

AWAKENING TO YOUR DREAMS

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Dreams are the universal language of the unconscious. They reflect where we are with ourselves at any given moment or day in our life. Dreams are our personal unconscious computer print-out, waiting each morning at our psychic door to be picked up, experienced, decoded, understood and integrated into our conscious life. To decode and understand the hidden message and meaning of any dream is to tap into the guiding source behind dreams that is constantly urging or pushing us toward greater emotional, psychological and spiritual growth and evolvment.

The moment we begin to take our dreams seriously, to ponder their mysterious and baffling meanings in relation to our daily life and relationships, we find ourselves embarking on a "journey of Self Discovery," that I would refer to as an inner journey. It is like no other journey you have ever had or will ever take. This journey is not necessarily easy, because it demands from us the best we have to give ourselves and life in the way of courage, truth and intent. It guides us into the realm of " " of who we really are as opposed to who we think we are as our false negative or false idealized sense of self. (As a therapist,Ihave spent a considerable amount of time examining these states of false identification in the therapeutic session.) Consciousness is a key factor in understanding any dream. As we unravel or decode our dreams, we begin to see the interconnection of various symbols and images and how they reflect symbolically what is actually going on in our life, whether in relation to any given person, conflict, situation or a stuck pattern we may encounter in ourselves.

What we find as we work with our dreams is that the unconscious is calling us into a new and more balanced relationship with ourselves. Once we begin to take our inner self seriously,the inner world of dreams begin to emerge with new meaning and significance. We find that we no longer want or need to run away from ourselves and our present outer reality, no matter how difficult or painful it might be. We no longer need to escape from our pain, our hurt, our sorrow, or our ego indignation by turning to over use of pills, drugs, alcohol, food, material possessions or addicted pleasures, as well as built in defenses such as weight, intellect, appearance, roles, work, busyness or just plain denial. We begin to realize that there can be a light at the end of the tunnel of a particular struggle we are engaged in. Meeting our pain and life challenges is exactly what our unconscious needs or requires of us to be there as an inner teacher offering a new path for psychological as well as spiritual growth to occur. The Unconscious honors our vulnerabilities as long as we don't become identified with being a victim. As ego personalities, we exist mid -way between two worlds; the inner world of the unconscious (psyche), and the outer world of form and matter and all relationships. We find ourselves metaphorically like a bridge between these

two compelling realms of existence. Both these realms of the external and internal interact with us daily and it is our challenge to move into a more conscious, balanced connection with each of these worlds; to grasp consciously what each world is asking and needing from us. It is in this engagement that we have the opportunity to truly grow and evolve as souls.

In this conscious engagement we also come to an awareness that we don't have to fill every moment of our life with activity. We can stop and actually Be with ourselves in a quiet centered space that I refer to as contemplative time with myself, to engage in "Beingness", as oppose to doing-ness. In this space, we are able to encounter ourselves in a deeper and more genuine manner. In doing so, we have the opportunity to meet whatever comes up from the unconscious, be it insights, feelings regarding any particular person or life situation, body sensations; or dream images, symbols and sub-personality parts. What is important is to meet whatever arises. It is simply being present with what is. For those of you who are into journal writing, this offers a special time to record any of these feelings, thoughts and insights that surface during these special moments of inner contemplation, i.e. alone time. I see the above as *sacred time* for ourselves. It is different from formal Meditation. It is in this special time of paying attention to oneself and what arises from within our psyche in terms of what is going on beneath the surface of our ego conscious self, that the true seeds of transformation begin to occur. In choosing to focus on and write down or express any of these inner experiences, one offers oneself the opportunity to enter the Transformation Process within us.

Awakening to our dreams is a very intricate part of the Transformation Process. The realization that there are indeed meaningful messages waiting for us each day beneath the obscure dream symbols, leads us to eventually comprehend that we are not alone, but that we're in a sort of silent partnership with a "higher intelligence" within us that communicates to us daily through our Dreams, our insights, our Intuition and our visions, as well as our body sensations and inspirations.

Carl Jung, one of the founding fathers of modern day psychology, refers to this higher intelligence as the Self, as distinguished from our human ego-conscious personality self. To experience the Self is to experience an unknowable *Source* or *Energy* that is in some mystical way pushing us toward greater awakening to who we really are. Having a growing awareness of the function and reality of the SELF, within us, helps us to face and even accept with greater perseverance and faith, the difficult, stressful and at times painful life circumstances and lessons we are often confronted with. It's as though there is some inner guidance system going on within us.

Knowing or experiencing the above allows that whatever the circumstance of our life, we are not alone, but are in a mystical partnership with a divine

presence within us, adds a new depth of meaning and connection to an otherwise limited sense of self.

Jack Sandford, a Jungian analyst from San Diego, expressed this concept very well in the title of his excellent book, *Dreams, God's Forgotten Language*. The language of our dreams may be expressed mildly or harshly, powerfully or bizarrely or in loving and transcendent terms. The symbols and the tone in which the dream is expressed depends on how we conduct and manage our self in our daily life. The attitudes, beliefs, and emotional responses and actions we take to our selves and others each day, will have a direct bearing on how the unconscious will respond to us symbolically in our nightly dreams.

This journey that we take through our daily life, if it includes the quest for greater and higher consciousness is the Journey of Self Discovery, which Jung calls the "Individuation Process". It is a life long endeavor that doesn't end when therapy ends. In a sense it is what Jung describes as a search for "wholeness."

The Individuation Process is often thought of as synonymous with the hero's journey in most fairy tales, who must follow a certain path in order to find the golden apple, or the healing waters of the fairy of the dawn or the beautiful princess (meaning gaining access to the soul quality within). In the fairy tale motif, the goal is to return and claim the kingdom from the bad queen or king (negative Mother or father principle) and create a new kingdom or way of life for himself. The final union of the prince and princess is symbolic of the inner subjective union of the masculine and feminine principle within each of us. In the course of each fairy tale the hero is often diverted away from the path to experience the pursuits of the ego personality. Eventually, he is reminded of his quest, his journey, his ultimate goal or some negative circumstance awakens and jerks him back on the path.

This too, is our challenge, since we are the hero or heroine of our own story or journey. We, too, are prone to fall off the path of our own individuation process as we become diverted away from the holy work of who we really are, by the countless distractions, excuses and justifications we make to avoid this sacred task.

Scott Peck, in *A Road Less Traveled*, calls this latter attitude entropy, original sin or laziness. Once we commit to the path of individuation, the unconscious has a way of jolting us back when we leave it in pursuit of strictly ego endeavors, which ultimately lead us into imbalance. Either some outer crisis, like illness or loss, etc., occurs and/or the unconscious hits us with a powerful dream aimed at getting our attention and reminding us to get back on track to what I believe is our true psycho-spiritual growth or being about our father's business. Man may think he is awake and conscious, but

according to Jung, this is so mainly from a physiological standpoint. Psychologically he found that the average person walks around in a state of semi-consciousness equivalent to being half awake. He referred to this state of being as an “automaton” or living one’s life on automatic pilot, in other words not being fully present with what is.

In my professional work with clients, I have developed a simple outline for decoding and understanding dream symbols. First, I have the client tell me the dream in the present tense. I try to get a sense if the dream is subjective or objective. In other words, does it have to do primarily with what is going on in the outer life of the person or is it strictly subjective, having to do solely with the inner reality of the person. Sometimes it is both. By inner reality, I mean that it has to do with our relationship with our self primarily,

If the dream contains unknown figures, it may well be a subjective dream that speaks of the dreamer’s relationship to inner unknown parts of him/her self. I find unknown figures in dreams to be particularly interesting. What I look for is a careful description of the figure and one’s feelings about the figure. I want to determine whether the figure is a friend (ally) or a foe (adversary) sub-personality part of themselves.

In many dreams the unknown figure can represent a higher Self figure offering a special kind of guidance. In my professional training workshops, I emphasize the importance of never jumping in to make a quick interpretation. The client and I work together to grasp the connection to what’s going on in the inner as well as the outer life situation. The outline helps the client and myself break down the dream into parts that are not unlike a puzzle. Together we move the parts around, fitting them to outer and inner events; to memories and associations and into meaning.

1. First I have them describe the scene. Where is the dream taking place? If it is inside, where is it? Is it in a house, a school, a hotel, an office building or on a ship, a boat or a canoe? If its in a house, what part of the house; the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, etc? Each symbol carries its own personal significance for the client. If I have an intuitive hit on the dream, I bring it to my client as an offering. I never push it on them. It must ring true for the client. A school stands for a place of learning by and large, but it could also be a place where something terrible occurred. It’s important to find out what the person’s own associations are to any scene or symbol. Many people dream of being back in their childhood home, sometimes as children and sometimes as adults. Such an image would indicate unresolved issues around the parents or their childhood. I check it out. I had a client who would continually have nightmares around her childhood home in Germany during World War II when the French army occupied her home. This was a major piece of dream work. A kitchen as a symbol is a place for cooking and preparing food and nourishment. It’s also a place where one cooks

psychologically. If a person has had upsetting experiences and memories in their childhood around food, the kitchen would not necessarily be a symbol of nourishment. The kind of food that a person is eating in a dream is also significant. It gives us an idea of to what degree the individual is or is not nurturing him/herself. Junk food verses a huge bowl of salad; an apple or a donut. A bedroom or bathroom is a place of intimacy and or privacy or both. What is the nature of the intimacy? Who is it with? Does the dream take place outside? If so, where? Is it in the snow, in the desert, at a lake in water, in a theatre? Does it take place in another country? So much has to do with what is projected on an image, symbol, person, place or thing. I could go on and on.

2. Who are the primary players in your dream? Most dreams involve people. Who are these people? Are they from your current life or are they from the past? If they're from the past, what period in your life? How old were you? What was going on during that period of your life? Was it a good period or difficult? If it was difficult, how? Why? All this information gives clues to the ultimate meaning of the dream. Are the players children? Again, how old are they or you as a child? Does the dream have to do with babies? Newborn babies stand for the birth of a new life principle, whether masculine or feminine. Are there animals present in your dream? If so, are they domesticated animals or are they jungle or wild animals? Animals stand for instinct; there is a great deal of difference between most animals; for instance the way a dog and a cat express themselves. A dog is usually loving and needs to please his master, while a cat is very independent and will come and go as it pleases. It's instinctual nature is not to please. Each animal has it's own unique expression of it's instinct. Take the difference between a lion and an elephant. The lion, as the king of the jungle, is one of the most powerful instinctual symbols, while the elephant is mammoth and lumbering and basically good natured and open to human contact. If you dream of an animal, it is referring to some aspect of your instinct life. What kind of shape is it in? Are the animals sick or well? Are they angry or are they your friend? Do you have a special animal that you dream of or relate to?

What other symbols stand out in your dream? Colors are important symbols as are weather conditions, the time of the day, cars, the clothes you or others are wearing. The type of shoes you are wearing in a dream is particularly significant. Clothes represent our self-image or persona. If one is naked in the dream we would want to explore whether the person is lacking in a persona; lacking in a way of projecting out a self image. Again, we would want to get to the person's thoughts about being naked. Does it cause the person to feel vulnerable and/or exposed or uncomfortable about something going on in his/her life, or does it produce sexual feelings in the person? There is no end of the symbolism that springs forth from the unconscious.

3. What is the action in the dream? What is taking place in the dream and

around whom? A common dream motif is driving a car. A car is our way of getting around quickly. Important details to note: the description of the car and who is driving the car, (who is behind the wheel or in charge), what make it is and what year or vintage, tells us a lot about what is going on psychologically with the person. A woman has a repeated dream of something going wrong with her car. The unconscious was trying to tell her that something wasn't right with her ego adaptation (way of getting around). Other activities in dreams range from traveling (on ship, plane, car, foot, etc.) and the story or description that goes with it. A dreamer could be dancing, running, cooking, fighting, making love, taking an exam, sleeping, etc. A common theme in a dream is losing something. Purses and wallets are the most common symbols that are lost. They both can stand for losing one's identity. Losing one's car or becoming lost is also common. Another common action in a dream is being chased. In this motif, who is being chased? Who is the figure doing the chasing? This usually represents the adversary. Who or what are we running away from? What part of our self?

A part that Jung has designated as the shadow or a disowned part is most common in dream work. These are parts of us we unconsciously reject, deny or disown. The shadow represents the other side of us, which could stand for our repressed anger, jealousy, power, or some neglected part of ourselves. The shadow is not bad or good. It is a disowned part that eventually gains energy or power in the unconscious if it is not met and dealt with consciously. This could easily be the passive aggressive, whose shadow side comes out the back door. Dr. Jung has said that "the shadow can also contain up to 80% gold". This refers to a person who lives out their dark side; their negative, cold, selfish, angry, acting out parts of themselves, so that their disowned parts would be owning their positive, sensitive parts of their nature.

4. What is the feeling tone of any particular segment of the dream? What is the overall feeling of the dream itself? The feeling tone relates to our various experiences within the dream. Does a particular scene evoke sadness, love, happiness or pleasure, or does it evoke anger, tension, fear, surprise? Each segment can produce different feeling responses, from disgust and anger to feeling released and at peace. How does the dream begin and how does it end?

A client of mine dreamed of riding a Harley Davidson motorcycle. Ahead of him he sees train tracks and an approaching train. He decides to race the train, guns his engine and zooms toward the tracks. He barely makes it as he slams against a fence of a junkyard. He feels relieved that he's okay, but then becomes very disturbed to find out that he can't get out of this junkyard. A man tells him that it's all locked up. He then notices a woman who reminds him of me and she is able to find a way to get him freed, because he had a child he had to go and see. After getting out he goes to the

child, who he finds frozen in a freezer. The child turned out to be the two-year-old daughter of one of his friends.

Together we acknowledged that the motorcycle represented a very powerful masculine and solitary part of himself. A motorcycle is a solitary way of getting around. This definitely fit my client at that time. It is also a very macho vehicle, which also described him accurately. The action shows him in a sort of daredevil act, perhaps trying to prove himself. It also involves risk. He makes it, but at a price. He winds up in a junk yard; a place of dead cars—the end of the line. Think of what this represents psychologically! It was without a doubt a warning dream on how dangerously he was living his life.

At the time, I believe that the dream did indicate where he was psychologically and perhaps even physically heading. Either the outer or inner therapist or both had come to his rescue and found a way to free him. Now he has to find a way to free the very young innocent feminine within him from being locked in the cold storage. This dream shook him up. He was a very attractive Latin actor who tended to have a very tough persona that had the potential, as the dream alluded to, for getting him into a lot of trouble.

5. What is the message of the dream? In this dream, we were able to see that the dreamer was pressing his luck with a power game; that psychologically a junkyard is both the end of the line and a pretty low and depressed place to wind up. He did get the message, but it has taken him a longer time to rescue the inner feminine child and/or soft loving, feeling side of himself.

It has been made very clear to me through experience that the unconscious wants us to “make it.” Once we commit to the Individuation Process (to the path of psycho-spiritual growth) the unconscious then seems to require some degree of continued investment in ourselves and our growth process. If we don’t pay attention to our self, the unconscious is inclined to not pay attention to us. Metaphorically, we become like a garden that hasn’t been watered or fed and therefore remains fallow. It doesn’t let us off the hook so easily when we forget and stray away from ourselves and our path to wholeness. According to Jung, the unconscious responds to us in a reciprocal manner in the way we relate to or treat ourselves. In other words, if we relate to our self with forty percent negative energy,(being overly self critical and self diminishing) the unconscious will respond by giving us sixty percent negative energy (response) in return. On the other hand, if we give ourselves forty percent positive energy,(being loving and understanding and self empowering) the unconscious will kick in sixty percent positive energy in return in the form of positive and uplifting dreams. In this way dreams become an amazing teacher for us on the road of life. To those of us committed, the unconscious seems to need the

introspective energy of paying attention to what's going on around us and our part in it, as well as being willing to own our errors and our mistakes and be accountable where it is important, in addition to facing our responsibilities without damning ourselves.

What is essential is an attitude of "what can I learn from this experience in order to not make this same mistake again?" I see mistakes as being a natural phenomenon of life. We all make mistakes continually. It is part of the way we grow, evolve and become conscious. It is when the ego is insecure, fragile or brittle that it needs to protect and defend itself (sometimes at all costs) because, in these cases, owning the mistake would create more guilt or discomfort than the ego is capable of handling. These are the same people who usually cannot take criticism. To own a mistake is a courageous endeavor because it requires one's willingness to accept the temporary discomfort of their behavior and, if possible, be able to correct the mistake. Within a certain frame of time, it is essential to acknowledge one's mistake and be willing to experience the pain, the sorrow, the regret, and then be able to truly forgive oneself and move on. Moving consciously through our mistakes is crucial to creating the building blocks of our personal and psychological growth.

In connection with the Individuation Process, it is important to learn the difference between identifying at the victim level when we are hit by some heavy life situation and acknowledging and even experiencing our pain and vulnerability without becoming a victim. These are the most difficult and challenging moments because despite our pain, anguish, and general upset, becoming a victim or a martyr doesn't really agree with the unconscious. I have found that the Unconscious doesn't give chicken soup unless we do the work to deserve it.

Here is where one learns of the concept of the "dark night of the soul" which Jung frequently refers to in his writings. This is the experience of acknowledging the pain and carrying the tension of it; that is, staying with it, which allows a person to go through it, rather than remaining stuck in it. It is the ability to move through the experience as consciously as possible, carrying the tension as much as possible, knowing you won't disintegrate or fall apart (as opposed to giving in to the anger, rage, and tears continually) This triggers off what Jung calls the "Transcendent Function," which is the release of the "Big Dream." Jung also refers to this kind of a Dream *as symbols of reconciliation*. When you experience such a dream, you know you have been touched or contacted by something profound within yourself that you can never forget.

I believe that dreams come from different levels of the psyche (Unconscious). At this point I would say that there are at least three levels from which dreams emanate: The Personal Unconscious, the Collective

Unconscious and the Cosmic or Super Unconscious

The first level is the Personal Unconscious. This level of the unconscious is the closest to our waking consciousness. These kinds of dreams tend to be our basic every day variety of dreams that are left at our psychic door each morning to be picked up and read, digested and understood as we would our morning newspaper. The difference is that the Dream is a daily psychological report from our unconscious, giving us the latest update from the unconscious as to how well or not well we are doing ourselves psychologically. The question is what we then do with our daily dreams? Do we ignore them and simply drop them in the trash can or perhaps never bother to pick them up in the first place and just continue to go about our outer lives? If we do the latter, we miss out on the special ongoing opportunity to look into our dreams and grasp their underlying meaning and significance that can make a profound difference in our lives and relationships.

The second level from which Dreams come is referred to by Carl Jung as the Collective Unconscious. This is the realm where the personal unconscious meets up with the collective unconscious as all islands might meet on the ocean floor. I have posters that illustrate conceptually how this would be seen. From the ocean floor to the center of the sphere of our earth would be the deeper realm from which the collective or impersonal dreams arise. This is the realm from which Archetypal images emerge. Archetypes are the universal symbols or motifs found in all cultures. Examples of an archetypal symbol would be the hero, the wise man, the magician, the clown or fool, the witch or crone, the seductress, the goddess, the healer, medicine man etc. There are people who live their lives in identification with one or more archetypal images. For the rest of us they appear in our dreams to make some dramatic or powerful statement or visitation. There is some powerful energy within a person that can ignite or invite archetypal symbols into our lives. Then it is a question of, to what degree an individual gets hooked on them and continues to live out this energy indefinitely. It can be very seductive and bewitching or part of a person's destiny.

The third level is the Cosmic and Christ Unconscious or Super Conscious level from which comes our more transcendent or spiritual dreams. The Big Dream could come from either the second or third levels. These dreams are the most uplifting, healing and transformative. They connect us to the Divinity of who we really are; to our highest vibrational frequency as human beings. To touch into this level of our Dream life is like no other and it is not uncommon if we can maintain and use our psycho-spiritual tools to navigate through our outer lives as well as the vast realms within us.

What is fascinating and paradoxical about the nature of the unconscious is

that when we do the necessary work, it lets us know by a positive dream that can be profoundly uplifting and encouraging. When we don't attend to ourselves, or life as we're meant to, our dreams reflect this attitude in the way of disturbing dreams or no dreams at all. The unconscious doesn't want us to sell ourselves out by falling victims to our old or current negative patterns and beliefs. If, instead, we find new ways to acknowledge and empower ourselves from a non-egoic attitude, then we will know it by the quality of our dreams.

I have no doubt that we are monitored in our waking state by some mystical intelligence (force) that can scan our every thought, feeling, emotion, attitude and behavior and feed back to us its response in the form of the Dream.

Dream work isn't simple, yet it can be learned and therefore be available to each of us in a most useful and ongoing way. It gives us the necessary and important guideposts along the way of our personal journey, which I believe are indispensable for our arriving at our true destination.

All you need to do is, *AWAKEN TO YOUR DREAMS*

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