

Some thoughts about Dreams.....

We all dream, every night, whether we remember our dreams or not. We have also been perpetually fascinated by our dreams. Since the onset of recorded history, there has been consistent controversy—and even long periods of suppression of knowledge—about dreams.

In the Western world, it has only been since the emergence of the scientific method and the science of psychology that our dreams have been restored to us as a viable, valuable and *common* human experience worthy of our attention and consideration. With the discovery of Rapid Eye Movements (REM) in sleep labs in the '50s, as indicators

of dream activity during sleep, dreams became a legitimate topic for study... and more controversy.

Among the various individuals and groups researching and encouraging appreciation for dreams at this time are the scientific and/or research oriented academicians, professional therapists (usually 'depth' or transpersonal psychologists) and a growing number of 'dreamworkers' and dreamers who innately—or through personal experience—have come to believe in the profound value and power of dreams and of our intrinsic human right to understand the symbolic language *and* meaning of our dreams. The *Dream Network* falls into the latter category.

The controversy continues for a reason: dreams are elusive, metaphorical. They come most primarily to provide us with personal information, but also in the form of Visions, visitations, warnings, etc. Dreams come *always* in the service of our health and healing. It is *Dream Network's* goal and commit-

What is Symbolic Language?

A brief dictionary definition of symbol is: (from the Greek, to throw together); an object used to represent something abstract, such as *the dove is a symbol of peace*.

The word metaphor is nearly synonymous: (from the Greek, to bear over or to transfer beyond); a figure of speech in which one thing is spoken of as if it were another, such as *all the world is a stage*.

Dreams speak to us most often in symbolic language, therefore the story that is given in a dream is frequently—not always—symbolic of a situation or condition in our lives. To interpret a dream literally is generally to miss the message, altogether.

How we *feel* upon awakening is very important in determining the purpose of a dream. Do the 'others' in our dreams represent aspects of our inner self, or the actual person(s) pictured? These are clues which can also help inform us in determining whether to view the dream from a subjective or objective perspective.

Learning to understand the symbolic meaning of our dreams is a matter of *making associations* to each person, place and object in the dream. Who do they remind us of? What do they represent?

Though each dream symbol is typically *unique* to the dreamer, let us look at two common dream symbols. A house, for instance, is often symbolic of the body/mind/soul complex. Discovering new rooms in a familiar dream house could mean discovering new aspects of ourselves; being in a car driven by someone else, or by you, that is out of control—brakes won't work, it's going downhill, in reverse, stuck in the mud, etc.—could be warnings that we are not in control of some aspect of our life situation.

Hints to Help Recall Your Dreams

The *desire* to recall our dreams is the key to remembering them.

☞ Affirm as you are falling to sleep, repeating several times: "Upon awakening, I will remember my dream."

The Kahuna people of Hawaii and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia suggest drinking one-half glass of water before retiring and making the affirmation: "Upon awakening and drinking the remainder of this water, I will recall my dreams." It works!

☞ Talk with your friends *about* dreams in general; discuss your dreams regularly with trusted friend or join a dream group; read books about dreams. Bring dreams *into your life* in meaningful ways.

☞ Abstain from alcohol, drugs (legal or illegal) and overeating prior to bedtime. Sex is OK.

☞ Have a means for recording your dreams nearby. This could be a dream journal or a tape recorder. Voice-activated recorders are ideal, as they require no physical movement.

☞ Try not to move when you awaken; keep your position and your eyes closed. Let the dream 'replay' in your mind's eye a time or two before recording.

☞ If you remember just a fragment of the dream, *record* it; this fragment may stimulate recall of the entire dream or dream sequence, later on.

Basic Ethics for Dreamsharing

We can't share every dream, although we almost always learn more from any dream when we share it with others. What we learn today may well be amplified in weeks, months, years to come, as the meaning of a dream is often revealed in *layers...* as we are ready. Though we are not always aware of it, dreams often reveal deeply personal and emotionally painful information.

☞ Therefore, when choosing a friend or group with whom to share your dreams, assure that **confidentiality** is observed.

☞ **Respect for the privacy of the dreamer:** their safety and authority over the dream-sharing process is essential. The dreamer only discloses what they are comfortable with sharing and can halt the process whenever they choose.

☞ After sharing the dream, **allow questions** that will help you to clarify the meaning of the images, place and story in the dream. Share the dream twice, if necessary; once from your journal and another time, more animated, from memory.

☞ Learn to ask **questions** that will help to illuminate the meaning of the dream for the dreamer: How did you *feel* upon awakening from this dream? What does that person, object *remind* you of? *What happened recently* that may have triggered this particular dream? How do you see the dream after considering these questions and your associations? etc.

☞ Never interpret another's dream.

☞ Dreams are ultimately a mystery and **respect for the mystery** is *the* basic ethic for dreamsharing. ☞