

Dream rebound of suppressed emotional thoughts: the influence of cognitive load.

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Source

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Abstract

Initial evidence suggests that suppressing a thought prior to sleep results in subsequent dreaming of that thought. The present research examined the influence of cognitive load on dreaming following suppression. In Experiment 1, 100 participants received either a suppression instruction or no instruction for an intrusive thought prior to sleep, and subsequently completed a dream diary. Participants instructed to suppress reported dreaming about the target thought more than controls; dream rebound was predicted by poorer performance on a working memory task. In Experiment 2, 126 participants received either a suppression instruction or no instruction for an intrusive thought prior to sleep, and half of participants also had cognitive load of learning a 9-digit number. Participants receiving the suppression instruction under cognitive load reported greater dream rebound than other participants. These findings indicate that thought suppression prior to sleep leads to dream rebound, and this effect is enhanced by cognitive load.

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PMID:

21115260

[PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]