

## Dreaming

### What Are Dreams?

*Dreams are defined as a sequence of images, emotions, and thoughts that pass through a sleeping person's mind.*

- Dreams are often characterized by their hallucinatory imagery, discontinuities, and incongruities
- REM Sleep is when most dreaming occurs.
- Everyone dreams, although almost 95% of dreams are forgotten.
- Lucid dreaming occurs when we are aware that we are dreaming.
- The quality of the dream varies vastly.

### What Do We Dream?

- Sigmund Freud believed that the content of our dreams revealed much about the unconscious mind.
- He called the remembered story line of a dream its **manifest content** and that the imagery and events of the manifest content served as symbols related to the **latent content**, or the underlying meaning of the dream.
- In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud described the purpose of the latent content of dreams was to express the desires of the unconscious mind (see wish fulfillment theory below).
- Sometimes dreams recall the events of the day
- Sometimes stimuli from the outside world intrude on dreams (ever had your alarm clock go off and in your dream you cannot find the source of the noise?)
- While our brains can detect outside stimuli during sleep, contrary to popular belief one cannot learn content from an audio source while sleeping.

### Why Do we Dream?

**There are a number of theories as to WHY we dream, but all psychologists agree that we NEED to dream.**

1. **Wish Fulfillment:** Sigmund Freud suggested that dreams provide a psychic safety valve to discharge unacceptable feelings. The dream's manifest (apparent) content may also have symbolic meanings (latent content) that signify our unacceptable feelings.
2. **Information Processing:** Dreams may help sift, sort, and fix a day's experiences in our memories.
3. **Physiological Function:** Dreams provide the sleeping brain with periodic stimulation to develop and preserve neural pathways. Neural networks of newborns are quickly developing; therefore, they need more sleep.
4. **Activation-Synthesis Theory:** Suggests that the brain engages in a lot of random neural activity. Dreams make sense of this activity.
5. **Cognitive Development:** Some researchers argue that we dream as a part of brain maturation and cognitive development.