

# The Transformative Potential Of Dreamwork

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DeCicco, T. L., Smith, C., **King, D. B.**, & Nov, P. (2008, January). *The transformative potential of dreamwork: Implementing contemporary techniques*. Workshop held at the World Congress on Psychology & Spirituality, Delhi, India.

# Who Dreams?

- All people dream
- From all cultures, around the world
- Some people remember them better
- Dream during REM sleep
- Every 90 minutes during sleep
- Lab: wake the person every 90 min
- They can report a dream

# What are Dreams?

- Dreams are images created by the brain
- Dreams are: every memory, every thought, every experience.....
- Information is stored
- Can be accessed in the dream state
- Consciousness is continuous

# Consciousness

- Wide awake...brain is active
- ....fall asleep....brain slows down....
- Go into REM....brain is active again!
- During REM sleep the brain is actively processing information

# How Are They Generated?

- The brain is processing information in the sleeping mind
- Information is brought up in this state
- Stories are created around the images
- May appear bizarre but they are ALL about the dreamer and the dreamer's life

# How Do We Study Dreams?

- Two methods:
- Lab dreams and Home dreams
- Lab dreams: people sleep in the lab
- EEG, wake them at REM
- Conduct sleep/dream studies
- Home dreams: people record their dreams
- Use the dreams as data

# What Do The Images Mean?

- The images that are created, can tell us much about the person's personality, emotional life, health, etc.
- Imagery is personal to the dreamer
- Images are charged with the emotions of the dream
- The information is about the conscious and unconscious processes

# What You Can Learn From Your Dreams

- Personality
- Health
- Relationships
- Spiritual path
- Waking day issues
- Decisions to be made
- Unconscious drives and motives



# Working With Dreams In Therapy

- Many dream interpretation techniques that can be taught
- Therapist guides the dreamer through
- Helps connect the imagery to waking life
- Helps with waking life situations
- A tool to be used with other forms of therapy

# Self-Guided Dream Work

- Techniques, that once taught, can be done without a therapist or guide
- Worksheets, instructional CD's, taught in classes
- Very useful for people to have and use at home
- Therapy, groups, research

# Who Can Do Dreamwork?

- Adults: Non psychotic populations
- Couples: Work together on waking day issues
- Children: Dream therapy designed just for children
- Trauma, fear, anxiety, sleep related issues

# Working With Dreams

- SAFETY
- Private, personal, confidential material in dreams
- The dreamer should never have to reveal any information unless they choose to do so
- Share dream information if he/she wishes to do so

# Working With Dreams

- DISCOVERY
- The dreamer connects the dream to waking day circumstances
- Only the dreamer knows when they have made the connection

# An Interpretation Program

- Best to have more than one technique
- We suggest scientifically tested techniques
- Control group, testing procedures
- Know the interpretation leads to discovery
- Easy to use and to teach
- Therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists etc

# 3 Dream Interpretation Techniques

- The Storytelling Method (DeCicco, 2007)
- The Projective Method
- Ullman, Taylor (DeCicco, 2007)
- Meditative Dream Re-Entry (DeCicco, 2007)

# The Storytelling Method (STM) T. DeCicco (2006)

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# Guiding Principles

- Dream interpretation techniques are based on two guiding principles:
  - 1) Dream Description
  - 2) Associations made by the dreamer
- Associations are based on dream content.

# The Storytelling Method

- Adds an additional step:
  - That is, taking the associations
  - Making a meaningful story from them
  - Meaning comes from their own schema, experiences, personality, perceptions.

# Storytelling and Safety

- Provides a safe method for the dreamer.
- Personal and private - unconscious material being made conscious is kept to the dreamer.
- Disclosure is not necessary for insight.

# Storytelling and Discovery

- Occurs when the dreamer learns or becomes aware of something meaningful about his/her own life.
- Value of dream interpretation.
- Determines if a technique is effective.

# Results from Testing

- Storytelling predicts discovery, above word association alone.
- Worksheet: easy to use for participants.
- Easy to teach: clinicians, workshop facilitators, researchers.

# Testing w/ Control Groups

- 1) Compared the method to the Worksheet "without" the story.
- 2) Compared the method to a "neutral passage."
- The method with the story predicts discovery better than either 1 or 2.

# Protocol

- 5 Steps
- Steps must be followed in careful order.
- Worksheet provided.

# Step 1

- Record the dream in full sentences.

*I saw my mother in the garden*

*She was wearing a red dress*

*She was smiling to herself*



## Step 2

- Underline the most salient word/phrase in each sentence.

*I saw my mother in the garden.*

*She was wearing a red dress.*

*She was smiling to herself.*

## Step 3(a)

- Write a list of the words, in order of appearance.

*Garden*

*Red dress*

*Smiling*

# Step 3(b)

- Word association for each word.
- First word or phrase that comes to mind.

*Garden.....flowers growing*

*Red Dress.....vibrant*

*Smiling.....sad*

# Step 4

- A short story is made with the associated words, that is meaningful to the dreamer.
- Words must be kept in order.

*The flowers growing in my garden are vibrant but I am very sad.*

# Step 5

- Questions to reflect on the story.
- Discovery: Occurs if the story reflects some aspect of the dreamer's waking life.



# Storytelling Worksheet

With Your own Dream

# The Projective (Ullman) Method of Dream Analysis

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# Projective Method

- The method has also been called the Ullman method and other names
- The basic idea behind the method is that dreams are not the property of a few specialists
- It is believed that everyone can participate in the process and that it is a normal social process



# Continued

- It is assumed that in a group, everyone that hears a dream can contribute to the understanding of the dream for the dreamer
- Some of the ideas may not be valuable but others can be valuable
- The dreamer can decide which ideas are the most important to him/her

# Procedure

- The dreamer presents a dream to the group. Group members simply listen.
- Having clearly understood the dream narrative, each group member in turn pretends that the dream belongs to him/her.
- They simply state what the dream would mean-"If it were MY dream".....

# Procedure Continued...

- The dreamer simply listens to each group member in turn. There is no need to respond at this point. Notes can be taken.
- After the group has finished, the dreamer can respond as much or as little as they wish.
- They can simply say that some of the ideas were valuable or they can say more.

# Continued...

- The process allows for some dream insights while protecting the privacy of the dreamer.
- There is a special problem that goes with understanding one's dreams.
- It is called the "blind spot"
- Very often the dreamer is the last to understand his/her dream and others can guess the content more easily

# "Blind Spots"

- Dream- *"A woman dreams that she is standing in the centre of a circle of her friends, but they are all facing away from her and seem displeased. Then she notices that her tongue is shaped like a sharp razor blade."*
- She comments that dreams are kind of crazy and meaningless.

# Continued...

- In fact this was a real occurrence at a party and several other people were listening.
- Some of them gave little smiles as they had guessed what the dream might mean to her.
- This happens to everyone and the Projective Method helps us to get by these blind spots.

# Value of the Method

- The only real value of the method is that it provides some insight to the dreamer (who manufactured the story in the first place)
- Discovery and insight might come quite soon
- It may however take a few days to “sink in”
- This method has been assessed for its value in providing “discovery” or insight

# More Information

- A detailed assessment of this method can be found in the following paper:
- DeCicco, T.L. (2007). Dreams of female university students: Content analysis and the relationship to discovery via the Ullman Method. *Dreaming*, 17, 98-112.
- Also see [www.illnessrecovery.com](http://www.illnessrecovery.com)



# Meditative Dream Re-Entry

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# Meditative Dream Re-Entry

- Tested for clinical use
- Found: predicts discovery
- Predicts discovery better than a control group
- Major finding: Emotional shifting
- Both in the dream imagery and in waking life

# Procedure

- Package includes:
- Instructions
- Blank paper
- Crayons
- Instructional CD

\*Note: some level of meditation must be practiced before using the technique

# Teaching/Using The Technique

- Practice meditation or relaxation therapy
- CD: Tracks 1 and 2
- Use meditation with the imagery of Track 3 to guide the dreamer to discovery



# Practice Meditative Dream Re- Entry

# Dreamy The Pillow

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# Dreamy The Pillow

- Designed for children
- A kit
- Colourful children's pillow with a pocket
- A dream book
- Wish sheets

# Procedure

- Children read the story that takes them to dream land
- At the end, they wish for a dream
- Draw it on a wish sheet and tuck it into the pillow pocket
- They are visualizing a solution to whatever is on their mind



# Benefits

- Helps decrease nightmares
- Strengthens parent/child relationships
- Reveals the emotional state of the child
- Uncover skills and abilities
- Illustrates barriers
- Helps build confidence and self-esteem
- Encourages self-expression and imagination
- Offers security and comfort

# Contacting The Author and Creator of The Kit

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Thank you for participating in  
our Workshop

*Sweet Dreams!!*