

ON DREAMS AND DREAMING with PATRICIA GARFIELD, Ph.D. JEFFREY MISHLOVE, Ph.D.: Hello and welcome. Tonight we're going to be looking at "Dreams and Dreaming," and my guest, Dr. Patricia Garfield, is an expert on that subject. She's the author of the best seller, *Creative Dreaming*, as well as several other books in this field, including *Pathway to Ecstasy*, *Your Child's Dreams*, and *Women's Bodies, Women's Dreams*. Welcome, Patty.

PATRICIA GARFIELD, Ph.D.: Thank you, Jeffrey. I'm glad to be here.

MISHLOVE: It's a pleasure to have you here. You know, your first major book, *Creative Dreaming*, created a major social impact because of the fact, as I understand it, that you went back and looked at the Senoi tribe of Malaysia, and the unique ways in which they treated their dreams, and suggested that we in the West might learn something from that.

GARFIELD: Well, I think there's no question, Jeff, that Westerners were used to thinking of dreams as something that happened to you, and then you work with them. You work with a therapist, or you discuss the symbols, but you waited till the dream was finished. What was different about *Creative Dreaming* was saying that, hey, you can get ready to dream, you can prepare to dream, you can do something within the dream to change your dream. People had just never thought about it that way before. And when they began to try some of these techniques, they found indeed it made a difference -- not only in their dreams, but in what happened in their waking lives afterwards.

MISHLOVE: How did you first develop this approach to dreaming?

GARFIELD: Well, some of it -- you know, I've written my dreams down since I was fourteen.

MISHLOVE: You have a collection of thirty or forty thousand dreams by now, I understand.

GARFIELD: Oh, goodness, I haven't counted them recently. But I'm fifty-two, and there are twenty-some volumes of these dreams recorded. So when I was young, I began to notice that just by paying a lot of attention to what was going on in my dreams, things were happening. For example, in one dream, one of the characters, a young girlfriend of mine, said, "Do you know I represent sex to you in your dreams?" This is in the dream. And I said, "No." She says, "Haven't you noticed I always wear shorts?" At that stage of my life, I guess that was pretty daring. But my dreams began to comment on themselves, and I didn't realize it, but that was the beginning of what we call lucid dreaming -- a dream in which you know that you're dreaming, and you can change the action of the dream while it's happening. Lots of people notice this happening to themselves. For example, one woman told me that when she was little she often had these recurrent dreams about a witch, and one night she said to herself, "There's that darn dream about the witch again. I'm not going to wake up screaming. I'm going to stay asleep and see what happens." And just by noticing that you've had this dream before, or saying to yourself, "This is just a dream. I can wake up if I want to."

MISHLOVE: While you're in the dream.

GARFIELD: While you're in the dream. This very special state of lucid dreaming can give you a power in your dream state.

MISHLOVE: It's sort of like a cybernetic feedback system or something. You become aware of the fact that you're dreaming, conscious of the fact that you're unconscious.

GARFIELD: Exactly so. It seems like a paradox. At first people didn't believe that this was possible, and now we've had a lot of laboratory studies that have proved that in fact some people can learn to do this, can even be trained to become lucid in their dreams.

MISHLOVE: But is creative dreaming, the way you write about it in your first book, quite the same as lucid dreaming? Are there some differences?

GARFIELD: Well, there are definitely differences. But I think that one leads to the other. And what I was saying in *Creative Dreaming* is that there are many ways to use the resource that's within us. Every night when we go to sleep, four or five times a night, our bodies experience this particular physiological state that has psychological symbolic meaning, but we can learn from this. We can actively use our dreams. That's what I call creative dreaming -- that is, setting up a relationship.

MISHLOVE: You know, it's remarkable to think that we spend, most of us, a third of our lives asleep, and a large portion of our sleeping lives dreaming.

GARFIELD: Yes, about four years.

MISHLOVE: Four years of a human lifetime dreaming. And it's usually ignored by people. There's an old saying of the Jewish people in the Talmud, that a dream uninterpreted is like a letter unopened.

GARFIELD: I agree.

MISHLOVE: Yet most people don't begin to work with their dreams at all, or pay them any credence whatsoever. You obviously recommend that people do just the opposite -- that there's a lot of value to be had. Many people, though, can't remember their dreams, or they claim they can't.

GARFIELD: Well, you know, Jeffrey, remembering your dreams is a kind of memory skill, and anybody can learn it, unless the person is on heavy drugs or alcohol. Certain drugs -- sleeping pills, for example -- will actually inhibit the physiological dream state, and when you go off the pills, then you have this terrible condition we call a "REM rebound," with very frightening nightmares. But unless you have this situation, where the person is inhibiting their dreams, anybody can learn to remember their dreams. There are specific suggestions, of course, that I make in *Creative Dreaming*, if you want to talk about some ideas.

MISHLOVE: Well, I think that anybody who's interested in remembering their dreams, just knowing that they can -- I suppose, for example, putting a diary near your bed so you can write them down.

GARFIELD: A pad and pen is a good place to start. Just deciding that you're going to remember your dreams can help. And one important thing that's helpful is to keep your eyes closed when you wake up. As soon as you begin to move around, and open your eyes and get all sorts of other stimuli coming into your

system, this very delicate dream recall gets broken easily, if you're not used to it. One of the things I recommend is lying still and keeping your eyes shut and just catching hold of the last little bit of the dream, and very often it hooks onto the scene before, and the scene before.

MISHLOVE: These are very delicate states of consciousness, really.

GARFIELD: They are.

MISHLOVE: You know, I think one of the best arguments for a person to begin to remember their dreams or write their dreams down, comes, I believe, from your second book, Pathway to Ecstasy, or The Way of the Dream Mandala, in which you point out that by working with your own dreams, and combining that with various meditative practices, you really are able to enter into an ecstatic state of consciousness, a very blissful state.

GARFIELD: I believe that's so. Not everyone wants to pursue that aspect of dreaming.

MISHLOVE: It's very intense, I'm sure.

GARFIELD: But those who do find it very worthwhile -- that by using the images of their dreams, the special power images, so to speak -- they can begin to understand a whole pattern that's happening within them. I was suggesting their making a mandala out of the very powerful images in your dreams. For example, I used to have dreams about the house that I grew up in as a child. It was a place I hated, actually. I was very unhappy during my teenage years in this particular house. And in my dreams I would often find myself back there in a very negative situation -- all kinds of terrible things happening.

MISHLOVE: In this dreadful old house.

GARFIELD: Yes, that was so unpleasant to me, with very thick stone walls, and it was always cold, and had all sorts of unpleasant aspects. And usually the dreams were negative. But after a while, I began to find changes happening in there. Still very powerful dreams, but I might be in the attic going through all kinds of old papers, and suddenly find a very beautiful blue vase, or a lovely picture. The dreams began to change. And this is very important with anybody's recurrent dreams -- to look for the little differences.

MISHLOVE: I guess part of your method, then, is to look at the horrendous, negative images in dreams, and to try and somehow transform them.

GARFIELD: Yes, that's where the power lies, in effect. Because within the very image that appears to be terrifying, if you get in touch with it, if you begin to understand it, the power that went into forming the frightful image can become yours.

MISHLOVE: You're released somehow from the fear, and translate it into something more creative.

GARFIELD: You become able to own it. It belongs to you, instead of belonging to the frightening imagery. For instance, if you confront something in your dream that is terrifying you -- maybe it's a giant cricket, that's one dream I had; or another where I was being chased by a poached egg; or it can be your standard zombie or Frankenstein or wild animal. Whatever it is that's after you in a dream -- it's very common, being chased or attacked in a dream -- if you stop and you confront that in any way -- anything from saying, "Hey, cut that out. Stop. This is my dream. I can do what I want," or even making friends with it, and saying, "Hey, why are you bothering me like this?" Once I said that to a dog that was trying to nip me in a dream: "Cut it out. Why are you doing that?" And actually, they talk back to you, of course, during the dream. And this one said, "I just want you to pay attention to me." But there was something that I needed to understand in that image, and instead of running away from it, hiding from it, if you face it, if you interact with it, you begin to get some of the strength that's within that image.

MISHLOVE: I recall having had dreams like that myself, nightmare type dreams with monsters. They were about to eat me, and I would turn around and say, "OK, take a bite."

GARFIELD: What happened?

MISHLOVE: Well, I discovered, of course, that you can't really be hurt in a dream. The worst thing that would happen is you would wake up.

GARFIELD: Or even if it starts -- for instance, I was teaching this technique to some children, and one little girl said that she was having nightmares about a shark, and he was taking a bite out of her, and she was very frightened. Usually he would kill her. And after we discussed this, she wrote to me and said, "You know, when you first told me that, I didn't think it was possible, but I tried it, and it still was scary. This one bit me, and then I saw myself dead." And I talked to her some more, and I said, "Yeah, but look, you changed the dream. You already made it different. If you can do that much, you can go further." And sure enough, a few weeks later she had a dream in which her girlfriend was in the water, and the sharks were going to get her. She dived in and saved her -- perfectly safe. She was able to move from being killed by the shark, to being bitten by the shark, to then actually confronting it and dealing with it.

MISHLOVE: In your book, Your Child's Dreams, you spent a lot of time talking to parents about what to do when the child has nightmares, which is an issue, I'm sure, for practically every parent.

GARFIELD: Well, it's an ancient technique, Jeffrey. All the old cultures had ways of dealing with dreams. I brought one to show you here.

MISHLOVE: Let's take it out, and we can show our viewers.

GARFIELD: This is a double-headed tiger pillow, and it comes from China, where in olden times it was used -- especially in the countryside, this figure means king, number one, king of the beasts, and he was thought to be able to dispel demons. So when the children went to sleep, instead of using the kind of pillow that the adults used, which was made of porcelain or carved wood, very hard, the children used these. It's still pretty hard, but it's stuffed.

MISHLOVE: And I suppose if they're having a nightmare, this little lion fellow comes and chases off the --

GARFIELD: The tiger, yes. The child puts his head in between, and is thought to be protected from the demons that would come in the night and bother him or her in bad dreams.

MISHLOVE: This is a nice fellow to have on your side.

GARFIELD: Indeed it is.

MISHLOVE: Ah, we have another.

GARFIELD: This creature comes from ancient Japan. He's a mythological being called a Baku. You know about him. You think you don't, but you do. He's the ancestor of Pac-Man. Seriously. And his name means something like "to gobble." He was said to eat bad dreams.

MISHLOVE: Oh, I see. Baku, Pac-Man.

GARFIELD: Uh huh. It's what he lived on. This creature, when a child would call for him in the middle of the night -- if he had a bad dream, he was told by his parents, "When you wake up, call for Baku." They would call his name, and he was supposed to come and eat up the bad dream, gobble it up. And he eventually became Pac-Man, gobbling ghost monsters.

MISHLOVE: A very interesting transformation there.

GARFIELD: You were supposed to rub him during the day, and that would also help keep away the bad dreams. Parents have been concerned about what to do about kids' bad dreams for a long, long time.

MISHLOVE: Some of the ancient methods seem to still work.

GARFIELD: Well, I think that now it would be hard for a kid to accept that, but what we can do that's just as effective, is tell them, "Hey --"

MISHLOVE: "GI Joe will come."

GARFIELD: Exactly: "This is your dream. You can have anything you want happen in it. You could get somebody strong to help you. Who do you know who's strong?" Parents who talk with a child in this way are able to change the child's nightmares. For instance, one of my friends, Mary, her little boy Richard was having terrible nightmares about a lion chasing him. I discussed this method, and she said, "I'm going to try that, because I usually have to stay up for an hour, patting his back and telling him to think happy thoughts, and so forth. So she said to him, the next time he had the nightmare about the lion, "Richard, you know, this is your dream. You can have anything you want happen in it. You could get somebody who's strong help you. Who could you get? Who do you know who's strong?" And he said, "How about Ultra Man? Could I get Ultra Man?" She said, "Sure, it's your dream. You can have anybody you want, anything you want, happen." She said he lay right back down on the pillow, his eyes all round. He couldn't wait to go back to sleep.

MISHLOVE: This is a very profound notion, though. I mean, it's not just childish to say, "It's your dream."

GARFIELD: Exactly. And when the child learns that, or the dreamer of any age, it is not just the dream that changes, you know? You are teaching, I think, a lesson in living, because it carries over. You're saying to the child, "You can do something about your life. You don't have to be a passive victim. You can be an active participant. You've got your choice. You've got options. You can do something to make your life different." So it's not just the dream that changes. It is powerful.

MISHLOVE: A lot of your more recent work, Patty, seems to involve looking at the human life cycle -- particularly the human life cycle of females, in your most recent book -- in showing how dreams serve, I suppose, almost like rites of passage, or as landmarks, as we move through important phases in the life cycle.

GARFIELD: I'm glad you said that. You know, in our society we don't have rites of passage for the most part. We have weddings, but we very seldom celebrate a girl's menarche, her first menstruation. We certainly don't celebrate a woman's menopause, which is the equivalent kind of happening.

MISHLOVE: We could have big parties, I suppose.

GARFIELD: We could indeed. And retiring. You know, different stages of life are very seldom recognized, other than getting married and having babies, which are generally accepted as joyful occasions. But in our dream life we are marking those events very powerfully, and they can, if we pay attention to them, help us to integrate the events.

MISHLOVE: So although the dreams do belong to us, they also in a way serve as a teacher. There's a value in some sense to being the passive observer of a dream from time to time.

GARFIELD: Oh yes. Our dreams can teach us, even if we don't pay attention or work with them actively. They've got something to say -- that unopened letter -- if you can learn to read the letter. It's very important, of course, to understand the language of the dream. I think of it as a kind of set of hieroglyphs, and if you understand the pictures, then you can read that message. You can make a kind of translation of your dream.

MISHLOVE: How are we to do that?

GARFIELD: Well, first of all you need to write your dreams down. You need to keep track of them, keep a diary. Ask yourself questions about the images in the dream, if they're not apparent to you. You might know, "Hey, that dog with a shaggy haircut, that sort of poodle haircut, that's just like Joe at the office who's giving me a hard time. He has hair that looks sort of like a poodle."

MISHLOVE: You begin to kind of elaborate in your own mind on the dream images. The meanings become more apparent.

GARFIELD: Yeah, but even more specifically you can say, "Who is Joe?" Maybe Joe was in the dream himself. What kind of person is he? And try to describe a character or a thing in your dream, in a way that a person who doesn't know them can understand them. For instance, the dreamer might say, "Oh, Joe is a really difficult guy. He's always judging people. He's always making these critical judgments." OK, if Joe is in your dream, it can be that you're being annoyed with this critical person, but it also can be the Joe within you.

MISHLOVE: The critical part of yourself which is symbolized by this external person.

GARFIELD: Exactly so. And you begin to understand that the people in your dreams may represent themselves, and sometimes they do. They often represent a part of you.

MISHLOVE: Would you go so far as to say that every image in a dream represents a part of you?

GARFIELD: Well, the Gestalt people certainly believe that. And we can always learn something from looking at our dreams in that way. If this is a part of me, if that red bug is me, and talking for the red bug, what does it have to say? What do I need to hear from that? But Jeff, I think dreams also do something more. They're not always about our immediate problems, and the immediate things that are going on in our lives. They sometimes tell us about the future.

MISHLOVE: Isn't that fascinating?

GARFIELD: I think so. It's more rare, but there also is an aspect of dreaming that is beyond the ordinary understanding.

MISHLOVE: Well, I've certainly had dreams like that. I'm sure I wouldn't be here now if it weren't for some of my dreams along those lines.

GARFIELD: Well, maybe your listeners would like to hear.

MISHLOVE: I'll save it for another program. But I think it's fascinating the way that dreams do lead us into the future, and are often very useful for creative problem solving.

GARFIELD: Yes, yes. I've gotten some of my best ideas in dreams. Even the title of a book, for example. I had named Your Child's Dreams, Dream Child, which I liked better. It was very poetic, and I enjoyed it. Too poetic, said my publisher; come up with something else. And I looked back in my dream diary, and I saw that the night I decided to call it Dream Child, I had had a dream in which a woman said to me, "Well, I would have called it Your Child's Dreams." And at the time I thought, "Well, that's sort of interesting, but I like Dream Child better," and I stuck to it. But when my editor said, "You have to come up with a different title; this isn't going to work. It could be poetry, it could be a novel. Come up with something that has dream in it, and children in it." So I made up a list of about ten different names over the weekend, and I just put the dream name in among them, and on Monday morning I called her and said, "Here's my list. What do you think sounds best?" I read the list of names. She said, "Your Child's Dreams. That's it. That's perfect." And it was the dream name.

MISHLOVE: It might be worth mentioning at this point a dream I did have, which I believe you wrote about in that book, involving my stepson, who was living with us at the time, and who was having trouble with his math. I would help him every morning with his math, and he would practically tear his hair out, it was so frustrating. Then one evening I had a dream. In the dream I was at a resort with my son, and I heard this song we were singing, and it went -- I can remember it now -- "You can't remember the words to this song, because you make them up as you go along." And I got up the next morning, and began telling Louis to make up rhymes to go with his math. So he got into it, and he went "Six times seven is forty-two; if you don't believe me, I'll kiss your shoe." And he got right through his multiplication tables that way. The dream really gave me the answer. It was so frustrating until that dream.

GARFIELD: It really inspired you. And every dreamer has that within them. Whatever their problems are, whatever they're coping with, they've got some of the answer inside, if they just listen.

MISHLOVE: One would almost think that if our dreams really can reveal the future -- and there's quite a bit of research now that I hope to talk about in another program, that suggests that -- then really there should be no problem that a dream would be incapable of solving, if we look.

GARFIELD: Well, there certainly is a lot going on in there that we haven't paid enough attention to, and I think it's really important to listen to our dreams, because they're talking to us.

MISHLOVE: Well, Patty Garfield, it's been a pleasure having you here. You've been able in this program to cover so many aspects of dreaming, from how we can control our dreams, to how we can help other people, our children, with their dreams, and also to look at the ways in which dreams mark these rites of passage in our lives and serve as our teachers. Thank you very much for being with me, Patty.

GARFIELD: My pleasure, Jeffrey.