

Dreaming Dynamics: Recall, Record, Reflect

Did you know lives were saved during Hurricane Hugo because people “listened” to messages from their dreams? Have *you* ever had a dream that really stuck with you... maybe for hours, days or even years? Did you ever wonder if they have anything to *offer* aside from a confusion of the day’s events or a really good scare like a nightmare?

Research shows we all dream nightly, usually five to six dreams. People deprived of dreams, which occur during REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, become disoriented, irritable and even psychotic after five days. Experts agree that dreaming is crucial for healthy mental and emotional functioning.

Jeremy Taylor, an internationally respected author and leader in the field of Projective Dream Work insists, and we agree, “all dreams come in the service of health and wholeness”¹. Our complex world surrounds us with vast amounts of input, both positive and negative. Dreams help us to reconcile inner experiences with our perception of the outer world.

Paying attention to and investigating dream contents as symbolic or metaphorical material, rather than literal, dream workers gain rich insights into their own nature and the nature of relationships. Dream work is not always “therapy”, but it certainly can be therapeutic, and more.

Projective dream work is a method almost anyone can use to decipher the meaning of dreams. Benefits include boosting self-knowledge and creativity, tapping inner wisdom and improving relationships. Practiced in groups, dream work builds community by increasing understanding and compassion. In all cultures, throughout history, dreams have informed individual and community health. Dreams are a free, reliable, easily accessible source for personal truth, which can help us make sense of the world around us.

So, why don’t more people know about and use dreams for insight and creativity? For all its potential power, this movement remains fairly small in western civilization because it is still a radical notion that *the truth is within each of us*, and many people are skeptical. Dreams “cut through” the input of outside “authorities” to help us connect with our own source of truth.

Dream work promotes personal, interpersonal and transpersonal growth and evolution. Consider that solutions to important individual and social problems come from dreams. Thousands of inventions (Elias Howe’s sewing machine), works of art, music (“Yesterday“ by Paul McCartney), and ground-breaking theories (Mendeleyev’s Elemental Chart) are attributed to dreams.

While dreams are complex, personal and profound, finding their meanings need not be intimidating or necessarily difficult. Consider these beginning steps:

Recall your dream as soon as you awaken; before falling asleep, affirm your intent by saying: “I will remember my dream upon waking”

Record your dream in present tense with paper/pencil or recorder at your bedside
Reflect on the *symbolic* meanings of places, objects, actions, words, and characters as you relate them to waking life and note emotions. An “aha” or shift in your awareness will signal insight.

Dream groups are popping up throughout the lowcountry and resources are widely available. We invite readers to e-mail dreams that seem significant for the local community and hope to share interesting connections between them in a future article.

Exploring dreams together brings inner wisdom into the community – this dynamic benefits us all.

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¹ Taylor, J., Where People Fly and Water Runs Uphill, 1992. Page 5.