

## What Dreams Reveal

By Patti Teel  
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For many years, my daughter's last words to me before going to sleep have been, "Good-night Mom; sleep with the angels." Whether or not you share our belief that angels and guides visit us in our dreams, it's indisputable that dreams frequently reveal wisdom and understanding.

Throughout history, dreams have fascinated mankind and their magic and mystery hold a special allure for children. Dreams can be wacky and wonderful, or they can be foreboding and frightening. More than just fanciful imaginary happenings; they are projections of our inner state and can reveal fears, feelings and fantasies.

Encourage your children to try to remember their dreams and share them with you. This will give you a greater understanding of your child while giving your child a greater understanding of himself. It will also help children learn to pay attention to subtle messages and to develop their intuition.

### Exploring the Dream World:

- Have your child keep a journal or a drawing pad next to the bed. Encourage children to draw a picture or write about their dreams when they first wake up in the morning. (You may even decide to delve into your own world of dreams by keeping your own sleep journal by your bedside.) In the morning, get in the habit of taking a few minutes to share your dreams with each other. Dreams are delightful puzzles filled with clues that take the form of symbols. In time, children can learn to thoughtfully interpret their dreams in order to solve their everyday problems. But don't try *too* hard to analyze your child's dreams. Just enjoy a delightful time of sharing and laughter; it may set the mood for the entire day.
- Don't worry if your child is telling you about a dream and it turns into storytelling. Young children have a hard time understanding exactly where the dream memories end and the imagination frequently takes over.
- When your children are dealing with a dilemma or a difficult decision, suggest that they pay close attention to their dreams. Depending on your belief system, you may wish to advise them to pray or ask their inner knowing, guardian angel, guide, spirit, or God to give them a message in their dreams.
- If your child has frequent nightmares, try to cue good dreams through positive thoughts and visualization. Encourage your children to think of something wonderful just before they go to sleep. If your child asks you what to think about, feel free to make a suggestion to jump-start his or her imagination. Tell your child to be the director and star of his own movie—choosing things just the way he wants them to be. When a child's mind is filled with positive thoughts and images just before falling asleep, they can often enter the subconscious and be carried over into dreams.

### Did you know?

- Sleep is categorized into two basic types: *REM sleep* and *non-REM sleep*. Our bodies need both types of sleep to be fully rested. REM sleep, or rapid eye movement sleep, is so named because the eyeballs make fast lateral movements under the lids. In REM sleep, the slow brain wave patterns of non-REM sleep are replaced by fast, low-amplitude waves. Because the brain waves are similar to those when we're awake, REM sleep is also called *paradoxical sleep*.

## TIME OUT WITH PATTI TEEL

DREAM THE DREAM AND STEP INTO IT

- Although children can also dream during other stages of sleep, the most vivid dreaming, including nightmares, takes place during REM sleep.
- Children spend more time in REM sleep than adults, and it's the stage of sleep when the information encountered during the day is processed.
- When children wake up or are aroused during this phase of their sleep cycle, they are usually coherent and can talk about their interrupted dream.
- When children are deprived of REM sleep, their bodies will try to make up for it by spending more time in REM sleep on subsequent nights.
- Because REM sleep is so important, losing even an hour of sleep can have a profound effect. Studies show that the more REM sleep we get, the more likely we are to wake up in a positive and upbeat mood. When children are deprived of REM sleep, their memory and mood is adversely affected and they are likely to become irritable, moody, and fatigued.

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Dubbed "The Dream Maker" by People magazine, Patti Teel is a former teacher and the creator of an award winning relaxation audio series for children. Her book, *The Floppy Sleep Game*, gives parents techniques to help their children relax, deal with stress and fall asleep. She is a popular speaker and presents innovative workshops for parents, children, and health professionals. Get R&R tips and sign up for her newsletter at [www.pattiteel.com](http://www.pattiteel.com). You can listen to her online radio show at [www.timeoutwithpattiteel.com](http://www.timeoutwithpattiteel.com).