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## Why do you wake up from a dream when you die

Photo: Katarina Kacicová / EyeEm/Getty Images/EyeEm When it comes to dreams, there's almost nothing more unsettling than dreaming about death, whether it be your own or that of a loved one. While death-related dreams might seem like a bad omen, there's no need to feel too anxious about them. In fact, they could portend a positive transition or change in your life. "Death in dreams is really about some kind of change or ending you're dealing with in your real life," says Lauri Quinn Loewenberg, professional dream analyst. "The subconscious will show us this change in the form of a death so we can better understand the finality of it. We can let go of that which we no longer need so we can grow and embrace that which is coming." Below, Loewenberg analyzes all the reasons why you may be dreaming about death, from dreams about your own death to dreaming about a death due to COVID-19. If you dream of going to a funeral ..."The main element of [a funeral dream] is that your subconscious is telling you there is something you need to lay to rest in your real life, something you need to close the lid on and recognize as no longer being an issue. Of course, whose funeral it is makes all the difference. If it's your own funeral, what part of yourself is now at peace? If it's the funeral of a friend, is there some issue between you two that you can now put to rest?" If you dream you're at a graveyard ...Loewenberg says that if your dream takes place in a graveyard but there's not a funeral happening, it could be a sign that something from your past is being dug up that ought to stay buried. "Your subconscious is showing you this issue in a graveyard setting to let you know how wrong it is to excavate it. If you die of a disease like COVID-19 ..."First off, if you have a huge fear of COVID this could just be your release of that stress. But otherwise, any form of disease that kills you in a dream is the way your body is telling you, there's something going on in your life that's very unhealthy. What would you, in your real life, also refer to as a disease? You know, are you drinking too much? Are you in a very unhealthy, toxic relationship? Your subconscious is trying to tell you this is going to yield some irreparable change if you don't correct this, you don't find a way to heal." If you see a dead body in your dream ...While most dreams about death have to do with the finality of a life change, the specifics of your dreams can give you clues as to how you're processing the change, according to Loewenberg. If you see a dead body in your dream, it could be a sign that you're struggling to let go. "It would also be about something that needs to be buried, isn't yet — it's been exposed, something that may have been brought back up." If you witness an autopsy in your dream ..."An autopsy is to figure out the manner of death. So an autopsy in a dream would mean you are trying to figure out why this relationship ended, or why this situation ended. Why your job ended, you know, whatever the case may be, what ending has happened in your life? And what means are you doing to figure out why?" If you dream of your plants or pets dying ... Plants and pets are things in your life that you spend time and effort nurturing. So Loewenberg explains that if your pet dies in a dream, it could signal that you're forgetting to care about something else in your life. "So for any of these things that would be in our care that are dying, we must ask ourselves, What in my life am I neglecting? Plants tend to represent something that has the potential to grow. A dog can represent a relationship. A cat often represents a woman, either the reproductive self or the sexual self. Fish can represent creative ideas, your ideas that thrive in your creative juices." If you die peacefully in your dream ..."This is a really good indication that the change you're going through, you're okay with it. You're going through a welcome change." If you die violently in your dream ...While dying peacefully indicates a welcome change, Loewenberg explains that dying violently is the opposite. "There's a change happening that you're resisting, or you're afraid of the change that's going on." If someone you know kills you in your dream ... "If it's someone you deal with closely, like a family member or best friend or your partner, then that means they are probably urging you to make some sort of change in real life. Death in a dream is a natural-occurring change that's happening, whereas murder is a forced change: You have to force yourself to quit smoking or you have to force yourself to cut off a friendship. If someone you know and are close to is trying to kill you, then they are probably urging you to make a change that you are resistant to." If a stranger kills you in your dream ... "If it's not an actual person you know, then this stranger is going to represent a part of yourself, or it can represent just the forces at work that are making this change happen." If you have this dream, Loewenberg encourages you to ask yourself: "Am I feeling pressured to change?" If you know you're going to die in your dream and you can't escape it ...This has to do with a change you're anticipating and know is going to happen, according to Loewenberg. "That sort of dream is preparing you for this inevitable ending." If you wake up right before you die in your dream ...Loewenberg explains that this could just be your body's physiological response to a fear of death. "Or you can wake up before the death happens because in real life, the actual change has not been completed. You're on the verge — you're on the cusp of it." If you don't wake up immediately after dying in your dream ..."So many people tell me they've actually experienced the feeling of death and leaving the body. That dream would indicate that change has happened. If you feel yourself leaving your body in that dream, that's a good indication that you're feeling like this change is transforming you." If your child dies in your dream ...Loewenberg says this is one of the most disturbing death dreams that anyone can have, but it's much less scary than it seems. "It's because your child has reached some sort of milestone, it's the end of the phase of their life. Whenever they start crawling, start walking, start feeding themselves, all these different big phases of life mark the end of that younger child. It's actually the way we kind of grieve — the loss of that phase of their life. Because once you have a child, time goes really, really fast." If your partner dies in your dream ...There are some questions to ask yourself if you're having this dream, Loewenberg says. "What change is happening with them? Have they lost a job? Have they lost weight? Are they working a lot more and you never see them? How have they changed, or how has your relationship with them changed?" If your friend dies in your dream ...This will likely mean that your relationship with your friend is changing, but Loewenberg says that if nothing is different, this dream could indicate something else. "Your friend is going to represent a part of yourself. How are you like your friend? What quality do you share? Maybe your friend is always cheerful and the one that's always emotionally supportive and you dream she dies. What's going on with that part of you? Have you become depressed? Are you in need of cheering up? Are you having a hard time finding happiness right now?" If you kill someone in your dream ... "If you're the one doing the killing, then you are the one actively making some kind of change in your real life. So if you are trying to quit drinking, if you are trying to eat better, if you are trying to change careers, what part of yourself or what part of your own life are you killing off, ending?" If you die young in your dream ... "If you are a younger self in your dream and you die, you've got to ask yourself, what was going on with you at that age? What were you like? What were you dealing with? Is there something from that point in time that you've been carrying with you but that now you're finally over?" The takeaway: If you're having dreams about death, there's nothing to be worried about. Instead of being scared, this is a perfect time to think about what changes you might be going through in your life. "Especially if you're dreaming of your own death or if it's of a loved one, you feel that fear and that grief," says Loewenberg. "The emotions in the dream are very, very real. And so you wake up thinking, 'Dear God, am I seeing the future?' But you're not. So don't worry. Instead, just ask yourself, what change or ending is happening in my life right now?" Read more about dreams on the Cut, including why you dream about your teeth falling out. 19 Reasons You Dream About Death, Dying When you dream you're in REM sleep (rapid eye movement). REM sleep is only slightly more "deep" than stage 1 of non-REM which means it's not that hard to wake you up in the first place. Dying in a dream is a stressful event, which causes your brain to release adrenaline. You can't sleep and have an adrenaline rush at the same time so you wake up. These dreams where you die and wake up are usually more memorable due to the fact that you wake up whereas most people don't remember 95% of their dreams. Sources: Adrenalin: "Being particularly scary or threatening, nightmares can provoke 'fight and flight' responses, and the release of adrenalin whilst we are still asleep. Once you awaken from a nightmare it may then take a little time to come down from this elevated state, preventing you from being able to get back to sleep as easily or quickly." Professo Colin Espie, Director of the Sleep Centre at the University of Glasgow and co-founder of Sleepio Forgetting Dreams: "We forget almost all dreams soon after waking up. Our forgetfulness is generally attributed to neurochemical conditions in the brain that occur during REM sleep, a phase of sleep characterized by rapid eye movements and dreaming. But that may not be the whole story. Perhaps the most compelling explanation is the absence of the hormone norepinephrine in the cerebral cortex, a brain region that plays a key role in memory, thought, language and consciousness. A study published in 2002 in the American Journal of Psychiatry supports the theory that the presence of norepinephrine enhances memory in humans, although its role in learning and recall remains controversial." "At least 95% of all dreams are not remembered. Certain brain chemicals necessary for converting short-term memories into long-term ones are suppressed during REM sleep. Unless a dream is particularly vivid and if one wakes during or immediately after it, the content of the dream is not remembered" Hobson, J.A.; McCarly, R.W. (1977). "The brain as a dream-state generator: An activation-synthesis hypothesis of the dream process". *American Journal of Psychiatry* 134 (12): 1335-1348.



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