



Dream Work

INTRODUCTION

There is an ancient Native American wisdom that says "To dream is to know." Dreams have been studied and recorded for thousands of years. Many ancient cultures placed much importance on the content of dreams. In fact, many decisions effecting the future of a culture were based on the dreams of its elders. Some dreams have literally changed the world.

We all dream three to five dreams every night, depending on how long we sleep. Our dreams come at approximately 90 minute intervals. This roughly translates to between 1100 and 1800 dreams in a year. Even though we do not usually recall all of our dreams, they do occur. Most people will recall only those dreams that are scary or startling, what we call nightmares. People who are involved in Dream Work, however, can recall two and sometimes three dreams in one night.

Each of our dreams is a communication from our unconscious mind. In our unconscious mind is stored every bit of information that pertains to us. There are things stored there that we do not consciously recall. There is information there that we don't even realize we know. Carl Jung believed that we are even connected to all humanity past, present, and future through what he termed as the Collective Unconscious. Some of the things stored there are events or feelings that we have suppressed, and really don't want to remember. But it is all there. There is nothing that has ever happened to us, no thought that we have ever had, that is not present in our unconscious mind.

So, each night our unconscious mind sends us messages. These messages are usually related to current events in our lives - a decision with which we are struggling or an emotional situation that is causing us stress. Whatever the reason for the message,

the unconscious mind is trying to give us answers that will help us be happy and whole. Our dreams can even tell us about health issues of which we may not be aware.

It is important to understand that dreams come from within. They are about us. Even though other characters may appear in our dreams, some we recognize, some we don't, it is all about us. Our unconscious mind is not going to waste time dealing with someone else's problems. We are the writer, director, producer and star of our dreams. Every character in our dreams is an aspect of ourselves, even if they look like Aunt Betty or our ex-husband.

One of the problems we face in Dream Work is in understanding the message. The language of dreams is symbolic and the symbols in dreams vary from person to person. It is not recommended that people purchase and use dream dictionaries to try to decode their dreams, because the definitions in those dictionaries belong to the persons who wrote them, not necessarily to you. Some dream symbols are universal in nature, but all must be interpreted in light of the individual dreamer. The only interpretation that matters, is the interpretation that rings true to the dreamer.

On the surface, dreams seem to make little or no sense. They are sometimes fantasies, and are often filled with nonsensical activities and actions that seem impossible. What we have to remember is that the unconscious mind is not bound by time and space constraints. The unconscious mind does not live in a physical environment that is governed by laws of logic and physics. Dreams are the revelation of our imagination in its purest form. What is important in Dream Work is to look past the impossibilities, and search for the meaning.

Dreams can be pleasant and funny, or they can be sinister and scary. When they are the latter (a nightmare), it is generally because the unconscious mind is really trying to make an important point. You are more likely to recall and try to understand a scary dream, so maybe you will get the message. Recurring dreams are another tool the unconscious mind uses to get our attention. We must always remember that it is never the intent of our unconscious mind to hurt us, after all it is us. Every message must be accepted as a truth that is intended to help us be happy and whole. Dreams cannot lie.

Although recall may be a difficult task, it is essential if we are going to do Dream Work. There are many techniques that can help us achieve better recall. The most important aspect of recall is intent. We must believe that recalling our dreams is important to our lives and that we intend to recall as much as possible. In Dream Work we will begin to recall and record our dreams on a daily basis. Like any exercise, the more consistent we are, the better we do it. It is important to be persistent, but patient.

With all this wisdom stored in our unconscious mind, it is a wonder that more people do not participate in Dream Work. Our dreams are the richest source we have for understanding ourselves and our purpose. You can read thousands of self-help books and never come close to the level of understanding you can get from your own dreams - and these come free every night. If we can begin to bring just a small percentage of the information stored in our unconscious mind to our conscious mind, and begin to take appropriate actions, we will be astounded at how fast we can progress toward happiness and wholeness. A dream is a gift. Dream Work is what we do with that gift.