

**Paranormal "U"****Understanding Sleeping Disorders**

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Over the years we have heard a lot of reports from clients on experiences that occur while they are sleeping that appear to be paranormal in nature. These experiences range from being awakened by hearing, seeing, or feeling someone in their room to feeling like someone is holding them down to a sensation of being touched to having something sit on the bed next to them. These experiences are very real to them as they occur. They can remember every detail of the experience. Sometimes these experiences happen over and over again and sometimes just the one time.

Some of these experiences may very well be paranormal in nature and would need an investigation to determine. However, another thing to consider is if these experiences are related to a sleeping disorder, or dyssomnia. Before jumping to the "boogie man" see if what you or your client is experiencing sounds like something described below. If from this information it appears a sleeping disorder is being experienced, seek assistance from a trained medical professional for a full and accurate diagnosis.

Some of the more common Sleeping Disorders are:

**Hypnagogic Hallucinations**

A hypnagogic hallucination happens when a person is falling asleep. These dreamlike hallucinations can be heard, seen, felt, or all of the above. It is one of the four main symptoms of narcolepsy. These hallucinations can be associated with drug use, sleep deprivation, psychosis, neurological disorders, and delirium tremens (DTs).

**Hypnopompic State/Hallucinations**

The opposite of an hypnagogic hallucination is an hypnopompic hallucination. This is an hallucination which occurs as the person is waking up. Since this occurs in the transition between being asleep and being awake the person will feel awake in their mind but be paralyzed in their body. Much like the hypnagogic hallucination the person can have sensations of hearing, seeing, and feeling things that are not there. A very common report is a feeling of falling, not being able to breathe, and/or seeing a frightening figure over them. These hallucinations happen in higher occurrence with people that work the night shift and/or people that are sleep deprived.

**Narcolepsy**

Narcolepsy is when a person has excessive sleepiness and/or falls asleep, known as attacks, at inappropriate times. These people often experience disturbed nighttime sleep and an abnormal daytime sleep pattern. Narcolepsy is often confused with insomnia. Narcoleptics generally experience the REM stage of sleep within the first 5 minutes; whereas most people do not experience REM sleep until an hour or so later. Narcolepsy is a neurological sleep disorder and is not caused by mental illness or psychological problems. With Narcolepsy people can experience a sudden loss of muscle tone, known as Cataplexy, that leads to feelings of weakness and a loss of voluntary muscle control.

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#### Understanding Sleeping Disorders

##### Insomnia

Insomnia is when a person has difficulty falling asleep and/or maintaining sleep. This lack of sleep can impair daytime functions. Insomnia is very common and occurs in about 30 to 50% of the general population. Some of the common causes of insomnia are: jet lag, shift work, stressful life situations, drug or alcohol use, drug or alcohol withdrawal, cigarette smoking, caffeine intake, and certain medications. There are also other medical and psychiatric conditions that can cause Insomnia such as: asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), congestive heart failure, obesity, acid reflux, hyperthyroidism, urinary problems, chronic pain, fibromyalgia, Parkinson's disease, dementia, depression, psychosis, mania, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), menopause, pregnancy, and fever.

##### Parasomnia

Parasomnias refers to a category of sleep disorders that involve movements, behaviors, emotions, perceptions, and dreams that are abnormal. The exception to this is sleep apnea. Parasomnia can occur in all sleeping states from falling asleep to actual sleep to between sleep stages to during arousal from sleep. Some examples of Parasomnias are sleep-related eating disorder, sleepwalking, night terrors, sleep paralysis, and sleep aggression.

##### Sleep Paralysis, aka Old Hag Syndrome

Sleep paralysis is caused when our mind comes awake before our body does leaving our limbs and body paralyzed. Sleep paralysis is thought to be a result of a disruption in Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep, where we normally have complete muscle weakness (atonia) that keeps us from acting out their dreams. This disruption occurs before the natural muscle weakness effect wears off, thus causing the person to feel held down by something and/or being completely paralyzed. Sleep paralysis is a temporary state and can happen when the person is either falling into and/or waking up from sleep. This is a similar experience that can occur when an arm or leg goes "to sleep", but the person will not have the associated numbness. Sufferers from this disorder have frequently reported have terrifying visions of someone in the room, in which they can't react because of being paralyzed. Sleep paralysis has been linked to other health issues such as narcolepsy, migraines, anxiety disorders, and obstructive sleep apnea, but can occur by itself. Most symptoms are suffocations, hallucinations, and under-functioning of body parts. In severe cases it can lead to heart attack. In the paranormal field this phenomena is known as "Old Hag Syndrome".

Additional information:

Hypnagogic Hallucinations

<http://sleepdisorders.about.com/od/glossary/g/Hypnagogic.htm>

<http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=10482>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallucination>

<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Hypnagogic+hallucinations>



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Additional information (continued):

Hypnopompic State/Hallucinations

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypnopompia>

<http://www.sleep.com/content/hypnopompic-hallucinations>

Narcolepsy

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narcolepsy>

[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/narcolepsy/detail\\_narcolepsy.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/narcolepsy/detail_narcolepsy.htm)

Insomnia

[http://www.emedicinehealth.com/insomnia/article\\_em.htm](http://www.emedicinehealth.com/insomnia/article_em.htm)

<http://www.medicinenet.com/insomnia/article.htm>

Parasomnia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parasomnia>

<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/parasomnias>

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/ask-the-expert/sleep-and-parasomnias>

Sleep Paralysis, aka Old Hag Syndrome

<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/sleep-paralysis>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleep\\_paralysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleep_paralysis)

<http://sleepparalysissymptoms.com/>

Rapid Eye Movement (REM)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/REM\\_atonia#Physiology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/REM_atonia#Physiology)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/REM\\_atonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/REM_atonia)

<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/excessive-sleepiness-10/sleep-101>

Atonia

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2579974/>

<http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=9811>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/atonia>

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Atonia>

