

DREAMCATCHER

On a recent vacation trip to Arizona, one of our granddaughters could not resist the allure of a brightly colored Dreamcatcher Bracelet. The bracelet reminded me of the nearly universal fascination we humans have for our dreams. American Indian spirituality certainly encompasses dream interpretation.

In ancient Polynesia an island tribe met each morning to share their dreams and to invite feedback from one another as to the meaning of each dream. This tribe enjoyed exceptional cohesiveness and zest for living, as they stayed intimately connected with one another in their tribal family.

The Polynesian custom reminds me of one of my aunts who has participated in a monthly Jungian dream interpretation group for 35 years, and amazingly, the group members have remained relatively stable for most of those 35 years. I believe that the enduring group support with the sharing of dreams, plus my aunt's steadfast spiritual values, account for her exceptional energy, ego strength and positivity.

A dear friend from grade school days recently confided to me that he is overwhelmed with troubling dreams whose meaning eludes him. He believes they stem from the side effects of prescription medication.

In our Western culture, Sigmund Freud's Dream Theory is perhaps the most well known. His pioneering work conceptualized dreams as expressions of repressed wishes that we would rather not admit to having. He also viewed dreams as Wish Fulfillment having both a Manifest Content and a Latent Content. His approach requires the presence of a skilled psychoanalyst to do Dream Analysis, which involves interpreting the manifest dream content to ascertain the underlying or latent content.

Of course, nowadays in our cybernetic world, if you wish to understand your dreams you can Google Dream Analyzer for their Free Dream Interpretation Service. I think my aunt's monthly meeting approach is a wiser path to take.

Freud's colleague and contemporary, Carl Jung, took a radically different stance toward Dream Interpretation. Jung's approach does not require the participation of a Dream Analyst but instead believes that each person possesses the ability to interpret their own dreams. The dream images reveal something about yourself, your relationships with others and specific situations in your waking life. Like my very healthy aunt, dreams are used to guide your personal growth and gradually achieve your full potential.

CURRENT DREAM THEORY

My approach to Dream work is similar to Jung's in that I facilitate my client's connecting with the message that the dream has for them. The main principle is that each dream gives us feedback about how well we are living our life each day. The primary focus is on the predominant feeling felt in the dream and secondarily upon the content or story line. I then invite the client to do a brain search with their conscious mind to connect with the message for them from the dream. Oftentimes, this step is sufficient in achieving understanding of the dream.

The most challenging aspect in understanding your dreams is to trust the answer that comes into your mind. We tend to second-guess ourselves. The answer will come to us, but we'll brush it aside with lightning speed, barely noticing that the truth within us has surfaced.

If doing a brain search (like a computer search) doesn't yield an answer, the next step is to enter into a meditative state so as to connect with your unconscious mind. Your unconscious mind consists of everything you've ever experienced with your five senses and your conscious mind; it has an intrinsic push or drive to heal you of whatever may be impeding your growth toward maximizing your potential.

Most of the time, through the process of relaxing, remembering the dream and feeling fully the main feeling felt in the dream, the person will understand their dream. As with any skill, practice yields more rapid and substantive results.

DREAM CATEGORIES

Dreams are divided into two broad categories. Breakthrough dreams are in color with amazing detail and we feel very confident and capable. The experience is similar to watching an incredibly beautiful and compelling movie. The message or feedback for ourselves is that we're managing our life well.

The second type is generally a dream of fear or anxiety, falling or being chased or some form of failure. My recurring fear dream is I'm in graduate school but I haven't been attending lectures because I haven't gotten a class schedule, and I don't know the required courses to complete the degree. I'm extremely anxious!

The next step is to decide what to do to heal or resolve the issue sent to you in the dream. I use the same two-step process. First do a brain search with your conscious mind remembering to trust yourself, i.e. trust what comes into your mind. The second step is to connect with your unconscious mind, which wants to heal you. Remember there are 100,000 correct answers but the truest correct one is **your** answer or solution. To heal and end my recurring fear dream I must pay more attention to detail and get things done right away rather than procrastinating.

The next step is to devise a specific operational plan that holds me or you to accountability. For example, when will I do it? Where will I do it? What will I do? How often? I decided to do a daily self-examination as part of my nightly spiritual exercises.

The final step is to have a written or typed log of your dream work and to periodically review your log to determine if more work needs to be done or if the issue (and the dream) has been resolved. I use the acronym **AUDIO** for this process. **A** is for Awareness of the dream. **U** is Understanding the message for you from the dream. **D** is Deciding what to do to heal or resolve the dream. **I** is for Implementing or initiating your decision with a specific operational plan that holds your feet to the fire. **O** is for Outcome where you periodically re-evaluate to determine if the issue is resolved or more work needs to be done.

This may seem like a lot of work to some of you. Of course anything that is worthwhile generally takes time and effort. If you tend to not remember your dreams, simply tell your conscious and unconscious minds right before falling asleep that you want to remember one dream in the morning. This phenomenon

also occurs when you tell yourself when you need to wake up in the morning and you wake up at that exact time without use of an alarm clock..

Mining your dreams for feedback to accomplish personal growth is a surefire route for achieving greater peace and joy. Our precious granddaughter sure was wise in purchasing that Navajo or Hopi Indian Dreamcatcher Bracelet!

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