

Shrink Rap radio #189, January 2, 2009, Lucid Dreaming with Robert Waggoner

**David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Robert Waggoner**

(Transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Amy Wang)

**Excerpt:** *My view is much like, I believe, the Buddhist view is. It's that becoming more consciously aware is for the better. And even becoming more consciously aware in the dreaming is for the better, because the greater awareness you bring to situations, the greater growth you have, the quicker that you have growth and the deeper the understanding can be.*

**Introduction:** That was the voice of my guest, Robert Waggoner. He's the author of the 2008 book, *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self* and the co-editor of the quarterly publication, *The Lucid Dream Exchange*. Lucid dreaming refers to the ability to become consciously aware of the dream state while dreaming. Those who have experienced this unique state are likely to agree with the first scientist to prove lucid dreaming, Dr. Keith Herne, who said philosophically, scientifically, it is simply mind blowing. Over the past 30 years, Robert has logged more than 1,000 lucid dreams and deeply explored the dream state's potential for information, healing, and creativity, while consciously aware. In the book, Robert explains how to become consciously aware in dreams, maintain your awareness, and actively engage the dream environment—plus the apparent awareness behind the dream. A summa cum laude graduate of Drake University with a degree in psychology, Robert also is President-Elect of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. Now, here's the interview.

**Dr. Dave:** Robert Waggoner, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

**Robert Waggoner:** Thanks David. I'm glad to be here.

**Dr. Dave:** I'm not sure if you remember my conducting a brief interview with you a couple years ago at the International Association for the Study of Dream conference that was at Sonoma State University, but I'm happy to have the opportunity to view you at greater length now.

**Robert Waggoner:** Well, great. Yeah, and I appreciate being back.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Actually, I sat in on a couple of the presentations that you did there and they were very interesting. And since that time, you've become President of IASD and you've got a 2009 book on lucid dreaming that's just now coming out, which makes you doubly interview worthy.

**Robert Waggoner:** Well, thanks. And I should mention that I'm President-Elect of IASD, assuming everything goes as I hope, I'll be President beginning July of 2009.

**Dr. Dave:** Ok, well, that's pretty exciting. I think we can pretty much assume that my listeners will know that the term, lucid dream, refers to a dream in which you become aware that you're dreaming and at least some of the time can make some conscious choices inside the dream. Do I have that right or do you want to polish that apple a bit?

**Robert Waggoner:** That's the basic idea. A lucid dream is when you become consciously aware, when you're dreaming, that you're dreaming. And once you become consciously aware that you're dreaming, then you can think about the choices that you could make in the dream, direct the dream in a way you'd like it to go, and actually experiment and do a lot of interesting things.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, well before we go deeper into the topic and your book, let me ask you how you first got into the study of dreams, and then into lucid dreaming specifically.

**Robert Waggoner:** Boy, you know, probably the first book on dreams I read was one by Fritz Pearls, the Gestalt therapist.

**Dr. Dave:** Sure.

**Robert Waggoner:** This was back in the early 70s I think. One of my brothers had come home from college, I was still in high school, I think, and had a book about Gestalt therapy. That was my first introduction to dreams. Probably though, the way I got into lucid dreaming was by reading the third book by Carlos Castaneda called *Journey to Ixtlan*.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh yes, I remember those Carlos Castaneda books very well.

**Robert Waggoner:** Right, and in the third book, his teacher Don Juan, gave him a technique for becoming consciously aware in the dream state. And I was just a junior high school, but I was interested in that sort of thing, and so within a few days' practice, I had my first consciously aware dream that I had incubated.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, his instruction, as I recall, was to remember to look at your hands in the dream. Is that how you did it?

**Robert Waggoner:** Right, you know, I was a little bit uncertain when I was reading the book, exactly what the technique was. And so what I did was this;

before I went to sleep, I'd look at the palm of my hands and because I knew about the power of suggestion, I'd tell myself as I looked at my hands, "Tonight in my dreams, I'll see my hands and realize I'm dreaming." And so I'd do that for four or five minutes until I got sleepy and then I'd turn of the light and go to sleep. And about three or four nights after doing this consistently, I was having the dream that I was walking through the hallway of my high school, when all of the sudden, my hands popped right up in front of my face. And just at that moment, I realize, "Oh my God, it's my hands. This is a dream." And I was just stunned to be aware in the dreaming.

**Dr. Dave:** Did that pull you out? I know the few times I've had lucid dreams, I got so excited by the fact that, "Oh my goodness, I'm in a dream!" That it woke me up. Did that happen to you?

**Robert Waggoner:** You know, that was something that I learned later on is that you really have to modulate your emotions when you become consciously aware in a dream state. Just like you discovered, David, people who get too excited normally just awaken themselves up because they get so excited. And so, in that first lucid dream of mine, I think at first I was just too amazed by it all. That the idea that everything around me was a dream, that all these people that looked like my high school schoolmates, or just actually dream figures, it was just a mind blowing observation. So, my first lucid dream lasted quite awhile because I remembered another instruction of Don Juan, that was when the dream started to get shaky, or started to seem like it was gonna fall apart, to look back at your hands and stabilize the dream. And so I got to a part of the lucid dream where it started to get shaky, and I looked back at my hands and that stabilized the lucid dream. So actually, my first consciously sought lucid dream actually lasted a relatively long time.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow. You know, I'm wondering, if the fact that you were in high school, and you were young, so you were getting started at this at a certainly younger age than when I first made my attempts—when I first heard about it. And I'm just wondering if maybe starting early, before a lot of "adult" ideas about the nature of reality have rigidified. Do you know of any evidence or research that might support my hypothesis that maybe starting young would be helpful?

**Robert Waggoner:** I share your feeling. I do feel it helps to start young and I do think it helps to start young because at that age, you're still searching, and seeking, and curious, and you, conceptually, are pretty wide open; you don't have a bunch of strong theories that you believe in or have a rigid belief system. And so I haven't seen any studies about that, particularly about the age of first lucid dreaming or anything. But I do think you're on to something there because just like learning to play golf when you're a little kid or learning how to ice skate

when you're a little kid, just somehow, your physical muscles kind of learn those motions. I think by lucid dreaming at an early age, when I was like 15 or 16, kind of got my mental muscles acclimated to what it takes to be consciously aware in the dream state.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, I like that phrase, "mental muscles." I think there is something to mental muscles that I sometimes despair at how flabby my mental muscles seem to be becoming.

**Robert Waggoner:** One thing I do wanna say is that, David, the other thing as a high school kid, I was very disciplined when it came to these kind of things; like, I learned about self-hypnosis. And it was something that I practice everyday. And so I realize that this kind of activity, whether it's hypnosis, or self-hypnosis, or lucid dreaming, or whatever it is, it's one of those things you have to persist at it a bit. And oftentimes, when people tell me they're having a difficult time becoming consciously aware in the dream state, I talk to them a little bit about the importance of persisting and consistently practicing.

**Dr. Dave:** And you were a kid growing up in the Midwest, as I recall. I seem to have the impression from our previous interview that you grew up in a rural area. I mean, it's not like you grew up in California, which is a hotbed of these kinds of pursuits.

**Robert Waggoner:** Yeah, you know, that's right. I grew up in Hutchison, Kansas, down about 40- or 50-thousand people out in the flat wheat prairie of Kansas. And really, kind of a beautiful place to grow up because the nice thing about doing lucid dreaming back then in 1975; I encouraged some of my high school friends to do this and some of them succeeded at becoming consciously aware in the dream state, but they didn't get enamoured with it like I did. But in some ways, it's kind of nice to have done this where it wasn't a big deal because it allowed me just to pursue it out of deep curiosity and deep wonderment about how a person can be consciously aware in the dream state.

**Dr. Dave:** And I also seem to recall, sort of harkening back to that earlier brief interview, that while a lot of these people who present these conferences and so on are psychotherapists or psychologists, you're in some other completely different line of work, aren't you?

**Robert Waggoner:** I graduated with a degree in psychology and I plan to go on to become a psychotherapist, but at the time, the family business that my parents had started was kind of struggling, and so I thought, oh, I'll go and help them for a few years, then I'll go on and get a doctorate and become a psychotherapist. But I got involved in the family business and I've been involved with it for the last 26 years,

and it's just only here, in the past year, after writing my book that I decided to step away from that. So I kept my interest in dreaming and lucid dreaming and really a deep curiosity in it all those years, even though I was also very much involved in business.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Have your lucid dreams changed or evolved over time?

**Robert Waggoner:** They honestly have. That's one thing that I try to get across in the book. That lucid dreaming has incredible depth to it if you continue to practice at it; continue to try to expand it; to conceptually develop new areas in your lucid dreaming. It can keep growing and growing. And so, in the initial years of lucid dreaming, it was actually before people even knew what lucid dreaming was. And in fact, it wasn't until 1980 when Stephen LaBerge published his scientific proof of lucid dreaming, was the first time that people would accept it. Before then, when I'd tell my high school teachers or college professors about it, that they told me it was impossible to become consciously aware in the dream state. That it was a contradiction. And I told them, no, I was becoming aware, I could do, you know, pretty much whatever I wanted to do, and they assured me that it wasn't. But in those early years, I basically...it was easy just to play around and just to learn the principles of the dream environment and the principles of how to conduct yourself in the dream. It took quite awhile to really see this as a platform for experimenting in the dream state and also a platform for exploring the depths of the psyche, and what I would call identity as well.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, I like that concept of it being a platform for research, for inner-research. In the book, you actually talk about five stages of lucid dreaming, on pages 101 through 104. I don't know if you've got a copy of the book on hand.

**Robert Waggoner:** Yes, I sure do. Thank you. You know what, the first stage is one that really involves, what I call "personal play, pleasure, and pain avoidance." And in that stage, the lucid dreamer is just so amazed at being consciously aware in the dream state, that they kind of treat it as a joyful area to just play around in. They make things happen, they seek out pleasure, if a dream figure bothers them or something, they just obliterate it or run away. So, that's the first stage of lucid dreaming. And unfortunately, for a lot of people, that's the only stage that they really ever get into. They never try to move much beyond that because it's so fun...there's nothing more fun than being consciously aware in the dream state, and just doing whatever you want to do. You can fly, you can go through walls, you can make things appear and disappear, and it's just so much fun that people just stay at that stage.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, it's interesting. It probably corresponds to almost a kind of moral stage of development or spiritual stage of development that many of us get

stuck at the level of a sensory pleasure, let's say, kind of corresponds to that.

**Robert Waggoner:** Yeah, you know what? When I was writing that chapter, it kind of reminded me of Jean Piaget, you know, and cognitive development, kind of the stages of cognitive development. Because oftentimes the lucid dreamer is, pretty much at the beginning, just like a child who's one years old. They're very...the lucid dreamer is very amazed by sensation. A lot of lucid dreamers are, at the beginning, they just walk around touching things, just to get that sensation, comparing how it feels in the dream reality, versus the corresponding feel of, like, a leaf, or a brick wall or something in physical reality. And so I remember a lot of my first lucid dreams were just walking around touching things. You know, just seeing how it compared. But yeah, that's the first stage and that's where a lot of people spend much of their time.

**Dr. Dave:** Ok, so if the first stage is kind of about frolic, what's the second stage?

**Robert Waggoner:** You know, the second stage, I call "manipulation, movement, and me." Once you become consciously aware, it finally occurs to you that you can manipulate many of the dream objects. You can, in some sense, manipulate the dream figures, and also, an important thing is to move, because you have that visual sense in dreaming and oftentimes you want to fly up to that hill and investigate the castle up there or fly over to where you see some other dream figures. And so, that's kind of where you want to start to...want to learn the mechanics of, okay, how does this really work? How can I function at my best in this environment? And it's all about me, moving and manipulating the environment. And so that's what I consider the second stage.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, and then, moving along, stage three?

**Robert Waggoner:** And then, stage three then, it's when you become to some degree, kind of an ego inflated lucid dreamer. And by that, I mean, you have started, understood, so well that you have an incredible sense of power, purpose, and primacy. And by primacy, you get the sense that you are the only important thing in that dream environment. And unfortunately, that's very a very limiting, sort of, viewpoint to take. But oftentimes, you'll find the lucid dreamers, they're manipulating everything, they're moving around, they're doing everything they want, and they're doing it with a great sense of power. But that was one thing that Castaneda was told by Don Juan, was actually something to watch out for. He said that the world was much too mysterious—and I'd say dreaming is also much too mysterious and awesome—that to really be controlled by the lucid dreamer. And so that leads to the fourth stage, which I call re-reflection, reaching out, and wonder. And that's when you realize as a lucid dreamer that actually, you don't control everything. That there's dream figures who do what they want to do.

Sometimes in direct opposition to what you want them to do. Also, you realize that there is unexpected elements in the lucid dream state that you could never imagine having occurred. And then you begin to wonder, boy, maybe I do not control this at all. Maybe there's something else going on here, and that's what I always ask people to consider. So often people think that lucid dreaming is about controlling the dream. And I told them that that's a mistake. Lucid dreaming is really about directing one's focus within the dream. I bring up the idea that the sailor does not control the sea, and neither does the lucid dreamer control the dream. The lucid dreamer does his or her best to direct their focus. But they definitely don't control the dream.

**Dr. Dave:** I like that metaphor. And so what's the final, fifth stage, that you've identified?

**Robert Waggoner:** You know, the final, fifth stage, is something that was very strange that began to happen to me after about 20-years of lucid dreaming. I had gone about as deep as I could go and then I began to think that there's more than a likely something beyond lucid dreaming. That there's something beyond all this symbolism, beyond these dream figures; they come from some source. And even though they were tied to my beliefs and expectation and my intent and will, that they were obviously from beyond the ego Me. And so I was trying to become lucid about lucid dreaming. And that was a stage when I started to have some very unusual experiences. Basically what happened was I started having experiences of light. I'd wake up in the morning, and I'd sit down to put something in my dream journal, but all I could remember the entire night was light. And there wasn't any objects. There wasn't any me. There wasn't any other dream figures.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow.

**Robert Waggoner:** It was just light. And so at that point, I honestly just didn't know what was going on. And I had some other experiences of light during that time period, and kind of realized that I had finally gone beyond lucid dreaming and came to a point of light. It wasn't until about three years later, I was at an Association for the Study of Dreams conference in the North Shore of Oahu, Hawaii, and they had a Buddhist Lama come speak. His name was **Ten Zen ... (22:13)** And he spoke about the Buddhist bond tradition of dream yoga and how the ultimate goal of dream yoga will, what was basically what they call the clear light experience. And it was the first I'd ever heard anyone talk about using lucid dreaming as a path to deep experiences, deep spiritual experiences. And the clear light experience, which they consider a non-dual state, so there's not a subject-object. It's basically a unified state of consciousness, which is one way of saying it. So it is very interesting to see that someone like myself, who grew up out here in the Midwest, who grew up in a traditional Protestant family, by doing deeper and

deeper and deeper, 20 years into lucid dreaming at that time, started to have experiences that Buddhists have been talking about apparently for the last few thousand years, even though that was definitely outside the realm of my experience.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, that is really fascinating and really kind of a validation of the experiences that they were describing. Showing that it really is about a kind of mental training and mental discipline, and that if one follows the steps that anybody can have that sort of experience. Theoretically, anybody can, I don't know. I want to come back to that point in just a moment, but before I do, you started talking about the white light experience in the past. Is this something that discontinued after awhile or retreated? Or is it still going on for you?

**Robert Waggoner:** Well, I think if you talk with any experienced lucid dreamers, one thing you'll find them often talking about is a quality of light. Sometimes in lucid dreams, you'll have very interesting experiences with light—light being in objects or light shooting out of a building or light shooting out of the eyes of a dream figure or something like that. But this was definitely different because there really wasn't any objects or figures or anything like there. There wasn't even any sense of myself in these experiences of light. So they primarily occurred at that period when I realized that the only way to resolve the issues I was having at the time was to go beyond lucid dreaming. And you get by dealing with lucid dreaming, of course, you kind of come to understanding separate reality or an alternate reality because once you become consciously aware in the dream state, relatively consistently, you begin to realize it has principles, it seems to be full of information. It's much like the physical reality we live in and are a part of, but it's an alternate reality with it's own rules and functioning. At the same time, when you start to view this reality as something of a mental construct, and you realize lucid dreaming is a mental construct, then you get to the point where you're deeply, deeply invested in getting beyond mental constructs; getting beyond symbolism; getting beyond that. And that's where my head was when that occurred, and basically, my deepest experiences of these clear light experiences occurred over the course of about a year's time.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, this is all really fascinating. Now I have the impression that lucidity comes a lot easier to some than others and it sounds like you're on the end of the continuum where it came pretty easily. And I guess, in some ways, it can be seen as a basic human skill or a propensity like athletic ability or musical ability that we all start at a different place and that there's some room for improvement for each of us. I think I'm somewhere on the other end. I don't seem to get there for trying. I've had a few instances of rather brief lucidity, and I've pretty much trained myself to realize that falling dreams and nightmares are dreams, sufficiently to pull myself out of them, but not to do something more

creative, like turn the fall into flying or something like that.

**Robert Waggoner:** You know, in my book, I mention a story of talking to one of my nieces who is in college, and I was asking her about her dream life, and then asked her about her lucid dream life. And she told me she'd had 10 or 15 lucid dreams, but then she added that they didn't mean anything. I said, "Wait a second, what do you mean they don't mean anything?" And she goes, "Oh, I've become aware in the dream state and if I'm in a bad part of town, I'll fix up the buildings or I'll bring some trees into a treeless area or something." And that's what she does in her lucid dreams. So I told her, "Look, the next time you become consciously aware in a dream state, just yell out to the dream, 'hey dream, show me something I should see.'" And so about a few months later, she called me up and she goes, that she had a lucid dream, that in the dream, she was being chased by a lion, and all of a sudden, she realized that lions didn't exist in Kansas City. At least they weren't running free in the streets, and she became consciously aware. So she yelled out to the dream, "Hey dream, show me something I should see." And then, all of a sudden, she this long hallway of blue light, and at the end of it was a woman with grey hair. So she thought, "Well, this is interesting." So she went down there to investigate. And as soon as she got down there, she realized it was her great-grandmother and her great-grandmother was so happy to see her. And they began to talk. The interesting thing was her great-grandmother passed on to her information that she wasn't aware of in her waking life. So she woke up from the lucid dream, she gave me a call, and she said, "What do I do with this information?" Because it had to do with some of the family members. And I said, "Call up the family members and ask them if there's any validity to this. Just tell them you had a dream with your great-grandmother..." And so she did, and her family members were just blown away because she had picked up (it wasn't a family secret or anything), but she had picked up something that the great-grandmother was very very interested in and wanted to pass on to the rest of the family. And I think for my little niece, it validated to her that there might be something more going on here that you might be getting into, deeper levels of your conscious awareness than you normally might assume.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, a bit further on in our discussion, I want to cut back to the telepathic or E.S.P. abilities in lucid dreaming. But before we go there (we pretty much already spoke do this), do you see lucid dreaming as a worthwhile goal? In other words, why should a person go to the trouble of going to do it if it doesn't happen spontaneously?

**Robert Waggoner:** I think for most anyone, it would be an interesting thing to see. Just to see yourself, or find yourself consciously aware in the dream state; to realize that everything a moment ago, you took as very real and very solid and important; having that sudden switch where you realize "No, all this is just the

workings of a dream. This is just the workings of imagination.” I think for everyone, that’s an important point to get across. So just to have a few experiences gives everyone a taste of it and that, in and of itself is important. But for other people, if it comes naturally to you, if the dreaming path is something that you naturally drawn to, it can be a great supplement to your normal dreaming. And also help you, definitely, as you investigate, the boundaries of the self and the boundaries of the awareness.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. I think you’ve already indicated that total control doesn’t seem to be possible. That it’s not total control and the unconscious has a way of taking over, if you will. But there are some people who will argue that attempting to control your dreams is a bad thing, moving you away from the spontaneous expression of the unconscious and just another example of the ego attempting to control everything. What’s your comment on that?

**Robert Waggoner:** I understand their point and I devote most of a chapter to dealing with some of these issues, but really, my view is much like, I believe, the Buddhist view is. That becoming more consciously aware is for the better. And even becoming more consciously aware in the dreaming is for the better, because the greater awareness you bring to situations, the greater growth you have, the quicker you have growth, and the deeper the understanding can be. Even though we can say that all dreams are sacred, just like I often say that all dream are sacred, it still doesn’t mean that the dream wants us to arrive there without conscious awareness. It would seem to me that if the dream was sacred, the dream would want me to be more aware in that sacred space, instead of less aware. So that’s how I feel about it, that the sailor doesn’t control the seas; the lucid dreamer doesn’t control the dream and ultimately, the lucid dreamer, if they think about it will have greater respect and greater admiration for the power and mystery of dreaming, and the unconscious self.

**Dr. Dave:** That begs the question, what do you mean by “all dreams are sacred”?

**Robert Waggoner:** In my opinion, all dreams, by deriving from the unconscious, are leading us to a sense of greater health and greater wholeness, if we could understand it. They’re not random and they’re not chaotic. In some hard-to-understand way, they’re actually leading us toward a greater sense of being. And in that way, they are sacred.

**Dr. Dave:** Great. What about false awakenings? I know sometimes I’ve had that experience of a false awakening where I think that I’ve woken from the dream but in fact, I’m still in the dream. Where do they fit into the picture?

**Robert Waggoner:** You know, they’re a curious phenomenon. I probably

discovered three or four years after my first lucid dreams, I'd have lucid dreams where the dream was getting shaky, so I knew it was going to come to an end soon, then all of the sudden, I'd be in my bedroom, I'd lean over on my nightstand, and start jotting down my lucid dream. Then I'd look down at my dream journal and see that I'd already written down the lucid dream. And it would occur to me, "When did I write down this lucid dream? I just woke up." And that's when I'd realize, "Oh, I'm having a false awakening" and then I'd wake up for real. I think that Stephen LaBerge had the best view on this. He said that in his idea, false awakenings occur we expected to wake up and by expecting to wake up, we kind of push the lucid dreaming forward; we kind of dreamed awakening. Because oftentimes lucid dreams are expectations or are made manifest, and by expecting to wake up, we kind of create these false awakenings.

**Dr. Dave:** I've had a similar experience where I realized I'm in the dream, and there's sort of this feeling of "Oh boy, I'm in a lucid dream. I have to go tell my friend that I had a lucid dream" or something like that. I'd go and tell my friend and I think I'm telling my friend in reality and I'm sort of missing the contradiction that I'm still in a dream.

**Robert Waggoner:** It's an interesting point and it's one that other people have brought up as well, that even though you may be lucid or technically aware, you at the same time definitely aren't a genius or maybe not thinking to think through exactly as we do upon waking. What it made me realize, of course, is that our beliefs and expectations are kind of the primary focus in that lucid dream, as long as we believe that our friend wants to know, we can tell our friend, that we have that kind of logic, that that's an important thing to do. But you're right, oftentimes you'll find yourself upon waking, thinking, "Why did I bother to do that? I should've realized with greater clarity that this was a dream and it didn't make sense to do what I was doing."

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Now the subtitle of your book is "gateway to the inner self." And I think you've already said things that get at this, but I'll still ask you, can you say something about that? Gateway to the inner self? What do you mean?

**Robert Waggoner:** One of the things that myself and other lucid dreamers have discovered is that one of the things that's most difficult to manipulate is dream figures. Most people call them dream characters. I think that's a little bit too derogatory. I like to call them dream figures because when you call them a character, it's like they're an imagining or a work of fiction or something like that. I call them dream figures because they seem to have—and others have discovered this—that many of the dream figures seem to have their own sense of awareness. Sometimes they're logical. Sometimes they're very reasonable. Sometimes they seem actually more aware than the lucid dreamer. This is

something that Paul Foley, who is a German psychotherapist and someone who investigated lucid dreaming deeply, discovered as well. I remember in my book, I pulled out a section of his book that's written in German, and he was having lucid dreamers try to determine how consciously aware the dream figures were. So one of his friends became consciously aware and went up to a dream figure and asked the dream figure how consciously aware it was. The dream figure said (and I am quoting now), "I am aware, I am certain. But whether you are aware, I'm unsure because you ask such a silly question." So you have these dream figures do incredible things like that or someone will become consciously aware and tell a dream figure, "I'm dreaming you." And then the dream figure responds, "How do you know I'm not dreaming you?" Sometimes the lucid dreamer will say, "Look, I can fly." And then the dream figure will reply, "Well look, I can fly too." And then the dream figure does everything the lucid dreamer does to try to prove their independent existence. So when you have these kinds of experiences, you start to think, what's going on here? These dream figures I assumed were projections of my mind, and I assumed were just kind of these mental play things, they actually seem to have an awareness and cognition. So that was the first thing that struck me. There seem to be different types of dream figures. Some of them are just mental play things or mental mayflies; they just express a thought or belief or for some reason, they're in the dream. But other of these dream figures are very conscious and very alive, and that's when I started to realize...And what happened was, I had a lucid dream where I was supposed to find what a dream figure represented. I asked a nearby dream figure what it represented, and all of the sudden, a voice boomed out of the sky above it. And that's when I realized there might be something behind these dream figures. That there might be an awareness behind these dream figures. That's when I started to realize there is a deeper awareness within the dreaming.

I remember Ernest Hilgard, who was a president of the APA for awhile and I believe a professor at Stanford, he brought up the idea of the "hidden observer" that you can find in deep hypnosis. That there'd be a part of the hypnotized subject, which he called the hidden observer, that was very much aware of what was going on and which the hypnotist could communicate with. He was always struck by the intelligence and the businesslike aspect of the hidden observer and that sort of thing. Also, sometimes, psychologists dealing with people with dissociative identity disorder or multiple personality disorder, would sometimes find too, what they called a "center" or "internal self-helper," a portion of the psyche that was aware of what all the aspects of the psyche were doing.

So that's what I felt like I was starting to discover in lucid dreams, that behind the dream figures, behind the dreaming, was something that was aware, and conscious, and actually more broadly-minded than any of the dream figures. That's when I began to think that lucid dreaming really was a gateway to the inner self.

**Dr. Dave:** So how has this practice helped you, or benefited you in your own life, or in terms of your personality development?

**Robert Waggoner:** One thing that's really helped me; by understanding the principles of how the lucid dream environment is created has really helped me understand how I can better create my waking life, how I can better use my beliefs, how I can better use my expectation and intent and focus, to really achieve what I want to achieve in the waking life. So that's one thing.

Also, the other thing, dreams are a great platform to see how to deal with emotions and with feelings. As often occurring to me in lucid dreams, if I was being chased by something that was harassing me or upsetting me, I realize the thing wasn't to attack the hostile object, that instead, if I project love and compassion onto it, normally it would suddenly transfigure into something that was friendly and not hostile at all. It also made me realize that in those situations in life, when we have a knee-jerk reaction to get upset with or fight back, that really, if we can have a higher step of awareness and begin to try to seek love and compassion towards that person or object or situation, it would really make things so much better.

**Dr. Dave:** What about lucid dreaming and self-healing? I've been having some hip pain and my fantasy is that if I could become lucid, I could go into the hip area and do some inner healing or invite a dream physician or a dream shaman to heal that area, and that it might actually have some impact in waking reality. Is there any evidence for that sort of thing?

**Robert Waggoner:** There's quite a body of evidence and a lot of it's been brought together by Ed Kellogg. Ed Kellogg got a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Duke and has really researched this area and conducted a lot of lucid dream healing upon himself and in some experiments, on others as well. It does seem like there is a lot of anecdotal evidence that people who have become consciously aware in the dream state and decide to focus healing energy on some part of their body that's not functioning well or disease, oftentimes have very rapid recovery. I remember recently, in *The Lucid Dream Exchange*, which is a quarterly publication that I co-edit, a young woman was having trouble with anxiety but she's also a very good lucid dreamer. So I suggested to her, the next time she became consciously aware in the dream state, to announce to the dream that she was not going to have any anxiety for the upcoming week. She started doing this and she's been amazed by how her life has changed. Now she doesn't have near the anxiety that she used to, just because she announces or affirms in the dream that she'll no longer have that kind of sense. So physical healing and also emotional and psychological healing is something that lucid dreamers are practicing with considerable success.

**Dr. Dave:** So that really helps to answer the question of “why do it?” That’s a good motivation right there.

**Robert Waggoner:** It really does. For a lot of people, it’s a powerful motivation.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, now what about lucidity and things like dream telepathy? Do you even have a chapter on mutual lucid dreaming? So maybe you can talk about those two elements.

**Robert Waggoner:** As a person goes deeper into lucid dreaming and begins to have interesting experiences with dream figures and all, there’s a natural tendency to just keep going and see how deep is the pond, how wide is this lake of information and knowledge. And so myself and others, we’ve sought precognitive information, we’ve sought telepathic information and sometimes we’ve even sought to meet other lucid dreamers experimentally while consciously aware in the dream state. To really understand it, you’d have to read my book, but the basic point I’d like to make is it appears that these things are possible. It appears that in some cases, a person is able to get telepathic information.

For example, I had a college student write me, who asked me whether or not I thought someone could do this, and I said, sure, I think you could to it. But I told him that I couldn’t prove it to him but that he could prove it to himself just by conducting an experiment in a lucid dream. So he and a friend in his dormitory decided that the next time he became consciously aware, he would go to her dorm room and find the odd freckle on her back and be able to tell her where this odd freckle on her back is. The first time he tried it, he had all these difficulties. He became lucid and just couldn’t get to her room and saw this kid start yelling at him, saying that this was crazy, and all this kind of stuff. The next time he became consciously aware, he decided he would have her come to his room and make it easier on himself. So this young woman came into his dorm room while he was consciously aware and pulled up her shirt so he could see the spot where her weird freckle was. He woke up from that and ran down to her dorm room, knocked on the door and told her he had had this lucid dream and now he knew where her freckle was. The odd thing was it wasn’t where he expected. He felt like she had hinted it was on the side of her back but instead, it was on a very unusual place on her lower back and he put his finger right on top of it and she pulled up her shirt and there it was.

When people can do this for themselves, I know it kind of upsets our notions of linear time and that sort of thing, and linear space. But I think lucid dreaming is one of these tools that will help us broaden those notions, and maybe get to see what some of these physicists have been telling us all along.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, well before we close off, you’re about to be president of the

**International Association for the Study of Dreams. Maybe you can tell our listeners a little bit about the organization.**

**Robert Waggoner:** The International Association for the Study of Dreams is an organization that's been in existence for 25 years now. It has about 600 members. Some of them are therapists and psychologists who use dreaming in their practice. Some of them are academics and neuro-scientists who investigate in dreaming, either from a neurological perspective or a cognitive psychology perspective. And then there are people who are dreamers like myself and lucid dreamers who are just curious about dreaming and have a very deep interest in it. They have an annual conference each year and it's an incredible event because you get to hear so many views on dreaming, and research on dreaming, and also people's experiments and experiences on dreaming. It's very much a worthwhile organization to get involved in if you have an interest in dreaming. And you can find them on the internet at [asdreams.org](http://asdreams.org).

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, and I certainly underscore that I've both been a presenter and an attendee at a number of them and really want to underscore that you don't have to be a scientist or a therapist to join. Just anybody can join, as long as they have the interest.

**Do you have any particular goals you hope to accomplish during your presidency?**

**Robert Waggoner:** My main goal is just to expand the organization. We have such a great group and I don't think it's as well known as it could be. So to expand the awareness of the organization and also maintain the research and academic interest in the subject of dreaming, is really my goal.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, I'm doing my part to help you in getting the word out. As we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to leave our audience with?

**Robert Waggoner:** The only thing that I'd like to say is that in the lucid dreaming, I think that we have a revolutionary tool that we can begin to probe deeper in to the nature of identity; the nature of the self. And also come to understand the unconscious in dreaming from the inside instead of the outside. And for that reason, I really think that lucid dreaming is going to provide us a lot more insights and experimental evidence for what dreaming is really all about in the future.

**Dr. Dave:** Robert Waggoner, thanks so much for being my guest on Shrink Rap Radio.

**Robert Waggoner:** David, it's been a lot of fun. Thanks very much for having

**me.**