Podcast: Imagine This

Episode: Where do dreams come from?

Duration: 8’43

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Bri: Hello, my name's Bri. Today on Imagine This we're going to be finding out about something that we can do while we're sleeping.

[Lullaby]

[Kids yawn]

Bri: When you lay your head down on your pillow and you're all cosy in your bed, you close your eyes and you fall gently into a deep sleep. But even when you're sleeping, there's something you can do. What's something that can happen when we sleep?

Kids: Dream.

Bri: Yeah. You might have a dream. So what is a dream?

Kids: I think a dream is when you relax still and stay quiet and you think of something

Bri: How do we see the dreams?

Kids: When we close our eyes, we see them in our mind.

Bri: They sound kind of mysterious, these dreams. Well our question today is about dreams and it comes from four-year-old Winifred.

Winifred: I'm Winifred and I want to know where dreams come from.

Bri: Where do you think the dreams come from?

[Curious orchestral music]

Kids: Your body?

Bri: What part of your body?

Kids: Our legs and from our tummy. Maybe also from our blood or our bones.

Bri: Then how do we see them in our mind?

Kids: A special spirit brings it all the way to your way to your brain.

Your brain!

Bri: Ah, our brains. Let's take a closer look at what's happening inside our brains and talk to Dr. Shane Rogers. Shane is a professor of the mind. Hi, Shane.

Shane: Konnichi wa, Bri.

Bri: Konnichi wa? What does that mean?

Shane: That's hello in Japanese.

Bri: Ah, you're practicing your Japanese with us.

Shane: Yeah.

Bri: Good one. Shane, what happens when we go to sleep?

[Lullaby]

[Kids sigh sleepily]

Shane: When we go to sleep, we close our eyes and our body rests. But while our body is resting, our brain is still working.

Bri: Do you think we could take a look inside the brain while it's sleeping?

Shane: Sure thing.

Bri: Shall we take a look?

Kids: Yes.

[Dreamy chime]

Bri: Wow. This is a bit different.

Kids: We're inside the brain.

[Electrical sparks]

Bri: What's going on in here.

Shane: There's lots of electricity in our brain that makes it work.

Bri: Electricity in our brain? Like a battery?

Kids: Our brains don't really have batteries.

Bri: Oh, so what kind of electricity is in our brain then?

Shane: Kind of like lots of little fireworks.

[Fireworks]

Kids: Kaboom.

They look a little bit like lightning.

Yeah! They look like stars. They're flashing.

Shane: These fireworks help us think.

Bri: They're wires, in our brain?

Kids: They are wires, they're brain wires.

They're all connected.

It looks like they're so busy.

Shane: Yup, our brains are always busy.

[Electricity sparking]

Shane: When we're awake, our brains are really busy.

[Snoring, softer electricity sparking]

Shane: When we're asleep, our brains are less busy, but they're still working.

Bri: So all this activity in our brain makes us dream?

Shane: That's right. Our dreams come from our mind.

Kids: Your head.

Yeah.

Bri: What do we dream about?

[Dreamy chime]

Shane: We can dream about anything our minds can imagine. We can dream about things we did that day.

Kids: I went to an aquarium and I saw lots of real fish.

[Bubbling water]

Bri: So what did you dream?

Kids: I dreamed about seahorses.

Shane: Or we can dream about playing with our friends.

Kids: Kyle and Alley and Abbey.

Shane: Or what we had for lunch.

Kids: I had quesadillas and sour cream.

Shane: Ooh, delicious.

Bri: Yum.

Shane: Sometimes we dream about things we've seen on TV or in a movie.

[Cheeky music]

Kids: Whenever I watch it, I dream of them doing the same things on my TV.

Shane: Sometimes we dream about things that we want.

Kids: I have a wish that I could go into any show I want and be on the show.

Bri: Imagine if you could go inside a TV show, maybe you'll dream about it.

Kids: This is not my dream.

[Curious oboe]

Bri: What's your dream about?

Kids: I can dream about something scary, about spiders.

Bri: Aw, not spiders. Shane, do we sometimes have dreams that we don't want?

Shane: Yeah. We can have all types of different dreams.

Bri: But why would our brain want to give us scary dreams or sad dreams?

Shane: Some scientists think that our dreams might help us to solve our problems while we're sleeping.

[Music gets darker]

Bri: So even my bad dreams might be my brain just sorting things out while I sleep?

Shane: Yeah, potentially.

Bri: What else can dreams do?

Shane: Some scientists believe dreams might help us to make better memories.

Bri: How could dreams help us remember?

Shane: By replaying things over and over again, like practicing.

Bri: Do you think you practice your Japanese while you sleep?

[Snoring, dreamy chime]

Shane: Maybe. When we're dreaming, our minds can go over things again and again. Konnichi wa. Konnichi wa.

Bri: So the things that happen in our dreams, are they real or imaginary?

Kids: Not real because they're magical and magical things aren't real.

Shane: I like the way you're thinking about that. Dreams are like stories that our mind makes up.

Bri: But my dreams feel so real like they're actually happening.

Shane: They can feel real, but they're not real.

Bri: So they're just stories from inside my head.

Shane: Yes. The dreams, they come from you.

[Pleasant piano]

Bri: So Winifred when you dream your body rests, but your brain is still working and all of that activity inside your brain is what makes the dreams happen.

[Electrical spark]

Bri: You can dream about all sorts of things and you can even go over things in your mind while you're sleeping. So where do your dreams come from?

Kids: Your brain!

Bri: Yeah, and they're all yours. So how do you know what my dreams are?

Kids: You tell me.

Bri: Yeah. You can tell someone about your dreams.

Kids: Mummy.

Yes, mum and dad and my sister.

Bri: Yeah. Sometimes it's good to have a chat about what's going on inside our brains. I wonder what you'll dream tonight.

Kids: I will dream about buttercups, flowers. The bees got the honey while I was with me.

Bri: What a beautiful dream.

Bri: Imagine This is a co-production brought to you by ABC Kids Listen and The Conversation. Special Thanks to Dr. Shane Rogers from Edith Cowan University, Hamish Camilleri for mixing and all the kids who had a chat with us on this episode. I'm your host and producer, Brianna Peterson. To hear more episodes of imagine this, you can download the free ABC Kids Listen app or find them wherever you get your podcasts.