

Why do we dream? Jandial unpacks in his book several theories that remain plausible attempts to answer this question. The first suggests that dreams are a kind of virtual simulation in which we test different responses to threats or situations and imagine the consequences. This would explain why in various studies conducted over the last century, participants' dreams often repeat regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status: we dream that we are falling, being chased or attacked, arriving late, trying to do something repeatedly without success... There is no scientific evidence, but this reality hints at some genetic influence, as if the characteristics and content of dreams were, according to the neurosurgeon, "hardwired into our DNA."

Another theory suggests that dreaming keeps the brain active and ready, even while we sleep, so that when we wake up, the brain can quickly become active and alert. Furthermore, the fact that dreams are often surreal led U.S. neuroscientist Erik Hoel to propose the so-called overfitted brain hypothesis, according to which dreams help us generalize what we learn during our waking hours, which could lead to more flexible and creative thinking.

According to Mayà, this would explain why composers from groups like The Beatles or The Rolling Stones, among others, have dreamed songs that they later wrote upon waking, or why some dreams preceded technological or scientific discoveries such as the sewing machine, Bohr's atomic model, or the periodic table of elements.

Finally, there is what Jandial calls the "dream theory," in which dreams act as a sort of nightly therapist that helps us process and manage emotions related to anxiety — a theory recently supported by some scientific research. "Dreaming is fundamental for emotional regulation. Dreaming, on one hand, helps us remember valuable experiences and, on the other, to forget painful ones," says Álvarez.

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