

Ask the expert

Q&A

Q *Why can't we always remember our dreams?*

A This has some evolutionary advantage: If we fail to forget dreams, we might confuse dream experiences with waking experiences, and face possible deadly consequences.

However, occasionally we do remember certain dreams, and some people recall their dreams more often than others.

What are the physiological explanations of such phenomena?

It has been shown that “high re-

callers” woke up more frequently at night, and their brains responded to complex sounds (for example, their own first names, compared to simple sounds like beeping) more actively than “low recallers” did during wakefulness.

These findings suggest the possibility of neurophysiological differences between events of successful and unsuccessful dream recall, and between people with high and low dream-recall frequency.

Specifically, scientists have recently discovered in rats that, during rapid-eye-movement (REM)

sleep, the memory-consolidating activity decreased significantly.

REM sleep is a phase of sleep where random eye movements and dreaming occur. This finding explains why dreams are so difficult to remember.

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