



SNAKES AND FEARS

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I have read somewhere that dreaming of snakes could manifest the dreamer's fears in life. I guess you could call me perennially fearful then, judging by the countless nights I have had nightmares of being chased by snakes of all lengths and sizes.

However, I also believe that I am not alone in having such dreams, and therefore I am not alone in being bothered by fears, in whatever shape or form.

We all have our fears. They may range anywhere from career inhibitions to fears about living life in general. Our dreams only tell us in subtler terms that those fears do exist. Maybe having such dreams is the manner by which our subconscious tells us to see those fears as they are—as nasty, creepy creatures that are meant to be squished. In my dreams, I often find myself running away from those fearful representations, but there have been times when I have also trampled, squashed underfoot, or slain them in some of my dreams. Waking up from a highly-victorious dream often leaves me tired but somehow surprisingly feeling good inside. I don't know if that comes from having soothed my subconscious in some way or what.

Fears are often said to be precisely addressed that way: by facing them squarely and doing what one can to allay them. We have been taught from childhood how to get out into the world and carve our corner in the sun. Our own mothers had pushed us to stop being crybabies in preschool and play and learn with kids our age. This very thing we also do to our own children, present and future. We continuously encourage our children to find their own niches, share the world with others around them. By loving encouragement and motivational guidance, we eventually help our children succeed in slaying their own dragons (read: snakes) and facing their life's battles.

But our role is more crucial when taken in the leadership-by-example approach.

When our kids see us running away from our responsibilities, for instance, they learn the nuances of escapism and irresponsibility. Showing them the appropriate manner of facing our duties and upholding a virtuous existence serves as a lasting reminder for them to do so in like manner. When we fail to show our own kids how courageous we are in facing the consequences of our own actions, we fail miserably in our role as good parents. There are exemptions however, where kids who have witnessed their parents shirking from their responsibilities get a firm resolve not to duplicate what they see. But those are exemptions, as I have said.

When our kids confide their dreams of snakes to us, let us tell them the truth about such dreams: that those snakes are fears we may or may not yet have, but slaying them in our dreams is tantamount to having conquered them subconsciously. Perhaps, this way, they will learn to face their real fears in the real world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Have you ever had dreams of snakes? Do you remember distinctly how you have felt while having those dreams?
2. Why should we learn to face our fears?
3. What becomes of someone who never learns to face their fears?
4. What are your most common fears in life? Have you ever had a traumatic experience that has led to any of those fears?
5. Talk about a fearless person you greatly admire.