



# Sleep Paralysis: Historical, Psychological, and Medical Perspectives

By Brian Sharpless, Karl Doghramji

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Humans throughout history have described a peculiar state between wakefulness and sleep during which they are consciously aware of their surroundings, but physically paralyzed. Sleep paralysis is also commonly accompanied by high levels of fear, feelings of suffocation, and hallucinations (i.e., waking dreams). Early interpretations of this event were that it was an actual attack by malevolent and supernatural entities such as demons, ghosts, or witches. Some of these beliefs persist to the present day in the form of nocturnal visitations by extraterrestrials and shadow people.

*Sleep Paralysis: Historical, Psychological, and Medical Perspectives* offers the first comprehensive examination of sleep paralysis from scientific and cultural perspectives. Drs. Brian Sharpless and Karl Doghramji synthesize the many literatures while providing practical guidance for the diagnosis and treatment of sleep paralysis. Included are medication suggestions and a new psychotherapy manual for mental health professionals. The result is a volume that illuminates the cultural, medical, and intellectual importance of this understudied phenomenon.

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**Editorial Review**

Review

"This well-written, comprehensive, and easily readable book is destined to become the definitive resource for anyone-professional or lay-wishing to learn about any aspect of sleep paralysis. The authors have done an excellent job in demystifying this fascinating and common condition, proposing the first systematic approach to the evaluation and treatment of this mysterious condition."

-- *Mark W. Mahowald, MD, Professor, Dept. of Neurology, University of MN Medical School (Retired); Adjunct Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University*

"Dr. Sharpless and Dr. Doghramji have produced an easy-to-read book which provides the most comprehensive and advanced knowledge of sleep paralysis in literature today. The authors have nicely documented sleep paralysis, a phenomenon noted throughout human history and across all cultures. Many folk myths remain entrenched in different cultures, and knowledge of these beliefs is critical to providing culturally sensitive care. This book will be of practical value to clinicians and appeal to people interested in philosophy, anthropology, religion, and the creative arts."

- *Thomas W. Uhde, MD, Professor and Chair, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences; Director, Sleep and Anxiety Disorders Treatment and Research Unit, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina*

"Sleep specialists are well aware of the subject of sleep paralysis because it is a member of the so-called narcolepsy tetrad. However, the exact mechanism by which strong emotion precipitates sleep paralysis in victims of narcolepsy is still unclear.

Not well known by the general public is that sleep paralysis occurs as an isolated phenomenon in otherwise normal individuals. Because most individuals are unaware that this is a normal part of REM sleep, the inability to move is incredibly terrifying. Given that prior knowledge of this phenomenon would avoid a long period of fear and worry for some individuals, it is my fervent hope that Dr. Sharpless and Dr. Doghramji's book will be at the top of the best seller list." -- *William Dement, MD, PhD, Professor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences - Stanford Center for Sleep Sciences and Medicine*

"This book provides the most comprehensive coverage of sleep paralysis to date. In addition to presenting an excellent summary of what we currently know about this strange and fascinating phenomenon, Sharpless and Doghramji highlight areas where further investigation is required. This volume will be of great value to researchers and practitioners treating those who suffer from sleep paralysis, as well as to sufferers themselves." -- *Christopher French, PhD CPsychol FBPsS, Anomalistic Psychology Research Unit, Goldsmiths College, University of London*

"This is a very welcome and important contribution to the study of sleep paralysis. There is a growing

literature on this fascinating phenomenon, and the volume does an admirable job of summarizing and synthesizing material." -- *Devon E. Hinton, MD, PhD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School*

"The only current book discussing sleep paralysis from a clinical, psychological, and medical perspective, Dr. Sharpless and Dr. Doghramji take a balanced multifaceted approach to understanding complex sources of sleep paralysis and associated experiences. The book provides an accessible overview of cultural, historical, mythic, and psychological aspects of sleep paralysis phenomena before turning to a strong focus on clinical aspects. A thorough treatment of sleep paralysis, the book provides a very good introduction to the topic and a quick reference for researchers and clinicians." -- *James A. Cheyne, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo*

"One of the great mysteries of sleep is the paralysis associated with REM sleep. This volume does an outstanding job in demystifying this phenomenon. It puts sleep paralysis in a historic perspective and sleep physiology framework, as well as the perspective of sleep disorders. Both the general public and sleep clinician can appreciate it. This volume unravels one of the great mysteries of sleep and its disorders." -- *Thomas Roth, PhD, Director Sleep Disorders and Research Center, Henry Ford Hospital*

"In this fine collaboration, Sharpless and Doghramji explore the long history of a frightening intermittent sleep disorder we now recognize as one of the symptoms of the narcolepsy tetrad. The authors recognize a larger group who experience sleep paralysis as an isolated phenomenon. These present differently in different historical and cultural contexts from being possessed through witchcraft to being kidnapped by space invaders. Beyond the enjoyment of reading this book, the authors offer detailed treatment programs for those suffering from this disorder and extensive references to encourage further diagnostic recognition and treatment outcome research." -- *Rosalind Cartwright, PhD, FAASM Professor Emeritus, Rush University Medical Center*

"This is a unique, superb, and enlightening book on sleep paralysis, a very common phenomenon but rarely written about from a scientific, historical, and social point of view. Anyone interested in how this common experience has affected human thought should read this book. This is a wonderful addition to the psychiatric literature."

--*DOODY'S*

Featured in *Rezensionen*.

Featured in *the American journal of Psychiatry*

## About the Author

Brian Sharpless, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Director of the Psychology Clinic at Washington State University

Karl Doghramji, MD is a Professor of Psychiatry, Neurology, and Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University; a Medical Director at Jefferson Sleep Disorders Center; and Program Director at Fellowship in Sleep Medicine.

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**Josephine Draughn:**

This Sleep Paralysis: Historical, Psychological, and Medical Perspectives is great guide for you because the content and that is full of information for you who always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it facts accurately using great organize word or we can say no rambling sentences inside. So if you are read the idea hurriedly you can have whole information in it. Doesn't mean it only gives you straight forward sentences but difficult core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having Sleep Paralysis: Historical, Psychological, and Medical Perspectives in your hand like finding the world in your arm, information in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no publication that offer you world within ten or fifteen minute right but this guide already do that. So , this can be good reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. active do you still doubt this?

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