SLEEP THEORIES
Sleep Theory #1

- Sleep played a protective role in human survival
- It keeps people safe during potentially dangerous times when our senses are limited (seeing in the dark!)
Sleep Theory #2

- Sleep may help us recuperate, restore and repair our brain tissue.
Sleep Theory #3

- Sleep restores and rebuilds our fading memories of the day’s experiences.
- After working on a task, then sleeping on it, people solve problems more insightfully than those who stay awake.
Sleep Theory #4

- Sleep is linked with the release of pituitary growth hormone.
Theory #1: Freud’s Wish Fulfillment Theory

- Latent content (hidden, unconscious) is revealed through manifest content (dreams)

- Dreams are a safe outlet in which to act out unacceptable or undesirable behaviors
Theory #1 continued: Freud’s Wish Fulfillment Theory

- Dreams help us work through conflict, problems, fears, etc. that we may be having trouble with in waking life.
- In dreams we can experience desirable outcomes that may not occur or are not realistic in waking life.
Theory #2: Information Processing

- Dreams help up process and organize information and stimuli from the day
- They help us consolidate memories
- And store information into memory
Theory #3: Physiological Function

- During REM sleep our brains create neural pathways,
- Preserve and repair existing pathways,
- Or destroy unused pathways
Theory #4: Activation Synthesis

**Part 1:** The sensory information in a dream is caused by random neural activity in the sensory, visual and auditory cortexes.

**Part 2:** Our mind connects that sensory information together to form a meaningful narrative.
Theory #5: Cognitive Theory

- Dreams are a reflection of the stage of a dreamer’s cognitive development.

- This theory is most often used with children to assess cognitive development.

- If the dreams are more abstract and symbolic, then the child is considered to be in the Formal Operational Stage.
Theory #5 continued: Cognitive Theory

- If the dreams are literal and concrete, this may reflect the Concrete Operational Stage of Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development.
Interpreting Dreams
Dream Analysis

- Dreams are the mind’s way of making sense of input from daily life.

- Dreams tap into a “database” of memory, experience, perception and cultural belief.

- With “database” information, dreams form new ideas and concepts that can help us understand our inner/unconscious world.
Exploration of Dreams

- Dreams often have to be interpreted from more than one perspective in order to be fully understood.

- Interpretation must include the dreamer’s understanding of his or herself.

- Exploration generally begins at a simplistic level and increases, through practice, to a deeper level of analysis.
Levels of Analysis

- **Conventional interpretation**: simple and apparent conclusions
- **Psychological approach**: takes a deeper look at the significance of the dream; analysis explores less obvious issues in dreamer’s life and subconscious
- **Spiritual meaning**: Analyze dream in terms of placement on spiritual path, universal connections, etc.
What to Focus On:

- **Situation or environment**: gives context (ex: dreaming of being in a school indicates a learning environment; this can be related to present environment)

- **Emotions experienced**: Understanding of the dream scenario

- **Symbolism of images**: Deciphering meaning of images included in the dream and how they work together

- Looking at all elements together, holistically, for complete analysis (big picture) and applying it to the present life’s situations
Steps to Help with the Process:

- Get a full night’s sleep (every night!).
- Don’t eat or have caffeine right before bed.
- Get into a routine, go to bed around the same time.
- Tell yourself before bed that you will remember your dreams in the morning.
- Write down your dream as soon as possible so details are fresh.
- With dreams difficult to interpret, describe your dream to a friend. Saying it out loud can help with recall and insight.
Dream Description

- Describe a dream you have had:
- Recently (as recently as possible)
- Repeatedly
- Vividly
- You should describe your dream in as much detail as possible. Include emotions and impressions as well as visual details.
- You should select a dream that you think is meaningful; something with depth, worthy of analysis
Dream Interpretation

- Re-read your dream description
- Add any additional details you remember.
- Identify 4 or 5 objects, people or places that you think are significant and write them down.
- Go to a bookstore or log onto the internet and look up dream symbolism. Write down 2 explanations for each word you wrote down (there can be many explanations for a symbol so make sure you have a well-rounded idea of your selected symbols).
- Write an analysis of your dream. Consider the activities, stressors, environment, etc. of your life at the time of your dream. Be as thorough as possible with your dream interpretation. Learn something about yourself!