

DREAM INTERVIEWING

A contemporary method of dream interpretation

FIVE PREPARATION STEPS FOR DREAMERS:

These steps can expedite both the interpretive process and the resulting therapeutic insight. If they completed **by the dreamer** prior to the actual dream interview, it saves a great deal of time for the interpretive work of the interview itself.

1. DREAM RECALL
2. DREAM INCUBATION (PRESLEEP INSTRUCTION)
3. DREAM RECORDING
4. DREAM DIAGRAMMING
5. DREAM OUTLINING

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DREAMER'S STEP 1: DREAM RECALL

Sleep researchers assure us that everyone, even those who "never" dream, have four or five spontaneous dreams every night. If you consistently follow the steps below every night, within a couple of weeks you will almost always find that you will recall more of your spontaneous dreams.

1. DREAM JOURNAL

Begin a dream journal in a blank notebook, or a spiral or loose leaf binder. Start by writing the following notes:

2. DAY NOTE

Just before you go to sleep, write the day & date and the title: "Day Note." Then, write a brief paragraph about the *major events* and *feelings* of your day.

3. RECALL PREPARATION

Leave the dream journal, pen, and a light by the bedside within easy reach.

4. DREAM RECALL AND RECORDING

Upon awakening, immediately think back, and write down any dream, dream fragment, thought, or feeling that you have or recall from sleep. Then give each dream a title for easy reference. Be sure to distinguish waking ideas ("editorials") from dream ideas. Waking to quiet (vs. alarm) facilitates recall.

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DREAMER'S STEP 2: DREAM INCUBATION (pre-sleep instruction)

This is a process of pre-sleep instruction designed to focus dreaming on a specific issue, even to pinpoint a specific solution to a problem. You will notice that the first 2 steps are the same as those to recall a spontaneous dream.

1. DREAM JOURNAL

Begin a dream journal in a notebook, such as a spiral binder or loose leaf folder, in which you will write the following notes:

2. DAY NOTE

Just before you go to sleep, write the date and the title: "Day Note." Then, write a brief paragraph about the *major events* and *feelings* of your day.

3. INCUBATION QUESTION

Now write a subtitle, "Incubation Question," followed by a few lines about your understanding of the problem that you wish to address, paying particular attention to the related feelings.

Next, being as precise as you can be, write out the specific question or issue you would like your dream to answer or clarify. Do not ask for magic; ask only what you would *really like* to know. E.g. Is my plan the best way for me to handle this? Why am I having so much trouble with Donna right now? Or you can even just ask for "Help!"

4. RECALL PREPARATION

Leave the dream journal, pen, and a light by the bedside within easy reach.

5. ACTUAL INCUBATION

Repeat your question to yourself as you fall asleep; if your mind wanders, bring it back to focus on your specific question or request. If you awake once without a dream, try it again. If you find yourself too anxious to sleep, rethink your question till it is one that you really *do* want to know the answer to. E.g. "Should I break up with Jordan?" could be changed to, "What does this relationship with Jordan cost me at present?" or "Why do I stay with Jordan?"

6. DREAM RECALL AND RECORDING

Upon awakening, immediately think back, and write down any dream, dream fragment, thought, or feeling. Then give each dream a title for easy reference. Be sure to distinguish waking ideas from dream ideas. Awakening to quiet facilitates recall.

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DREAMER'S STEP 3: DREAM RECORDING

1. WRITE OUT THE DREAM in the most practical way as soon as you awaken.
2. REWRITE/TYPE THE DREAM LEGIBLY if necessary and double space it with wide (2") margins left and right (for notes later.)
3. SEPARATE THE SCENES (i.e. changes in setting, or major shifts in characters and action) into paragraphs, and number them I.,II., III., etc.
4. INCLUDE ALL THE FEELINGS you experienced **in the dream** at the end of each sentence, or at every shift in the feelings.
5. USE ITALICS FOR ANY ASSOCIATIONS OR 'EDITORIAL' COMMENTS which occur to you from **waking life**, or enclose them in parentheses if you are handwriting.
6. TITLE THE DREAM, using a word or phrase that seems most appropriate to you.
7. Make copies for your dream interviewer, and dream group if you have one.

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DREAMER'S STEP 4: DREAM DIAGRAMMING

This step is to help separate out the **five** major components of any dream: **Setting**, **People**, **things**, **action** and **feelings**. The first directions are for handwriting, and were the original directions suggested by Gayle Delaney, PhD in the 1980s, and alternates are for those using a computer.

1. **SETTING (PLACE)**: There may be more than one.
Draw a square box around each setting.
Write setting in **BOLD BLOCK CAPITALS**
2. **PEOPLE***: Circle the people mentioned in the dream.
ITALICIZE + CAPITALIZE + BOLD the *PEOPLE*
3. **THINGS**: Underline all things with a double line or single line
4. **ACTION (PLOT, VERBS)**: Underline the action words and their adverbs with an arrow.
Underline and write the action words in italics
5. **FEELINGS**: Add any words that convey feeling, if they are missing but known.
Underline with a wavy line
Italicize + bold all feelings in pink, inserting any omitted feelings

*For some people their pets are like people; for others, all animals are things. Use your own perspective here.

Dream Diagramming - Example

Dream: (note the omissions that need to be filled in)

A woman had made some bed covering with lace. I was sitting in the bed. She asked if I wanted one. It felt pleasant.

Diagrammed:

[SETTING?] *A WOMAN* had made some bed covering with lace.

[feeling?] I was sitting in the bed. [feeling?] She asked if I wanted one.

It felt *pleasant*.

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DREAMER'S STEP 5: DREAM OUTLINING

Dream Outlining helps clarify the action and related feelings in the dream. It also makes an important contribution to the bridge step of recognizing the place in waking life to which the dream metaphor refers, i.e. the actual interpretation.

1. MAKE TWO COLUMNS on a clean sheet of paper. Title the whole with the dream title you chose. Title the column on the left **Action**, title the right **Feelings**.
2. WRITE OUT THE FIRST ACTION (indicated by verbs) in the left hand column in one **brief** sentence. Omit descriptive details.
3. WRITE THE FEELINGS that correspond to that action in the right hand column, opposite the related action sentence.
4. WRITE THE NEXT ACTION SENTENCE BELOW the first action entry.
5. MATCH THIS ACTION in the right column with the appropriate feelings from the dream, and so on.
6. LIST ALL DREAM ACTIONS & FEELINGS, including, "I am (thinking, talking,)...."
7. MARK THE SCENES in the Left margin as in the original dream record.
8. No editorials in an outline. Dream sequences only.

[Example follows]

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DREAMER'S STEP 5 (continued): DREAM OUTLINING, an example

Part A. Dream as first recorded

I am laying down on a platform, not a bed, in a modernistic interior. (This will seem really strange now but...) Laying next to me on the platform was a statement, in a computer language I use; it had a physical presence. I had a thought "now you remove/delete this statement." I knew what to replace it with. I edited it out and it went away. It was immediately replaced by a big bear, clambering over me. I could feel its hot breath, and I was trying to scream louder, and louder afraid that it was going to maul me.

Part B. Outline Format

ACTION

FEELINGS

I am laying down on a platform

Calm, work mode

Laying next to me on the platform was a statement, in a computer language I use; it had a physical presence.

It was inert, inanimate. I felt it was no problem

I edit out the statement

Confidently ready to replace it with the brilliant thing that'd work really well.

A bear clambers over me; I could feel its hot breath

I am terrified.
The bear is curious: 'Is this something to eat?' attitude.

I scream, louder and louder

Terrified it's not loud enough, and I'm afraid I'll get mauled