these people, I make the point that you cannot know what lucidity is. You can never know if you're awake in a dream, or asleep in waking life. Saying, "I'm awake," or "I'm asleep" is a declaration that doesn't change anything. All reality is a construction and there is only one state that you are aware of at any moment: you are it. Integrated, dissociated, fugue, alter, schizoid, medium, channel, multiple or family constellation states all exist as one reality at one point in time. If they don't, they are states of chaos.

No matter how awake you are, you can always "awake" again, and this happens frequently to lucid dreamers. There have been accounts of seven levels of repeatedly "waking up" into a state that turns out to be another dream. Similarly, no matter how "in control" you think you are, you are not, really. Lucidity, like free will, cannot be defined. Ultimately, this leads us to reflect on the nature of mind and the psychotic state.

Putting this minor detail aside, you can have a night-time dream in which you come to the realization that you're dreaming and take control of your dream. You can fly and jump through walls. The prospect of doing this appeals to many people as a form of virtual reality that has all the emotional benefits of real reality, and more. However, as I take pains to point out, this is not necessarily a good idea.

Subconscious

Your subconscious mind is the primary source of your emotions and decisions. Dreams are finally being recognized as a

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doorway to your subconscious, not necessarily into or out of it—as that presupposes the ability to move between—but a reflection of what the subconscious contains. As hypnotherapists, we recognize that dreams and hypnotic trance states are cousins. Both let us look into the engine of our mind.

Also as hypnotherapists, we're rearranging the circuits of consciousness. We tread carefully in the china shop of the subconscious. I see myself as an electrician standing in a bucket of water. We know that repetition leads to habit, and not all habits are good. And while some habits are manifestly unhealthy, most habits are just expressions of limited awareness, reflex or unconscious patterns.

We are mechanics of the subconscious, called fix starters and unstick accelerators. If dreams reveal the mind's mechanisms, then the value of just jumping in and indulging oneself is questionable. There are clearly better and worse things to be done. Asking for an audience with God may be a good thing, whereas shooting your boss might not be.

One of my motivations in writing *Becoming Lucid* was to call a time-out for all this virtual reality enthusiasm and to suggest that some reflection might be in order. Just as technology has put more power into our hands than we know what to do with, perhaps we should acquire more wisdom and maturity before we blow the hinges off the doors to our subconscious.

Self-Awareness

I conclude that lucidity is not a noun, it's a verb. Depending on what state you're in there are different steps you can take to reach a larger, different, or mixed awareness state. First, you need to become aware of what you are aware of. Then, you need to consider how your awareness might be incomplete, incorrect, biased, or preconceived.

We take these to be natural questions from the perspective of our conscious state, at least we think we know what these questions mean. But even so, even from our conscious state, there is a lot that we don't know, can't see, and are not aware of. Mindfulness is one approach, lucidity is another.

From our less-than-conscious states, these questions can be difficult to grasp, and this is where the fun begins. It has been argued that our less conscious states are the conscious states of animals. If this is the case, then we're moving into the realm of animal communication at the same time that we're entering into deeper communication with ourselves. If you can become more in touch with your deeper emotional states, can you also connect more deeply with your dog or cat? How about with the earth?

This is a healthy spiritual exercise. The question of how you become more aware from a less aware state requires something that you do not yet have. How do you get what you don't have? Clearly, you cannot be taught what you cannot conceive of. How do you learn anything that's beyond your grasp?

To become lucid is to call for guidance, and this is definitely something we could all use more of. This does seem to be how learning happens: you place yourself in a position to receive it and then you call for it. Somehow, understanding emerges from confusion. The fascinating question is where this comes from? We'd all like to know but I'm not sure we can. Steven LaBerg, one of

the founding figures in the study of lucid dreaming, recounts it this way:

"At the words, 'letting go,' I realize that I am dreaming, and the real solution is to trust and let go. As I do so, leaping into the beautiful sunrise sky, I am overwhelmed with feeling, and awaken with tears of joy."

To get your copy of *Becoming Lucid, Self-Awareness in Sleeping and Waking Life*, go to <https://www.mindstrengthbalance.com/becominglucidbook>