

## DREAMS

A young Albert Einstein dreamed he was sliding down a snow covered hill. As he began to move faster and faster, he looked up and saw that the appearance of the stars was changing. Einstein then awoke and spent the next 12 years thinking about the meaning of this dream, which eventually led him to the theory of relativity, also known as  $E=MC^2$ .

There are numerous stories of scientists being inspired by the creative power of dreams. James Watson, for instance, said that he discovered the shape of DNA after dreaming of spiral staircases. And Friedrich August Kekulé dreamed about a serpent eating its tail, which led him to discover the shape of the benzene molecule.

Artists have also taken inspiration from their dreams. Paul McCartney of the Beatles woke up with the song "Yesterday" playing in his head. And the story for the famous book Frankenstein came to author Mary Shelly in her dream.

Salvador Dali, the Spanish surrealist, also used dreams as inspiration for his paintings, and had a quirky technique for remembering those dreams. He would position a plate on the floor and would fall asleep in a chair holding a spoon over the plate. As he nodded off, the spoon would drop, arousing him with the dream images still fresh in his mind.

No one knows how many discoveries and creative connections are made in our dreams, but are not remembered. Most of us can only recollect a small percentage of our dreams, but remembering our dreams is a skill we can actually develop.

Some people use dream diaries to capture and record their dreams in writing as soon as they wake up. As people cultivate this habit of jotting down their dreams every morning, their ability to recall their dreams grows.

The ability to record all the inspiration that comes to you in your dreams while you're catching some Zs might be on the horizon. Recently, scientist Yukiyasu Kamitani measured people's brain activity while they were dreaming. He woke each person up over 200 times, and recorded what they said they saw in their dreams.

Next, Kamitani showed these same people hundreds of images on video while measuring their brain waves to come up with an image brain wave pattern code. He used this code to create a program that could successfully read the subject of that person's dreams.

Kamitani describes this technique as being primitive. Every person is different, so the code for one person doesn't work for another person's dreams. It isn't able to ascertain any details such as color, shape or feelings, but as this technology becomes more sophisticated, one day it might just do the trick. Then we can all harness the power of our dreams for inspiration.