

On The Edge of Awareness

by Stewart Blackburn

We have all experienced it. It's the state of consciousness that we're in when we are just about to fall asleep or just as we're waking up before we start focusing on our body. Some call it the hypnogogic state; others call it journeying. It's a very important and useful state of consciousness where we are still aware of our inner world and we are conscious of that. But our physical senses mostly remain offline with the exception of hearing.

When we are in this state at the end of sleep, we can be acutely aware of our feelings and can process them easily. We can be aware of dreams we are still having and perhaps some that occurred earlier. Often times answers to questions will come and solutions presented.

To stay in this state can take some intention and focus, but the rewards are tremendous. It is easy in this state to communicate with our Inner Self, ask questions, relax into oneself, and to increase our sense of who we are. If we allow it, the places where we are resisting life will show themselves. At that point we can relax and let the energies flow naturally. For me this is the number one place to go to find peace. I define peace as the letting go of resisting oneself. That is, becoming quite comfortable with who and what one is.

The conscious awareness of this inner place on the edge of sleep and thus of nightly dreams is a great training ground for the practice of lucid dreaming. In lucid dreaming, we allow the body to stay asleep, but we become aware of our dreaming and learn to consciously change things within the dream. This is sometimes called Dream Yoga or Yoga Nidra in the Tibetan tradition.

Serge Kahili King calls this state B3 in his classification system of states of consciousness related to dreaming. As a precursor to lucid dreaming, it is the training ground for learning how to manipulate the elements of our inner world, and thus the elements of our outer one. Robert Monroe, the great pioneer of Out-of-Body experiences, had a different system of classification and called this state Focus 10. Seth, of Jane Roberts fame, calls this Psy-Time or Psychological-Time. It's a special inner sense that underlies all other inner work. Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutras, would probably have called this Dhyana. It differs from concentrated meditation in that we do not hold the focus on one particular thing. This is more flexible and investigative. We play with the dreams that we find within and use will and desire to adjust things.

There are several ways to use this state of consciousness. One is simply to watch the workings of one's psyche. We can see the thoughts come and go, the feelings arise and dissolve, the connection between those thoughts and feelings, and how they influence the reality we experience. We can track a desire from its inception to its manifestation by watching from this inner perch.

Another way we can use this state is to let our Inner Self show us what we need to know or work on. By simply looking at whatever seems to be presenting itself to our consciousness, we can work with our Inner Self to realize our deeper being. It always feels good and the peace that follows the letting go of any resistance is intoxicating.

A third way of using this state is, as mentioned above, to change elements in our reality. Since we are dealing with dreams, we are dealing with symbols and feelings. The healing technique of finding a symbol for a problem, that is something that doesn't feel good, and changing that symbol to something that does feel good can be used within any state. Here we are talking about anything being able to be used to symbolize something else, not just colors, runes and figures, but anything. The key to this work is making sure that we actively like or even love the different symbols and feelings we end with.

And a fourth way to use this state of consciousness is to mold who we are. We are constantly changing and how we change can largely be up to us. As we become more clearly aware of the values we as unique beings hold, we become more competent at creating experiences that align with what is most important to us. Of course, knowing what is most important is the most important thing. We can never be happy unless we are fulfilling that inner drive to live in alignment with our inner values. As we move in the direction of our values, we change with intention. In this state of consciousness, we can focus more deeply on those values and make the necessary decisions about how to live within those values. And even if we are not making new choices while we're in this state, the time we spend in this state changes us for the better.

Personally, I find that hanging out in this hypnogogic state forms the cornerstone of my spiritual practice. I get more done here, learn more, and enjoy myself more here than at any other time of my day. I hope you can find your way there, too!