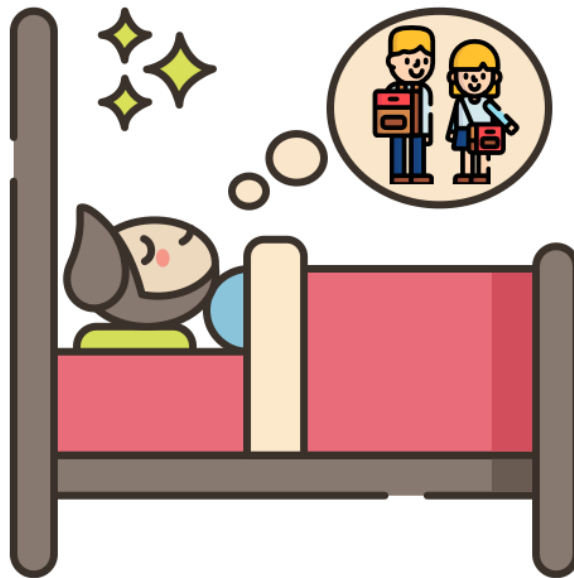


Dream

This isn't just one true story, but millions of true stories!



I would like to thank my friends **Jonny Giordano** and **Emma Govan** for their helpful comments.

Ahmed Shalaby

Maynooth, Ireland

04/11/2024

Dream

This isn't just one true story, but millions of true stories!

In the beginning, and before anything else, I would like to tell you a few things about myself. **First:** My name doesn't matter at all; I have many names. And if I were to start with the first name now, the remaining life of this miserable planet wouldn't be enough to reach the last one. But let's pick a random name from among my many. For example, let's choose '**Ahmed**'. There are millions of people named '**Ahmed**' whose lives are like mine anyway.

Second: I don't think my age matters either; as all ages are perfectly valid for what I want to say. But let's again pick a random number; let's say forty years, or forty-five? But here I face a big dilemma that I cannot handle at all; as **Omar** likes even numbers, and **Fatima** likes odd numbers, and I honestly don't want to bother either of them. So, let's say I'm forty and a half years old to be fair to both **Omar** and **Fatima**.

And now, as that man who is forty and a half years old named **Ahmed**, I would like to confess something to you. I'm depressed, deeply depressed, and very sad to my core, and my heart does not bleed blood; but rather bleeds hearts that in turn bleed hearts that bleed blood; thick black blood. And my soul is also shattered like my soul, for honestly, I have not found anything more broken than it, so that I could compare my wretched soul to it. In short, I'm a dead man, but I still able to breathe, and yet breathe nothing but death.

Many fools, both those I know and those I don't, who fill this unjust world in every corner, have advised me to seek treatment for my depression, insisting that there must be a solution to this torment I endure. But, my friend, believe me, never try to convince fools that they are fools; because they simply are just fools.

And now, as that depressed, deeply sad man, who is forty and a half years old and goes by the name **Ahmed**, I listened to the words of one of those fools; because I too have become a fool like them. I sit now listening to a scientific lecture delivered by a decent PhD student, who seems to be American judging by his accent. The lecture was about how dreams cause depression!

I will summarize for you what I understood in a brief and boring manner. Boring, but not because the lecture was dull, quite the opposite. It will be boring because I'm a boring person now. I used to be funny and cheerful, I think, or at least that's what **Omar** and **Fatima** used to tell me.

The young man classified sleep into two categories. The first, which concerns us now, is the sleep during which we dream those dreams that resemble real life. As I understood, he explained that there is a relationship between depression and this type of sleep, and that if we were to reduce this sleep, we can eliminate depression. That's what the research says, or at least that's what my exhausted mind gathered from the lecture. Then the young man held up a damned electronic hat of his own design, to be worn around the head to help accomplish this miserable task.

The lecture was nearing its end, and I was thinking of only one thing, that this well-meaning young man might be able, with that damned hat he holds in his hands, to rid me of my depression, and in doing so he will completely end my dreams. I mean dreams of sleep of course, not dreams of life, as someone as dead as I am no longer wants anything from this damned planet.

The lecture ended, and the chairperson stood up, asking the audience if anyone had any questions. I stood in my place, raising both my hands as I had always done throughout my life, and asked to pose one question. The chairperson gave me permission to speak, and I said...

- Oh, young man, beautiful, handsome like my **Omar**, first and foremost, I detest that hat of yours from the bottom of my heart. I'm truly sorry if I seem a bit rude; but I don't tolerate hypocrisy, and I really dislike that hat of yours. Not because it looks bad, on the contrary sir, your hat is aesthetic in design, but I hate all hats, especially those that encircle the whole head like yours.

And if what you say is true, you will put me in a great predicament that I have no strength to bear at all with **Omar** and **Fatima**. You will make me appear a traitor and helpless. I know I'm a traitor and helpless anyway, but sometimes I forget that, and forgetting makes all the difference. But what you say will make me feel betrayal and helplessness every second of my life. And if you ask me, who am I betraying? I'm certainly betraying **Omar** and **Fatima**.

And also, man, if you rid me of my depression, I will have no motivation for this life. Yes, sir, this depression you are talking about is my only reason to endure another damn day in this miserable life with all its boring details. But deep down, I also don't want to die.

I know you're all calling me a contradiction and crazy right now, but honestly, your opinion doesn't matter to me at all anymore. I truly don't want to die; I just want to sleep forever in the sky. I know you're asking yourselves now what is the difference between death and sleeping forever in the sky? The difference is significant, gentlemen! It's a huge difference! A stupid man like me can't explain it at all; I just want to sleep forever in the sky. Really, that's all I want.

Yesterday, just a few hours ago, I mean, not yesterday metaphorically, I had decided to commit suicide, but I didn't have the energy even to do that. Can you imagine that, young man? Depressed to the point that I couldn't get out of my bed to shake off this shattered soul. Sorry for the length, gentlemen; I know your time is extremely valuable, but I will finish my question right away. I decided to postpone my suicide to today instead of yesterday.

But when I woke up today, that strange motive was born within me to endure another miserable day in this world, just one more day for sure. I completely removed the idea of suicide from my mind and postponed it for another day. Do you know why, young man? Because I felt that betrayal once again, and if you ask me again, who I am betraying this time, it is definitely **Omar** and **Fatima**.

Omar and **Fatima**, my children who have not yet reached the age of six, came to me in my dream yesterday. Yes, sir, that dream you want to take away from me to cure my depression! That dream is the only thing that drives me to live another day!

Omar and **Fatima** came to me in my dream yesterday, and they were happy. They were beautiful. They were running towards me to hug me, just as they always do when I go to pick them up from school. But it wasn't at the school gate that they came to me from as they always do. I walked past the gate, and there where the school stood was nothing but rubble. They came out of the rubble, young man, the rubble! But it's not much of a difference, gentlemen! It's the same school anyway, with just a slight, negligible change in its condition. Who really cares about those small details! What truly matters is that **Omar** and **Fatima** were so beautiful and happy.

But I want to ask you all a question, gentlemen, that has nothing to do with what I'm talking about. And sorry this time for straying to a different topic. **"Is there an eye doctor among you? Are my eyes fine, gentlemen? Does anyone see any flaws in them that I don't notice?"** Because I can see all of you clearly now, very clearly. I see your faces, your eyes, and your arms well. However, in the dream yesterday, when **Omar** approached me, he was completely stained with a red substance that I don't know what it is. Perhaps he spilled his strawberry juice, which he loves madly, all over

himself. The strawberry juice I prepare for him every morning before school.

But when **Omar** came close, I could not see his arms as I see yours now. I think there's something wrong with my eyes; their condition is unstable. Sometimes I see clearly, just as I see you all now, and sometimes I just lose sight of certain details in the picture, like **Omar's** arms.

Fatima, too, was stained with strawberry juice, even though she doesn't like strawberries but loves milk. It seems that **Omar** was teasing her, as usual. Those little rascals, my children, I know them well.

When **Fatima** came closer to me, I couldn't see her right eye. No, I think it was the left one? No, no, it was her right eye! Forgive me, gentlemen, I've been terrible at distinguishing directions ever since I was a child, running away from those men in similar uniforms, who wore those cursed metal helmets, much like your hat, young man. And they carried in their hands complex iron tools, that make loud sounds like the ones you all make here during festivals and celebrations. And from their nozzles come out tiny, fast metal balls. My father told me one day that if one of those balls touched me, it would make me sleep forever, not in my bed, but forever in the sky.

I thought my father was joking with me as he often did. He loved to joke a lot. He told me that, and a few days later, one of those tiny fast balls touched him. And now, he is sleeping forever, in the sky, of course. My father never lied; since he fell asleep, he hasn't woken up until now. He was handsome,

just like uncle and grandfather, and beautiful like my siblings, my wife, my mother, and my aunt, who are all together asleep forever in the sky. **Omar** and **Fatima** are sleeping with them too! That's why I don't want to die; I just want to sleep forever. I don't want to die alone; I want to sleep forever with all of them, especially with **Omar** and **Fatima**!

What truly matters is that **Omar** and **Fatima** were incredibly beautiful and happy. I have never seen in my life children as beautiful as they were last night. They approached me and, as usual, hugged me so tightly, I still feel it now and yet, at the same time, I can't remember feeling **Omar's** arms around me. So, gentlemen, is there any connection between what the eye sees and what the body feels? Perhaps, who knows? Maybe my body has another ailment. But **Omar** was embracing me with his soul, hugging me fiercely, so fiercely that it almost suffocated me and made me feel how much of a traitor and helpless I am.

He placed his lips kissing me on my cheek. There is only one thing softer than his lips in this world, do you know what it is? The lips of his sister **Fatima**. **Fatima** who was also kissing me on my other cheek.

Before I woke up from my dream, the one you want to take away from me, oh young man, they welcomed me as they always do, with their cheerful voices and sweet words that still resonate in my soul even now. Their words made me feel the betrayal if I ended my life. Their words that push me to resist day after day in this damned miserable world. Oh,

gentlemen, **Omar** and **Fatima**, after hugging me madly and kissing me fiercely, they smiled at me with their usual innocence, even if covered in strawberry juice, do you know what they said to me?

“Dad, hello!”


Dedicated to all the **Palestinian** and **Lebanese** children who lost their lives during this war, which was always unjust. And of course there are hundreds and hundreds of absolutely beautiful, innocent children named **Omar** and **Fatima**, who are now sleeping happily forever in the sky!

Dream Deprivation: A Treatment for Depression?

Jonathan Giordano

More than half a century ago, the association between Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep and depression was first observed. Depriving individuals of REM sleep through physical awakenings appeared to reliably alleviate depressive symptoms in certain individuals. However, subsequent studies have questioned this therapeutic approach over the ensuing decades.

The relationship between REM sleep and depression remains unclear, with more questions raised than answers provided by empirical investigations. This presentation will examine the history REM deprivation as a treatment for depression and propose the development of an open-source tool to address unanswered inquiries in this domain



Hamilton Seminar Room (317)
Wednesday 15th May @ 2:00pm

I wrote this story the day after my friend **Johnny Giordano**'s lecture, the decent American PhD student who is holding a cursed hat in his hands in this story, as part of the seminar series given by PhD students at Hamilton Institute.