

## Using Dreams As A Pathway To Your Soul

*“Dreams show us how to find meaning in our lives, how to fulfill our own destiny, how to realize the greater potential of life within us.”*

—Marie-Louise von Franz

Rich with symbols, archetypes and metaphoric meaning, dreams are an invaluable healing instrument, and when regularly processed and understood, can be a pathway to higher consciousness, healed relationships, fulfilling your life’s purpose and greater abundance. Dreams are powerful vehicles in which to solve your daily issues for they provide ideas, solutions and insights. Literally, they are jackpots of information, especially when you ask for answers to specific concerns. Edgar Cayce taught, “Dreams work to solve problems of the dreamer’s conscious waking life, and they work to quicken in the dreamer new potentials which are his/hers to claim.” Such is the capacity of your nightly dreams.

Dreams can be very helpful in your life’s journey because they broadly cover the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of your life. Their scope and depth is immense. For example, while counseling I have heard dreams ranging from common, everyday “bathroom” scenes where the dreamer is urinating (representing a releasing or cleansing taking place), to the dreamer observing a “phoenix” soaring through the sky (the mythical bird that transcends the fire and ashes, depicting transformation, transmutation and spiritual rebirth).

It’s important to keep in mind that each of your dreams, however silly or insignificant they may first appear to be, are abundant with information. They only await your willingness to learn. Further, dreams are meant to *help* you, not scare you. Being “stories of information,” they are expressed from your higher self through your subconscious to lovingly guide you. Countless times I’ve heard people exclaim, “I want to learn from my dreams, but mine seem so weird or negative that I’m hesitant to work with them.” There was a time in my life that I felt the same way, but through practice I’ve become very familiar with the patterns my dreams follow and I am no longer afraid to look at what they’re telling me. My dreams have been such a big part of my growth that I know with absolute conviction they appear only to help me.

### **LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF YOUR DREAMS**

Dreams are highly personal. What a symbol may mean to me may have a very different meaning for you. For example, I have a black Pomeranian dog named “Guru” whom I dearly love. Whenever Guru appears in my dreams, I know my dream guide is revealing to me something that involves the vulnerable, innocent and childlike aspect of me. Guru has appeared most often when I’ve been working through past issues and healing my inner child. However, dogs for you, (even a pet dog) may mean something entirely different. If you prefer felines to canines, or have had negative encounters with dogs, one appearing in your dream may be uncomfortable for you or even arouse fear. It all depends on the perception you have about a specific dream symbol. So beware of

using dream books as *the* key to unlocking the meaning of your dream. I remember once counseling a woman who shared a dream in which a cluster of bugs had burrowed their way inside her leg. As we talked through her dream we discussed how “bugs” are also called “insects.” By changing the symbol’s name to “insects” and paying attention to the feelings she was experiencing, we were able to see that the dream was not about *insects*, but something very different and much deeper—“*incest*.” This awareness resonated to my client, and like an intricate puzzle that had never quite come together, all of the pieces began to fit. This woman had unconsciously been sensing that she had been molested when she was very young but had not been able to remember specific details. In a typical dream book, “insects” or “bugs” represent “small annoyances and irritations.” Certainly something was “bugging” this woman, but in this case, it was anything but “small.” A long and honest discussion regarding what her dream was telling her—coupled with several previous dreams—was necessary for her to recognize the core issue. With her newfound understanding, she was able to direct her energies toward healing the sexual abuse and begin the long yet rewarding journey of recovery.

Using your dreams as a pathway to your soul is a process. In order to learn from them and utilize them as your own private psychotherapist (and why not?—they can save you a lot of money!), you must be willing to be patient and get to know them as you would a beloved child or pet. Dream analysis is a feminine practice in that it requires quiet time, nurturing and the willingness to delve more deeply into your soul. In the book *Season of Changes, Ways of Response* it states, “The greatest book of study is that of your own, written by the soul upon time and space—that of your dreams.”

Two key questions to keep in mind while working with a dream is:

- 1) What am I currently dealing with, or being affected by, that my dream may be trying to show me?

*Dreams tend to reflect your life and its current situation. Thus the thoughts and feelings you had the previous day is key.*

- 2) What do I need to know from my dreams so I can take the next step in my personal and spiritual growth?

*Dreams occur to help you in every area of your life, even those areas that you have built a defense around and do not want to see. (Examples: addiction, self-destructive behaviors, unresolved relationship and childhood issues, unfulfilling career, etc.)*

In her book *Cloud Nine*, author Sandra Thompson states the following dream themes are the most common:

- 1) Taking an Exam
- 2) Missing a plane, train, or other vehicle
- 3) Sexual Experiences
- 4) Pursuit Dreams (being pursued by someone or something)
- 5) Finding Money
- 6) Falling
- 7) Flying
- 8) Nude in Public
- 9) Teeth Falling Out/Damaged Teeth
- 10) Dream Characters Changing into Someone or Something Else

## **DREAM RECALL**

In my work I find that many people want to understand and utilize their dreams but have a hard time remembering them. *Willingness* is the key to dream recall. Sometimes we're tempted to think that we didn't dream, yet each of us has an average of four to five dreams per night (depending upon what we've ingested prior to falling asleep; alcohol, drugs and heavy eating will impair our dreams). Some steps you can take for using your dreams as tools for healing include:

- A. Set your intention to remember your dreams before falling asleep.**
- B. Keep a notebook near your bed (or a tape recorder).**
- C. Ask your Higher Self for guidance in remembering and learning from your dreams.**
- D. Allow any issues you are working on, or answers you are seeking, to come into your awareness as you fall asleep. Form a question and keep asking it, over and over, as you fall asleep. When asking for a solution to a problem, keep the question simple—one at a time works best. Assume you will receive the answer in that night's dream(s).**
- E. Immediately upon awaking, keep your attention focused on any dreams you have had during the night, and/or on the most recent dream. Again, assume the answer was given. Do not allow your mind to drift forward toward the day's events! This will inhibit your ability to remember your dreams.**
- F. Record your dreams as soon as possible, even if it's during the night. Avoid turning on any bright lights or anything that makes noise. Record even bits and pieces of your dream. Often, "wisps" become catalysts for remembering the rest of it later in the day.**
- G. Focus on dream symbols and *feelings* while recording your dream.**
- H. Make a commitment to remembering your dreams and learning your own "dream language" for several months. As you do so, your dreams will become easier to remember and understand.**

## **UNDERSTANDING YOUR DREAMS**

- A. Focus on feelings first, then dream symbols.**
- B. Do not judge your dreams—all dreams are significant and have much to tell you. Not meaning to frighten you, your dreams are lovingly channeled through your subconscious to help you learn, grow and heal.**
- C. Dreams occur in patterns and "themes." Look for the dream theme while recording your dream.**
- D. Notice the dream characters: ask yourself, "What aspect of me does this person represent? (Keep in mind that most people in your dreams are different sides of you).**
- E. Dreams of someone who has passed away means: 1) they are trying to**

communicate to you through your dream state, 2) they represent an aspect of you that has “died,” 3) they are representing something to you from your past (while they were still alive) that is in need of healing.

- F. Dreams that have repeating dream symbols or themes are **VERY IMPORTANT!** Pay particular attention to your feelings during repetitive dream themes and symbols.
- G. Dreams occur in sequence during the night and “build” upon each other. What was the dream sequence?
- H. The first scene of a dream often sets the “stage” for the entire dream. What is the first scene like? Who is in it? Where are you? What are you doing?
- I. The last scene of the dream shows “where” and “how” the energy of the dream (and your life) is turning, i.e., where things are “going.” What happens in the last scene and how are you feeling?
- J. Look for any literal interpretations of dream symbols. Pay particular attention to your physical body in a dream as it could be warning you of an illness. Cars typically represent our bodies.
- K. Again, your dreams are meant to help you, not frighten you. Any fear that surfaces is something you may be afraid to look at in your waking life. Nightmares occur when we continue to avoid looking at our fears or unresolved issues.
- L. Dreams will tell you the **TRUTH** about a particular situation in your life, even if you’ve built a defense structure against it. If there is conflict occurring between your conscious and subconscious mind, your subconscious will always win out.

Because of their honesty, dreams are both powerful and healing. They are a priceless means for connecting with our soul. Through dream work, we are able to cultivate a deep and soulful relationship with our true self and unite authentically with others. Sweet dreams!

### **SOME RECOMMENDED DREAM RESOURCES**

Marc Ian Barasch, *Healing Dreams: Exploring the Dreams that Can Transform Your Life*

Marion Woodman, *DREAMS: Language of the Soul*

Jo Jean Boushahla, Virginia Reidel-Geubtner, *Dream Dictionary, 1000 Dream Symbols from A-Z*

Wilda Tanner, *The Mystical Magical Marvelous World of Dreams*

Edgar Cayce, *Dreams and Dreaming* (documented case histories on dreams interpreted through the altered state of consciousness)

Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* and *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*

Sandra Thomson, *Cloud Nine, A Dreamer's Dictionary*

Gayle Delaney, *Living Your Dreams*

Mark Thurston, *How to Interpret Your Dreams*