

## Lucid Dream Induction Technique: Finding Your Hands in a Dream

I first read of the Carlos Castaneda technique for becoming aware in the dream state through this passage in his third book, *Journey to Ixtlan*:

“You must start by doing something very simple,” he [don Juan] said. “Tonight in your dreams you must look at your hands.” I laughed out loud. His tone was so factual that it was as if he were telling me to do something commonplace.

“Why do you laugh?” He asked with surprise. “How can I look at my hands in my dreams?”

“Very simple, focus your eyes on them just like this.” He bent his head forward and stared at his hands with his mouth open. His gesture was so comical that I had to laugh.

“Seriously, how can you expect me to do that?” I asked.

“The way I’ve told you,” he snapped. “You can of course, look at whatever. . . . I said your hands because that was the easiest thing for me to look at. Don’t think it’s a joke. Dreaming is as serious as seeing or dying or any other thing in this awesome mysterious world. Think of it as something entertaining.” ( Page 98 *Journey to Ixtlan* )

Don Juan certainly seemed serious about such a simple technique! So I tried it, every night for about five minutes before going to sleep. Within a few nights, it happened. I became consciously aware in the dream state.

From a psychological perspective, the Castaneda approach establishes a simple stimulus-response associational linkage between seeing one’s hands and realizing, “I’m dreaming!” When we consistently associate the sight of our hands with the idea, “I’m dreaming!”, then like Pavlov, we set up a mental conditioned response which sparks an aware realization in the dream state. As Pavlov learned, we need to repeat this activity frequently to establish a **solid and automatic** association. By creating this association in the waking state, we can influence the dreaming state.

### Here you have my version of a modified Castaneda technique:

- 1) Sit in your bed, and drop the cares and concerns of the day. Take a minute to do this.
- 2) Look softly at your hands, and as you do so, tell yourself in a caring manner that “Tonight while I dream, I will see my hands and realize I am dreaming.”
- 3) Continue to softly look at your hands and mentally repeat the affirmation, “Tonight while I dream, I will see my hands, and realize I am dreaming.”

- 4) Don't be bothered if your eyes cross, or you begin to get tired. Remain at peace and continue to repeat slowly and gently your intent.
- 5) After five minutes or once you feel too tired or sleepy, quietly end the practice.
- 6) Gently remind yourself of your intention to see your hands in a dream and then realize that you are dreaming, and go to sleep.
- 7) When you wake up in the middle of the night, gently recall your last dream; did you see your hands? Resume your intention to see your hands and realize that you are dreaming.
- 8) Repeat this approach faithfully each night, and you should have a lucid dream. When you wake from your lucid dream, take a moment and write it down in your dream journal—write the entire dream; how you realized you were dreaming; what you did while aware that you were dreaming, etc. Congratulations!