Sex dreams about dad? help! [1]

Dear Alice,

I am having these really weird dreams. They start off with me flirting with an older gentleman and then it evolves quickly into heated sexual passion. The thing that is really disgusting about it is that the older gentlemen switches personalities from random strangers inevitably into my father. I'm really upset about this whole "Electra-complex" thing and it rudes me out. I always wake up when it starts getting too heated and then I feel really ashamed for having dreamt it.

I have a good relationship with my father, although sometimes I wish that he would pay more attention to other aspects of my life other than my schooling and career. Is there something wrong with me? I am happy in my relationship with my boyfriend, I have lots of friends who care about me, I'm doing very well in school, etc., but I don't know why these dreams are happening all of a sudden. PLEASE HELP! Where can I go to seek more answers?

Maybe I should also tell you that my boyfriend and I are very good friends and I love him to death, but sometimes the sexual spark isn't there as it was with prior boyfriends. I don't know if this is because we have been together for so long (about 5 years) or if I've just gotten old and crotchety, but then where do these dreams fit in?

?freaked out by dreams

Answer

Dear freaked out by dreams,

In our culture, many theories of dream interpretation have been proposed. Perhaps the most well-known are those of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, which suggest some consistent rules for uncovering the meaning of symbols and events in a person's dream. The Electra-complex is one psychological theory regarding a woman's love and sexual desire for her father. Remember, this is one perspective shared by some in the field of psychology. A former student of Freud, Carl Jung wrote about archetypes and imagery and suggests that dreams are a way to connect you to your unconscious. For further reading, try Freud's Interpretation of Dreams or On Dreams and Jung's Dreams or Memories, Dreams, Reflections.

Some dreams can be a bit jarring or uncomfortable. Dreams involve dramatic, humorous, and sometimes confusing symbolism, as you describe. You mention your sexual apathy and your relationship with your boyfriend. It is possible that your dream could be trying to help you face
these issues. Remember that characters in dreams do not always represent who they are in real life. While your father appears in your dream, his persona could be a symbol of your feelings about your relationship with your boyfriend, or something else entirely. Before definitively accepting the role of Electra, you may want to consider whether your sexual life, satisfaction, and desires are crossing dreamland wires with issues related to your father.

It sounds like you are interested in delving further into the meaning of your dream and/or your current relationship. Would you be interested in speaking with a trained clinician (psychologist, counselor) who will help you explore the meaning of your dream and/or the thoughts you are having about your self-described sexual apathy?

Outside of counseling, there are several other options. You could confide in the friends you mention about what your dream means (it's likely your friends have had uncomfortable dreams too, sharing the stand-out dreams may be a relief for both of you). You could consider opening a dialogue with your boyfriend about whether you are each sexually and otherwise satisfied with your relationship. You may want to consider consistently writing your thoughts in a journal after you have the dream and then reflecting on your reactions and interpretations. Another option is a vast number of dream interpretation books and websites; some are for entertainment while others are grounded in research and theory. See Health information online: Who can you trust? [2] to get an idea of how to discern trustworthy sources. None of these solutions is better or worse than the other, it's all about how you want to approach your dream.

The mysteries of the unconscious mind are as unique as the individual. All the best in unraveling your own personal mystery.

Alice!
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Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [11]
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [12]
Published date:
Jan 27, 1995
Last reviewed on:
Apr 24, 2015
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