

# Unlock your secret *by decoding your dreams*

**Which of these images do you see in your dream? Experts reveal how messages hidden in the night can make your day**

**A**s we whirl through our to-do's, juggling the chaos of our busy lives, we're not left with much mental energy to devote to big-picture planning—the kind of strategizing that connects us with a deeper sense of purpose. Luckily, our sleeping brain picks up where our waking mind leaves off. “Dreams help us powerfully process what would take too long in the conscious mind,” asserts Kelly Sullivan Walden, author of *It's All in Your Dreams*. “They help us be more intuitive, solve problems and trust our decision making.”

The challenge: We can't always remember or make sense of our dreams upon waking up. “Dreams are a story being told in a symbolic language,” says Michael Lennox, Ph.D., author of *Dream Sight*, noting that often it's the scene that most resonates with you that holds the key to decoding the dream.

The pictures on these pages illustrate common dream scenarios. Just choose the one that best represents your last dream (or the one you're inexplicably drawn to), then read on for your bliss secrets.

## WILD ANIMAL

### It's time to get strong

“Anytime we dream of encounters with powerful animals, it's a reminder that we are connected to something greater than ourselves,” says Kelly Bulkeley, Ph.D., author of *An Introduction to the Psychology of Dreaming*. Your first instinct may be to run, but often the beast represents an aspect of your strength.

“Running from the animal means we're running from our power,” confirms Walden. “Instead, see the lion, tiger or bear as trying to give you a gift and reacquainting you with your strength.” She says mentally turning and facing the animal when you wake up and accepting the gift can be incredibly healing. “You don't have to figure out the *how*, but just know that a part of your power is chasing after you.”



## LOSING YOUR ID

### It's time to change direction

“It's common to dream of losing an item of value,” observes Gillian Holloway, Ph.D., author of *5 Steps to Decode Your Dreams*. But misplacing your wallet signals that something in your life is off: “The purse is a representation of your identity, and the dream is saying you don't want to lose yourself,” she says. Such dreams crop up during times of transition, like when you're taking on a new job that's a bad fit. “As women, if something doesn't work we think, *I'll just try harder*,” muses Holloway. “But the dream is telling you that if you continue, you're going to lose something significant.”



# path to success

## FLYING

### It's time to take a big risk

"Flying dreams feel good because it's a moment when we're breaking free of all that weighs us down," says Lennox. Your subconscious is cheering you on by showing you that you're capable of rising above obstacles. A flying dream signals that now is the time to focus your energy on the projects that lift your spirit the most, like that new consulting gig, confirms Lauri Quinn Loewenberg, author of *Dream on It*. "The dream is saying, *The sky's the limit, darling, keep going!*"



## A TIDAL WAVE

### It's time to let go

"Many women dream of a giant wave and it's a big warning that you're reaching a breaking point. If you don't stop pushing yourself, you're going to crack," asserts Walden. "The dream is an ally. It's telling you that in order to preserve yourself and maintain optimum functionality, you've got to prioritize your own needs."

To release tension before it knocks you off balance, Lennox suggests surrendering: "Half of the people who have dreams of an approaching tsunami report that they just let go and floated, and all was well. When we let go instead of trying to stay in control, we have a more graceful experience."

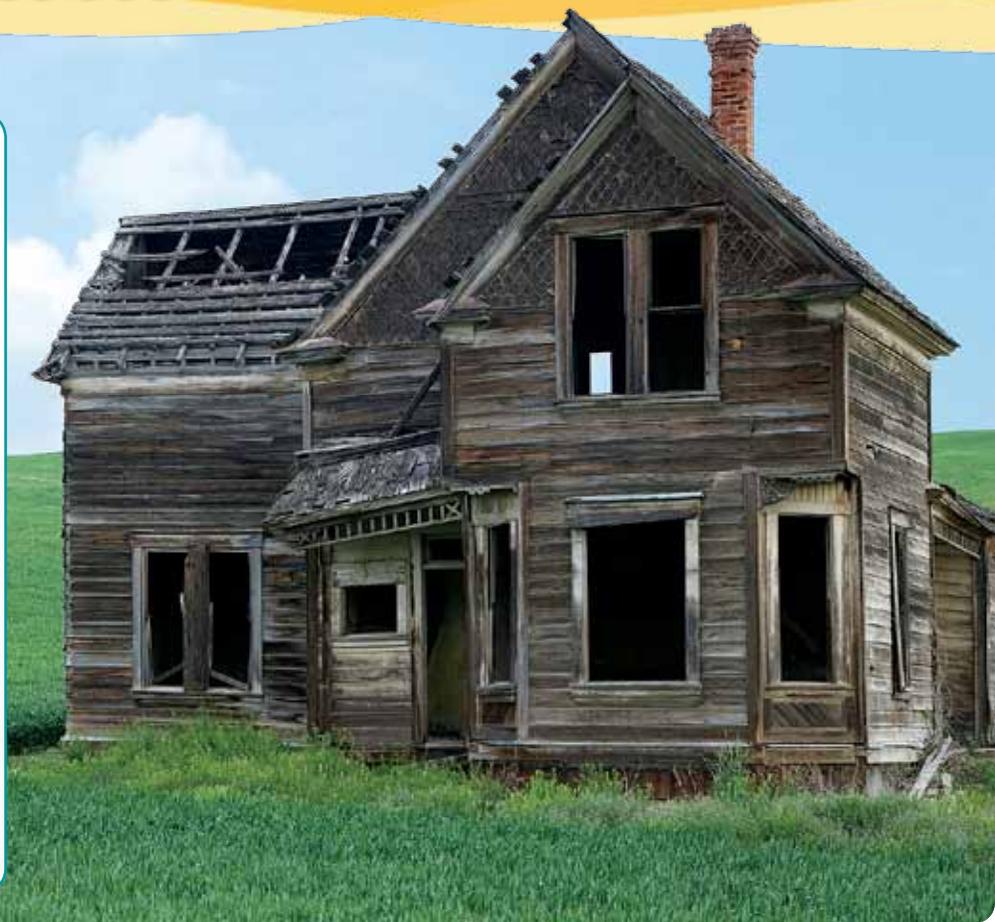
Turn for more dream decoding

## A DILAPIDATED HOUSE

### It's time to love you

"A house that appears in your dream, whether it's your actual home or not, represents you—your body, your state of mind," says Lauri Loewenberg, creator of [WhatYourDreamMeans.com](http://WhatYourDreamMeans.com). "If you're hard on yourself and constantly having thoughts like, *I'm not worthy*, your dream will reflect back a dilapidated old home." The crumbling roof signals the toll that put-downs have taken on your self-esteem.

Loewenberg suggests envisioning showing the house some kindness, like giving it a fresh coat of paint. "Dreams speak in symbols, so the painting or shoveling represents work you're ready to do to clear the psyche and confront your inner critic," she notes. "This is something you can do in waking life. If you change your day thoughts, dream thoughts will follow."



## A DEARLY DEPARTED

### It's time to seek wisdom

In visitation dreams, a departed loved one appears offering anything from an embrace to guidance. These mystical experiences can be surprisingly lifelike and multisensory: "One woman I spoke to said she dreamed her deceased husband came back and they danced," recounts dream researcher Kelly Bulkeley, Ph.D. "She remembered vividly the feel of his jacket under her hands and the scent of his cologne."

"These dreams tend to appear when there's something going on in your life that makes you feel stuck, confused and afraid you're about to make a bad decision," notes Bulkeley. For example, perhaps you're contemplating a risky investment option to increase your retirement savings, or maybe you're considering taking on a new role at work. "Some people report a loved one giving them clear instructions in the dream," says Bulkeley. "But more often, just the presence of the dearly departed loved one reminds the dreamer of all that the person represented, and that's enough to tap into their perspective and gain new insights."



## CELEBRITY CAMEO

### It's time to let yourself shine

“Dreaming that you’re hanging out and laughing with a celebrity like Julia Roberts is very empowering,” asserts dream expert Kelly Sullivan Walden. “On one level, these famous people represent the celebrity aspect of yourself and encourage you to step into the spotlight of your own life.” That can mean seeking outlets that showcase your signature strengths, like putting your flair for connecting people to good use by volunteering to serve as your church’s social-events coordinator.

This extra push can be especially helpful for women who have passed on opportunities to avoid the discomfort of being front and center in the past. “Because women want to be liked, we often play our power down so we don’t intimidate or make people feel bad,” observes Walden. “We think, *If I take a bigger piece of the pie, there’s less for others.* But in reality, we’re all bringing something different to the table. A celebrity dream can help you step more confidently into roles that are right for you, enhancing your ability to be successful.”



## AN AWE-INSPIRING VISTA

### It's time to take a step back

Oftentimes, it’s so easy to get caught up in mundane details (scheduling conflicts, travel delays, pick-up times) that we miss those fleeting moments that make all our efforts worth it (your sister’s ecstatic expression when you greet her at the airport). That’s when you’ll fall asleep and see a stunning sunset beyond a mountain range, or endless fields spotted with vibrant wildflowers.

“A dream of this mind-opening awe of nature can be an antidote to the tunnel vision that funnels down our world so we only see our problems,” explains Bulkeley. In fact, research shows this mental nudge to take a step back and smell the roses is key to problem solving: “Having a powerful dream in nature can give you a bigger perspective on whatever is going on in your life so you can face the issue more creatively.”

