



Satisfy the Image

**The Wisdom of Your Dreams
& Guided Imagery
for Self Balancing**

Ann Sayre Wiseman

Also by Ann Sayre Wiseman:

Making Music, with John Langstaff, Storey Books, 2003

The Best of Making Things, Little, Brown, 1997

Nightmare Help, 10 Speed Press, 1989

Finger Paint and Pudding Prints, Addison Wesley, 1980

Welcome to the World, Addison-Wesley, 1980

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Limited editions from ansayre press:

Spinning Straw: a memoir, 2010

Bali Sketchbook

Sketching/Expressive Therapies in Russia

The Hidden Garden: Memoirs of a Greenwich Village Childhood

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Find the author on the web at: ansayrewiseman.com



Satisfy the Image:

The Wisdom of Your Dreams &

Guided Imagery for Self Balancing

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Why Read This Book?	iv
How This Method Came About	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
CHAPTER 1	1
<i>Gifts from Dreams</i>	
What are Dreams?	1
Buried Traumas and Unfinished Business	2
Dreams that Prepare Us for Loss	3
CHAPTER 2	4
<i>Art and Dream Re-staging: The Method in Brief</i>	
Questions to Start the Action	5
The Bitter Almond Tree	5
A Guide for Recalling and Harvesting Dreams	6
Group Work	8
CHAPTER 3	9
<i>The Paper Stage: Seeing is Understanding</i>	
Why Set the Stage?	10
The Trapeze Artist	10
Questions for Evaluation	13
Children and the Paper Stage	14
The Unacceptable Divorce	14
CHAPTER 4	17
<i>Harvesting the Metaphor, Finding the Message</i>	
The Big Draft	18
Quick Dream Interpretation: A Poet's Shortcut	18
Rafting to China	19
Vehicles as Metaphor	20
Piss and Poop Dreams	21
Flying Dreams	22
CHAPTER 5	24
<i>The Importance of Recurring Dreams</i>	
The Professor's Trap	26
Feeding Hitler	27
The Undelivered Birthday Cake	27
Help for Recurring Dreams	28
CHAPTER 6	29
<i>The Art of Guiding</i>	
The Robber Fish	29
Trapped in The World	30
A Tool Kit For Dreamer and Guide	32
CHAPTER 7	34
<i>The Benefits of Re-staging the Dream</i>	
The High Diver	34
My House Is on Fire	35
Hearing the Dialogue: Role-Reversal	37
The Ice Cream Shooting Machine	37
The Alligator's Revenge	38
CHAPTER 8	40
<i>When Stuck, Borrow a Helper</i>	
The Open Wound	41
Writer's Block	42
The Borrowed Therapist	44
Finding an Animal Guide	45
The Possibility of Past Lives	46

CHAPTER 9	47
<i>Self-Parenting: Returning to the Source</i>	
The Power of Ridicule	47
Disowned Feelings	48
Advice from the Unborn Child	48
Reframing Faults	49
Throwing the Self Out	49
Be Gentle with Addiction	52
The Lightning Bolt	52
Making Things Wrong:	
A Survival Strategy	54
Making Things Right:	
Taking Responsibility for Satisfaction	54
CHAPTER 10	55
<i>Children Empowering Themselves</i>	
The Tractor and the Baby Tree	56
Violence and Negotiation	57
The Exploded Teacher	57
Learning from Fear	59
The Sister-Napper	60
Death Comes in my Room	61
Guiding Children	62
Useful Questions for Guiding Children	63
A Note to Parents and Caretakers	63
The Toilet Paper Wizard	64
CHAPTER 11	66
<i>The Price of Change</i>	
Fat as a Survival Strategy	66
Bugness	67
Anger Before Forgiveness	68
Conditions for Availability	68
The Goldfish	69
The Baby Destroyer	69
Dream Yoga	70
CHAPTER 12	71
<i>Visual Problem Solving: Other Uses of this Method</i>	
Life Mapping:	
What to Do with the Rest of Your Life	71
Rent-a-Mom	73
Body Mapping:	
Symbolic Healing and Self-Balancing	76
Questions and Suggestions for Body Mapping	78
The Holocaust Baby	82
The Cellophane Child	84
The Little Gray Thing	85
The Little Gray Thing's New Self	86
Caring for Max	88
Solving Life Problems	
Whatever Works, Works!	89
The Lost Cause	89
The Lump of Clay Feeling	90
Excitable Skin	91
A Final Warning	96
Conclusion: Think On It	97
Bibliography	98

Why Read This Book?

"It is impossible to think without a mental picture."
— Aristotle (*De Anima*)

I wrote this book to show you a very simple hands-on process that makes a problem visible. The book tells how to "work a dream," "stage a problem," listen to your body, and map your future. These simple techniques enhance and sometimes change peoples' lives. The process asks you to use symbols to tell your story and uncover your emotions. It's a quick way to help you see your life, how you treat your body, how you may have ignored your dreams and your inner child, where you are stuck, and how you may sabotage your success. Seeing shows you where and how to make change and plan for the future you truly want. Self-esteem and self-balance is the goal. ***Seeing is believing! Feelings are true. You know you have found the truth when you feel the "Aha!"***

I call my approach Dream Re-staging or Autodrama on the Paper Stage. As a concrete mapping method, it works for dreams and all kinds of life problems. You create your own symbols to represent the people and things in your story and set them on a sheet of paper we call the stage. Telling the same story in words would take much longer. Instead, we use colored paper or found objects to represent characters and significant objects—it's very simple. As you answer questions about the scene, you begin to understand the problem and manipulate the characters in search of resolution.

The method integrates Gestalt, psychodrama, and guided imagery. Autodrama is a mini psychodrama, shrinking the stage to the size of a sheet of paper and eliminating the other players. It is more direct, less cumbersome than a full scale psychodrama with human players. You can work alone, but is often more effective with a guide who helps navigate by asking questions. Dreamer and guide are joint observers who help the Self who's caught up in the problem. In re-staging the scene, the dreamer plays all the roles, speaks and hears the dialogue, harvests the projections and negotiates a resolution.

This work has also been inspired by Psychosynthesis, a form of therapy devised by Roberto Assagioli, who focused on the "higher self" and the "inner child." Polarized parts of the Self must negotiate a new strategy that allows conflicting voices to coexist in one body. The polarized Self can no longer dominate the entire person.

Becoming a good parent to the inner child is for many of us a totally new idea. When we begin to do this, we stop looking to other people for the things we crave or have missed. Metaphoric symbols, whether from a dream or a waking problem, move the emotions, facilitate symbolic healing, and guide us to resolution. When the body feels something, it registers a true and real experience. When we experience the integrity of rightness, Aha! It works!

How this Method Came About

The method came to me in a very important dream. I saw myself as a tiny human attached to the earth's globe by gravity. Up in the universal darkness, a giant megaphone shouted "***FIND THE IMAGE AND SATISFY IT.***" Immediately I understood that the way to resolution was through the image, and the way to the image was through your feelings.

I have always worked in the arts and never was interested in an academic degree. Book learning was difficult for me; in grade school I'd been told I was "not college material." I didn't care, since I much preferred to make things. Since the age of three, I drew, painted, designed textiles, perfected and taught various crafts. When I had kids of my own, I made bread sculpture, rag tapestries, furniture, and toys. All this I turned into how-to books. The excitement of making useful things and teaching others was captivating.

In the 1970's, I was Program Director for the Children's Museum Visitor Center in Jamaica Plain, Boston, creating workshops based on these how-to skills. Visitors learned to make paper, build looms and kites, and invent musical instruments from junk. I also conducted workshops for the New Hampshire elementary school system, under the sponsorship of The New Hampshire Commission on The Arts and Humanities. Sixty to ninety teachers came once a week for five-hour sessions on "Methods and Materials" and "Creative Enrichment." With almost no experience in hands-on learning-by-doing, these teachers were very excited to create things they could take back to their classes. We called it "Kindergarten for creatively deprived adults."

From teaching teachers about methods and materials in the arts, it was a short step to Expressive Therapy. Despite my lack of academic degrees, I joined the staff of a training program just getting under way at Lesley College. At the same time the college had just launched an Independent Master's Degree Program, and encouraged me to turn my twenty years of teaching, writing, and publishing into a Bachelor's degree so I could get an M.A. It was a most exciting, experiential way to get a degree: much richer than a curriculum of words in books.

I've always been a visual learner. In my how-to books, visual instructions explain how things work faster and more clearly than verbal instructions. For decades, I've written down my dreams and appreciated how they guided me to deeper self-understanding. The originality of dreams is a gold mine, they pose important questions and require new ways of thinking. I sought more tools in every kind of therapy workshop I could attend.

Lesley's Independent Degree program allowed students to design their own course of study, choose their teachers and support team. My degree program was based on the expressive therapies. The trainings in-



cluded a work-study month in Gestalt at Esalen Institute, Big Sur California; Psychosynthesis at Stanford in Palo Alto; Psychodrama at The Moreno Institute in New York; sessions with Ildri and Bob Ginn in Cambridge, Massachusetts; EST training; Transactional Analysis; Co-Counseling; and Creative Group Problem Solving with Synectics in Cambridge. I have been privileged to attend the seminars and workshops of most of the best therapeutic leaders of the day, including Carl Rogers, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Ira Progoff, and Joseph Campbell. I heard The Honorable Dalai Lama speak at Harvard and attended Robert Bly's Great Mother Conference for many years. I spent four months in Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's Ashram in Poona India, learning about meditation, motivation and the dreams that brought me there. My practicum was with Shep Ginandes at his school, called "The School We Have," for disturbed adolescents in Concord, Massachusetts.

As I worked with Gestalt and Psychodrama, it became clear that dreams were often an arrow that lead straight to the unconscious issue. Dreams, like parables, provide perspective on a truth that may be too close to see. Dream images reflect aspects of yourself in a way that allows you to see them clearly. What we can do to decode dreams, we can do to dissect personal problems; the method is the same. Visual methods make problem solving exciting because they require you to think outside the box using your other kinds of intelligence, other sources of wisdom.

The Arts Institute at Lesley was created by Shaun McNiff who believed that the arts heal. He invited me to join the adjunct faculty to teach dream work and Life Mapping for the Expressive Therapies Training Program. At Lesley, I worked with many students and applied my methods to therapeutic work. Conventional dream work filled up class time with instructions, explanations, and the endless details of dreams, which may be important but are often distracting. My challenge was to get a class of twenty people all working at once on a disturbing dream or whatever issue they needed help with. Out of necessity, excitement, impatience and frustration, I said, "Show me your dream. Show me your problem. Create images. Tear characters from colored tissue papers or find an object from nature to represent the people and things in your story. Set the stage on a sheet of paper."

Inspired by necessity, the Paper Stage was a great success. Within half an hour, everyone had created a scene and could begin to work using ten simple questions on an instruction sheet. This allowed me as facilitator to go around the room from scene to scene and help move things forward or backwards as needed. The classes also owed some of their excitement to the magic of working in groups. I invited people to borrow from each other any ideas that might help them stage and resolve their issue. Seeing how others were doing the work got the slowpokes moving. Listening to those whose

problems were already being resolved increased everyone's willingness to take risks. Originality was rampant. Everyone left the room with new information, and often with a new resolution.

A Harvard student from Australia happened to sign up for a workshop I was teaching at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education. He said, "This work you do in dreams and psychotherapy is more interesting than all the psychology courses I've been taking at Harvard. I'd like my professor to see what you do." So I was invited to lead a workshop at Harvard. The professor asked what books I was using, what theory?

"No books, no theory—just common sense and the wisdom of the dream, the power of peoples' images. We simply 'satisfy the image.'"

"Well, that isn't going to make much sense to Academic is it?" he says.

"No. I guess not. It is not a theory; it is an experience."

I am often asked, "Are you a Jungian? A Rogerian? An Adlerian?" No. *You* are the system. *You are the method.* It's the doing that heals, creates change, and enlightens. Only when you experience it will you really know it. It is the "Aha!" method.



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CHAPTER 1

Gifts from Dreams

What Are Dreams?

No one knows for certain what dreams are, or why we dream, but we do know that we all have dreams every night even if we can't remember them. I believe that everything the body does has a purpose and a good use. The more familiar we are with the workings of our bodies, the better we function.

Sleep research tells us we spend four and a half years of our life in the dream-state, one and a half hours per night spent engaged in the inner movie. I believe that we dream all the time. Like a radio, we have many channels; waking switches off the night programs and switches on the day programs. That doesn't mean the program is over, it just means the station is turned off.

I like to think of the dream as a balancing voice, a messenger offering us an opportunity to grow. Some dreams give us affirmations; some are rehearsals or preparations for things to come. Some dreams bring us warnings. (A woman dreams that she is in a clinic for a check up. The doctor tells her she needs to contact her lover. On waking, she realizes she has contracted a case of the clap. Her unconscious knew it before she did.) How do we know such things? Are we a conduit through which revelation passes?

There are many kinds of dreams. Here we are dealing mostly with problem dreams and nightmares that can be seen as metaphoric messages alerting us to trouble areas in our lives. Dreams often let us know how we feel when we don't seem to know. They speak in a language of images more explicit, more subtle than words. Dreams take a feeling and translate it into an image.

Timmy, age 9, told me about this recurring dream: "A robot was chasing me all over the house with alarm signals screaming and lights flashing. I was so scared I started to scream. My own noise woke me up. I didn't dare go back to sleep." When asked to confront the robot and find out what it wanted, he said he couldn't stop it long enough to ask. "There is no turn-off switch." He realized he felt trapped in automatic behavior. Words could not have expressed such a complex feeling so well.

Pain and fear as guides are our best friends; they demand that we listen. Pain and fear often save lives. When we won't listen to the inner voice, it shouts loud enough to get our full attention. When the dream is so strong that it cannot be ignored, we call it a nightmare. The dream messenger is telling us something is out of

balance, forcing us to look at feelings we dare not acknowledge in our waking life. Sometimes nightmares feel like a matter of life or death. If we don't address them, such dreams keep recurring, often growing louder and nastier.

A young woman dreamed seven times in two years that she dialed 911 (EMERGENCY) and no one answered. She felt frustrated and desperate. It never occurred to her to answer the call herself. When she joined my class, I asked her to close her eyes and answer that call. She said she heard sobbing and a small child asking her mother to tell her stepfather to stop molesting her. Her mother had not heard that call twenty-five years ago, and the dreamer had continued to be deaf to it ever since. We learn to treat the Self as it was treated. It is all we know.

Before you edit the illogical out of your dreams, consider that it may be symbolically correct. Trust that the message will eventually become clear. Whatever their source, dreams offer you an opportunity to reconnect with your basic integrity, observe old survival strategies, and update them.

The Sufis teach through parables, as do many other cultures, in order to deliver a lesson indirectly. That, I believe, is also the way of the dream. Sometimes a dream appears like a *koan*, a Zen teaching story, a paradoxical riddle or conundrum which can only be solved irrationally. We work on it for years until one day it makes sense. I believe too that when we receive a dream we are ripe to deal with it. If hidden meanings are not ripe for harvest, don't push it. Wait for the next dream.

The dream poses a problem waiting for acknowledgment or a solution. The dreamer's task is to *translate the picture language back into feelings*. It is your choice to acknowledge the message, face the challenge of change, or turn a deaf ear. After drawing his robot dream on paper, Timmy was asked if he wanted the boy in his picture to remain in this situation or whether he wanted to help him find a solution. He said running away did not stop the dream from coming back. So he decided to confront the robot by drawing a turnoff switch to stop it long enough to ask what it wanted. The robot said it wanted help, so he agreed to help if it would stop chasing and screaming. He said, "It sounds like my dad. When he is angry, there is no turn-off switch. I am so scared I run away."

A young woman dreamed of a rocket plunging into a tunnel. She woke terrified. I asked her to speak from the points of view of the different elements in the dream. "I am the tunnel," she said. "I am not designed for speed or impact of that kind." "I am the rocket. Rockets need to explode." "Not in my tunnel!" said the tunnel. "Find a gentler approach." "Wow!" said the woman. "Now I can communicate with my boyfriend, asking him to be slow and gentle, instead of trying to accommodate his rocket."



Once you start working with your dreams, you will discover new dimensions of creativity and intelligence that have been trained out of you by our culture and displaced by our educational priorities. To survive in our culture we are quick to learn the day language, but no one really speaks the inner night language of feelings, which is our first language. You may have forgotten that you once possessed access to an intuitive advisor who has your own greatest good at heart. Like a patient parent, the advisor watches you make wrong choices that are not in your best interest. It takes a while to learn to trust your instincts as well as your feelings.

The dream is a unique resource for originality. For most people, it is a revelation to accept the idea that we are the creator of the dream. We are slow to own such creative power, such diabolical wit! At night we practice unheard of skills like breathing under water, flying over New York City, sharing tea with Queen Elizabeth. Without hesitation, we accept paradoxes like driving a car without a steering wheel or talking to our dead mother. The dream challenges the day mind to match wits with the imagination of the night mind. Delight in this innate ability, dare to listen to this metaphoric teacher, and take charge of a new dimension of your own potential. Help your children respect their dreams and dreams will become their lifelong friend and guide.

The problem is, how to retain the dream? It's gone the minute your day-mind checks in. If you feel deprived of a dream life, perhaps you wake up too quickly. Don't move until you review the dream; then write it down. Harvest the images: even a fragment is enough to work on. Befriend your dream center; invite it to coexist with your other obligations. Keep a journal of your dreams. Even if you only record your dreams and read the collection once a year, the accumulated stories and images will reveal their messages over time.

Buried Traumas and Unfinished Business

Many of us have forgotten our early training, which taught us to discount our feelings, avoid and overcome the messages from our body. Childhood fears of violence and failure to live up to expectations can push the child-Self beyond its powers of understanding and self-defense. Parental disinterest, abandonment, anger and unresponsiveness can feel like death to a child. Many adult dreamers never get relief from childhood fears; they just become encapsulated somewhere in the body. When I tell people on buses and airplanes that I work with dreams, they are quick to tell me about childhood nightmares that have been worrying them for years.

But childhood doesn't last long; we are pressed to grow up faster and faster until one day we cast off and find ourselves adrift in the big sea of life, with paddles that no longer push water the way they did at home. We try to establish a new independent adult Self, or we are seduced by the familiar and choose a lifestyle similar to the one we just left, in order to continue using our childhood strategies. Positive or negative, the familiar we know how to handle. As we were treated, we treat the Self, and as we treat the Self so we treat others.

No matter which path you take, your dreams will continue to speak (even if you protest, as my father did, that dreams are "perfect nonsense, no connection with *my* life whatsoever!") Buried feelings, like truth, will find their way out sooner or later, demanding acknowledgment, resolution or healing. Unfinished business keeps us stuck, keeps things from getting comfortably stored or filed away. This is why confessions have been a solace for centuries in most religions. Some of us are not content until we have told our secrets and woes on national television. For others, this unfinished business surfaces in our dreams. Surely it is better that we find a way to use dreams for our own good than leave them unattended.

Dreams that repeat over and over can alert us to trouble areas before illness demands our full attention. Recurring dreams indicate an urgent source of anxiety, often appearing as variations on one basic theme, like feeling pursued, stuck, threatened, trapped, attacked, unable to defend oneself, or meet expectations. It usually takes desperation, despair, divorce, loss, a mid-life crisis or spiritual enlightenment to force us to stop and listen.

One way of dealing with a troublesome dream is to look at it as a life position statement and ask "What do I like and what don't I like about this position?" To recognize one's position and explore possible changes, that is the gift of the dream. Working with your dreams requires you to take responsibility for your true feelings and accept your limitations. You need first to establish trust in your feelings, and feel worthy of your own trust.



“Get on with it!” they say, but jumping past fears causes stress. Stress creates a war inside our bodies. Dreams are the most handy portable stress-control device we have, and free of charge. Strange, that our culture doesn’t leap to harvest the wealth of such a rich communication system, when dreams are universal, international, and always available. Are we afraid of our own process?

Dreams that Prepare Us for Loss

Sometimes it seems that the unconscious mind wants to warn us of things we don’t know we know, and dreams are the direct line of communication.

John said that when he was six years old, he dreamed again and again of his father waving from a car, never stopping. Soon after this series of dreams, his parents divorced, and his father moved to another city. The dream had prepared him for the shock.

Rickie, age nine, was at camp when he dreamed he was trapped in a dark tunnel, afraid that his best friend was going to die, and knowing it was his fault. The next day, he got a letter from his mother saying, “Your best friend the chameleon died of a broken heart.” Rickie’s mother had made him go to camp against his will, and now he was forced to take the blame for his chameleon’s death by broken heart. A dark trap indeed!

Clara dreamed, the night before traveling to India, that a handless person came to her. She was shocked and frightened. She wondered how one could survive without hands; her own hands were her most valued extremity. During her first week in India, a young girl with no hands begged her for rupees. She raised her elbow stumps and, using them like pincers, took the bill Clara offered in her teeth, and dropped it into her breast pocket.

Martha, whose mother died when she was eleven, said that every night for years afterwards, her mother appeared in her dreams to ease the shock of loss. Finally, one night Martha dreamed that her mother said, “Once you are safely at boarding school, you will have to find a home in yourself.” She said she would never again appear in Martha’s dreams because that would weaken Martha’s courage to carry on alone. Martha never dreamed of her mother again.



CHAPTER 2

Art and Dream Re-staging: The Method in Brief

We are trained to look elsewhere for wisdom: to parents, god, teachers, therapists, bosses. We don't realize we have a second mind that protects us, giving us wake-up calls while we sleep. We don't understand this language until we look for the metaphor hidden in a dream. The metaphor speaks to your feelings in symbols. You can't argue with a dream, but you can decode the symbols.

In psychotherapeutic techniques such as Transactional Analysis, Gestalt psychology, Psychosynthesis and Psychodrama, the image is always the key. "A picture is worth a thousand words," and dreams are the picture language. The experience of a dream is like theater, dance, and art, which transmit feelings faster, deeper, and beyond the limits of words.

Re-staging a dream on paper makes the metaphor accessible, revealing a wealth of information that would take much longer to explain with words. This "Paper Stage" provides us with a symbolic reality. The dream scene is recreated using collage, with colored bits of paper and found objects representing elements from the dream. The most amazing thing about this process is that when you allow symbols to represent things, situations, or persons, real feelings get invested in these colored scraps of paper. When feelings are moved, and action felt, the body actually experiences change.

Reducing the visual stage to a piece of paper allows everyone in a big group to work at once. They are each the actor as well as director on their own private stage. In response to a series of questions, the participant dialogues with any image on his stage that wants to

speak and hears its point of view. The goal is to negotiate a resolution between disjointed parts of the Self. Self-parenting repairs old hurts; you no longer have to waste your life waiting for someone to give you what you didn't get. Interpretation evolves as the dreamer recognizes the projections invested in the images. Seeing the dream as the observer allows the dreamer to leave the stuck Self on the stage, freeing the therapist-Self to test the options that can lead to a solution. Closed eye work allows you to see and hear; for some people it feels like a self-induced trance. With closed eyes one can visit the scene and explore the options until finding one that *feels* right. When the body has been made to feel, we know instantly if an option is workable or not. Resolution is satisfaction.

I call this work "Autodrama" because it is like a mini-psychodrama, but faster, more direct, and not cumbered by other "actors." The guide facilitates the process. (The dreamer can also work alone, playing both parts, perhaps using two chairs as in a Gestalt dialogue.) Guided imagery is a way for the mind to travel on suggestion. Storytellers, faith healers, and hypnotists have used the power of suggestion and guided meditation since the beginning of words. It is a wonderful way to help someone envision a resolution. Whether there is a guide or not, no one interferes with the participants' integrity since the dreamer plays all the parts and harvests their own projections. The resolution can move surprisingly fast.

Finding answers from within is a journey of the heart. If we learn to settle the wars within ourselves without violence, maybe we can learn to keep peace on our planet. *"There is still hope that we will steer this fragile planet clear of self-destruction in the nick of time,"* says Buckminster Fuller. In any case, there is nothing else to do but make it work. Balancing the Self is the first step—a microcosm containing the solution for the universe. As we master wholeness in ourselves, we can model it, teach it, and recreate it. As the pebble in the pool radiates its rings from shore to shore, change begins with a ripple.



SIDEBAR

Questions to Start the Action

We each have our own answers; it is just a question of how to get at them. Here are some provocative questions to get you started.

- 1) What do you like and dislike about this scene?
- 2) What needs to happen to make it feel right?
- 3) What options are available to you? Try them one at a time, and check your feelings to see if it works. If not, try another solution. Allow your feelings to guide you.

Remember:

- You are the director and the interpreter of your dream.
- Translate the images into metaphors for your life.
- Trust yourself. Acknowledge and trust your feelings.
- Love your faults; they are strategies you learned in childhood that got you this far, but which now need updating. We call them **survival strategies** that no longer work.
- Become aware of your "addiction," your "loop," your repetitions.
- Discover and nurture the abandoned child inside you. Parent it, as only you know what it needs.
- Develop your higher Self. Dare to fall in love with yourself as a representation of the divine. You have a rightful place in the universe.
- Consider resistance and obstacles as a guide to the integrity of your real feelings.
- If stuck, "borrow an expert" or someone who can help.
- Once the resolution occurs, the body and mind have new information. You cannot revert back to your old position.



The Bitter Almond Tree

(Andi, age 32)

Andi lived in South Africa until her father's death when she was seven. Now a grown woman with a seven-year-old son of her own, she came to explore a recurring dream of the bitter almond tree, the image of her homeland.

Andi: The almond is like a bleeding heart hidden inside the outer coating. It is imprisoned; it wants to be exposed. *[She creates an image out of green papers. When asked how she might satisfy that image, she removes the green husks from the almond and turns the red almond nut around, leaving it room to move and turn.]* It feels too vulnerable.

Guide: Arrange it so it feels comfortable for the work we want to do today. *[Andi arranges the almond so it is protected at the bottom but revealed at the top.]* Speak as though the almond had a voice and could tell us about itself.

Andi: I am the bitter seed of the tree of Africa, the most beautiful country in the world, my birthright, my childhood, my paradise.

Guide: How old is the voice that is speaking?

Andi: Seven.

Guide: What happened at seven?

Andi: My father has just died, right in front of me, from a heart attack. My uncle is crying, my mother and sisters are there, doctors, nurses, people all around him. I am sitting at the piano, practicing his favorite song so he will think I am a good girl. He loved me. He said I was all he had. I defended him. Everyone hated him but me. I could do no wrong. How could he leave me to those women, to all those enemies, my mother's and sisters' resentment?

Guide: With your eyes closed, relax. Become that seven-year-old. See how it feels to be left alone in the camp of the enemies.

Andi: I am terrified. I am crying. I want to run away.

Guide: Follow the running child.

Andi: I get up from the piano and run to the kennel. My Airedale is the only thing my father left me. I crawl inside the kennel with my dog. *[Tears are flowing as the forgotten scene overtakes her. When the catharsis*

is spent, I ask her to visualize her adult Self coming to the aid of her seven-year-old.]

Andi: She wants to run away from these people.

Guide: Follow her, let her guide you.

Andi: I'm running up the hill to my friend. I need protection from all those hypocrites, relatives, imposters. None of them are really sorry my father died. They think he is a tyrant, they have nothing good to say about him, and they hate me. Now that he's dead I am unprotected. They will destroy me.

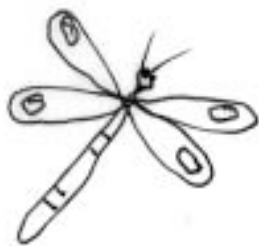
Guide: Tell that little girl that you have returned to Africa to find her and protect her. Ask her how to begin.

Andi: Oh, wow! The minute you said that, she jumped inside me! I am feeling my left shoulder tightness is gone. There is more room inside me. Whatever happened? I can't believe this! It felt like she'd been waiting for years, and the moment she saw me, she slit me open and jumped inside. *[Andi was holding her belly and chest as though the feeling were too real to contain with her eyes closed.]* I think something very important just happened. I can hardly believe it.

Guide: Is there anything you want to say to your father?

Andi: Yes. I'd say, "You should have known better than to keep me like your pet dog, isolating me in your love, cutting me off from everyone and then leaving me to the wolves." I never realized how angry I am, how dangerous and unjust a way to use an adoring love-hungry child. I had no idea I was just your pet dog! I had to learn this from a seven year old!

Notes: Andi made the connection between what her father did to her and what she was doing to her seven-year-old son, isolated far from home and family, feeling hated and different at day school, living like a pet dog in an empty apartment, waiting for his mother to come home from graduate school. This was the beginning of change.

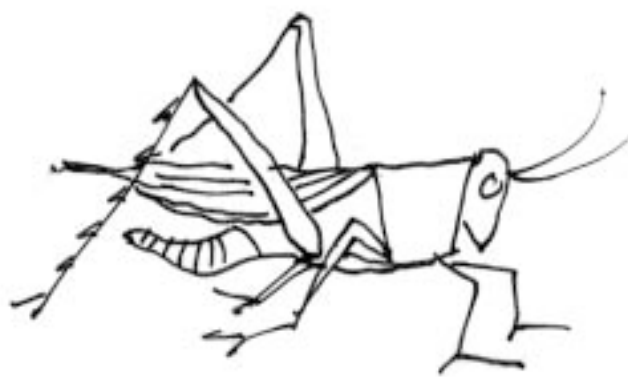


SIDEBAR

A Guide for Recalling and Harvesting Dreams

- 1) When waking, stay in the in-between place for a while, inviting the images to linger. Don't change your body position until you capture some of the images.
- 2) Record dreams without editing. Have pad and pencil or a tape recorder handy by the bed. Keep your eyes half closed when writing.
- 3) Record and note the feelings the dream left you with. The feeling on awaking from a dream is truer to the meaning than the afterthought. Trust your first response.
- 4) People, images, color, mood, and other details can be rich with information; let things speak. Note fragments, names, numbers, places, animals, objects. Remember, even a fragment contains the whole.

- 5) Look for puns, metaphor, word play, double meaning, and paradox. The paradox is a signal to investigate. The odd juxtaposition of people, things, and feelings can indicate traumas, discrepancies, and unfinished business.
- 6) Acknowledge gifts, advice, counseling, insights. Find the gift in the negative things as well as in the positive. Note who or what brought you the message or gift (animate or inanimate).
- 7) Containers, empty or full, can have meaning. Investigate closed containers by means of meditation. Ask them to reveal their contents. Accept whatever comes to mind for consideration.
- 8) In order to locate the time source, observe the age of your dream-self, the age of the dream feeling. The situation may symbolize a childhood belief system or trauma in need of updating.
- 9) Note how the day's events may have triggered the dream events as a **metaphoric replica**. Triggers that carry us back to important sources keep us locked into repeating feelings. Become aware of what they are.
- 10) Wherever you feel attraction or repulsion, it may be a shadow of your Self.
- 11) Note fears, anxieties, and frustrations. Fear is an intervention, an interruption, a safety warning. Listen and provide.
- 12) If fear woke you, return to the scene, make yourself safe enough to confront the enemy. Confrontation and safety in dreams are a state of mind. The question is how to make safety and protection available and reliable in waking life. Conflict can awaken you to its antidote.
- 13) Don't kill the "enemy." It has your power; transform it into your helper. Do not delete, change, or destroy any of the powers in your dream until you dialogue with them to gain information.
- 14) Feed the enemy. It may be some part of the angry infant-self craving validation and satisfaction. See if you can cooperate with the oppressor if it has a reasonable point of view.
- 15) Note the investment you deposit in your images, the projections you invest in others. Your images are extensions of yourself. Owning projections becomes an art and cleans up relationships.
- 16) If you are the victim in your dream, list the positive pay-offs for playing the victim role. Pay-offs are hidden in every excuse/accident/illness/default. Dare to see them.
- 17) As you acknowledge and redesign your position in the dream, the causes that make you a victim can change. Permission to transform and reframe your limitations and possibilities awaits your responsibility.
- 18) In the dream space, you have only to empower yourself; simply imagine it. Remember, this is **your dream**; you are the creator, the player, the rescuer, the director and the interpreter. Imagining something is the beginning of making it possible.
- 19) The "essence" quality is the key to your hieroglyphics. Determine the essence quality in each image. Become aware of your dream language and the feelings associated with your images.
- 20) Your essence vocabulary is your own private communication language. Make a glossary of essence words. This glossary will write you a poem that decodes your dream. (See Chapter 4 for more on this.)
- 21) Give the dream a title. After you have **satisfied the image**, you may find a truer title. Date it, step outside and become the witness.



Group Work

I have been a member of the International Association for the Study of Dreams since 1983, demonstrating this method for their annual conference programs here and abroad. I have given workshops at the Skyros Center for Holistic Health in Greece; the Art Therapy center in Gothenburg, Sweden; in London and Cambridge, England; Tel Aviv, Israel; The Bahamas, and Mexico. This method works in every country.

Anjali Hhazarika is a frequent attendant of our International Dream Conferences around the world. While living in Pune and working for Oil India, she introduced dreamwork to Indian business managers and wrote a book about it called *"Daring to Dream: Cultivating Corporate Creativity."* When I was in India, Anjali was the Director of National Petroleum Management Training Programs. She invited me to co-lead a two-day dream workshop in Delhi. Twenty corporate men and women came from companies including Oil India, National Thermal Power Corporation, and Times Internet. We introduced them to the concept of dreams as metaphor, got them thinking about their strategies of failure and success in their business lives, and showed them how they might use the Paper Stage for making a problem visible and negotiable. The idea that dreams could be useful in business management, goal setting and interpersonal problems was a new way of thinking for these Indian men and women.

The benefits of this method for this group spared them the need of a long explanatory lecture. Everyone in the group got right to work on their private issues; no one had to wait. When the stages were all set, we took turns delving deeply into one person's issue while the rest of the group listened and learned the process. No one analyzed another person's dream but they were encouraged to learn and borrow from one another.

Work done in small groups is infectious. There is courage and safety in numbers. Urgency usually forces the first person to act. What may seem silly or embarrassing at first becomes a gift to the group. Other people's emotions can ripen our own; sometimes other people even do our emotional work for us. Vicarious help is often easier to accept. As when we go to the movies, we can experience real feelings second-hand, stretching our experience without risk or visibility.



CHAPTER 3

The Paper Stage: Seeing is Understanding

Dreams are the inner artist, creating amazing and original pictures. Using objects or bits of colored paper to represent the dream images helps the dreamer step outside the story. It helps to visually describe form, relationship, color, and emotional content. Placement and proximity of the images transcends words, producing a symbolic reality so concrete that the feelings are real.

Setting the Paper Stage is simple and intuitive. The figures can be flat or three dimensional, torn symbols or figurative. Above all other art tools, torn-paper collage is totally available and non-threatening. No skill is needed, so no one need feel artistically inhibited. We bypass the fact that adults, in general, are not comfortable when asked to draw or act.

The size and shapes of images and the relationships between them on the stage reveals information beyond words. Color selection is instinctive; the hands know what to choose. Color reveals unconscious feelings: like or dislike, warm or cold, aggressive or passive, passionate or indifferent. It tells which members of the family are *your color*, the members you feel most related to, and which are opposing or different. Affinities between members of a family usually take weeks to explain verbally. We get more information in fifteen minutes from this method than in ten talk sessions.

In one workshop, Martha tore a large red dominant shape representing herself and placed it in the center of her map. Surrounding her were crowds of relatives, her children, and her students. One daughter and three of her students were red like herself. What does that tell you? In “The Excitable Skin” story (page 91), we see two red shapes representing parents, equal in size, closely bonded to their grey sick child who could not escape from under the yellow blanket of the disease.

Your association with color is a personal history that has been collecting in your inner computer since birth. It is so instinctive we rarely think about it. I often find students wearing the color that expresses their emotion of the moment. As they amplify their work and find that one color is not sufficient, they add pieces of other colors to indicate other elements. As feelings become more complicated, so do our colors.

I often start the explanation of the power of color by asking the students to choose colors to represent their

parents. The response is intuitive and immediate. When I ask, “Why that color?” they have an immediate answer: “It just seemed *right*.” Then comes the more precise reason: “Mom is shy. She allows dad to lead her. Brown is an indistinct color, so I made her less distinct, and brown was the nearest color that felt right.”

Once the stage is set, each student answers a set of questions to get the action started. As they gain more information about the situation, they can test new options by rearranging the images on the stage. The shapes that designate people, objects, and images are all movable, even if they have been glued down. (Everything we do in this process is symbolic. Much of our life is tightly glued down and must be torn free, leaving rents and scars.) Shifting the relationship of images reveals unspoken feelings that force a reaction. *Paper rehearsals tell true feelings and feelings tell the truth*. You need to experience the power of this method to understand the impact that symbolic action has on your feelings.

If colored papers are not available, *improvise*. Use junk or found objects from nature. On my way to Denver to lead a workshop for forty elementary teachers, my luggage was lost; I had no tools. I asked each teacher to take from their purse five items to represent the subjects they were teaching or the problems they needed to solve. On another occasion, a group of kids used objects collected on the beach to represent people and things in their invented village. But because found objects may be heavy or fragile and many players want to take their work home, paper is usually best.



SIDEBAR

Why Set the Stage?

*Because doing is faster than explaining.
"Show me" the dream to tell me how you feel.*

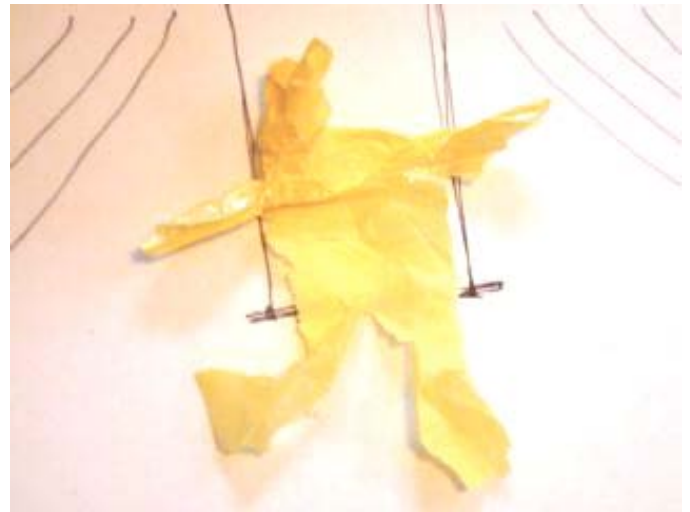
Trust your instincts to know how to represent each figure. (Watch your hands adjust the right distance between you and the other figures.) Feelings will automatically govern size, color, and placement.

Color is the language of feelings. Watch your hands thumbing through the choices until they find a color that satisfies. The mind may interfere, but in the end feelings will win.

Seeing the relationships is more revealing. Closeness, affinities, and power dynamics will be immediately visible. Feeling tells what needs to change to make things feel right.

Setting the stage forces you to focus on the most important part of the problem, bypassing all the many details that crowd the issue.

Every object and person on your stage has a point of view. You may not realize what you project onto people or things, but you do know the dialogue! (There are many things we don't know we know.)

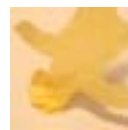


The Trapeze Artist

(Tina, age 38)

This woman at eighteen had fallen in love with a clown and joined the circus. By her late thirties, she had been divorced twice and raised three children as a single mother. She came to work on a dream that made her very angry.

Tina: I was starring in a trapeze act with my partner. I discovered I had an amazing new power in my body. I began to twist and turn, using my partner's strength as support, amazed at what I could actually do. As I began to perform an acrobatic flip (the most dangerous and wonderful act!) he moved in a different direction and dropped me on my head.



Recovering quickly, I climbed back up to try again, began the motions for the flip, and again, he dropped me! I couldn't believe that he could not feel what my body was about to attempt. I

climbed back on the trapeze, slid down his legs expecting to hook our feet together, and for the third time he let me fall! I woke up from this dream furious at my dumbhead partner.



Guide: Before you tell me any more, I would like to see this story. Set the stage; show me the scene.

Tina: Here is the hanging trapeze. My partner is blue, sitting on the bar. He is big, strong, muscular and dumb. He has dropped me on my head three times. Where is his intuitive understanding? Can't he see what I am going to do? How can he be so stupid?



Guide: We don't argue with dreams. We just accept the facts. He dropped you on your head three times and you are angry.

Tina: Yes. I am outraged. How could he be so insensitive? Doesn't he know that partners have to act as one?

Guide: When you look at your scene, how do you feel? And what are your options?

Tina: I can dump him, go solo, get a different partner.

Guide: Let's hear what he has to say. Close your eyes and listen to his point of view.

Tina: He says, "How was I to know you had the courage to try some new tricks? You didn't tell me. I'm sorry I let you down."

Guide: He is honest and sorry.

Tina: Yes, and I'm afraid to hurt his feelings. Even though he dropped me three times, I still need his support.

Guide: How did you get this partner?

Tina: By default. *[She chuckles.]* No. He says, "You loved me and needed my strength."

Guide: What have you learned so far?

Tina: My creativity can stand alone. I have new ideas. I can fly all by myself. I can't risk another fall, can't

sacrifice myself for his hurt feelings. I don't need him any more. He no longer protects me. *[She pushes his blue shape off the trapeze.]*

Guide: What does he say?

Tina: He says I'm hardheaded. He accepts what I have said with no argument. I can't risk being dropped again, but I think I overworked this idea of not hurting his feelings, and it's hard to let him go.

Guide: Have you felt that way before?

Tina: Yes, my granddad was my biggest support. He loved me. He let me do my thing. He knew I was self-sufficient and didn't interfere.

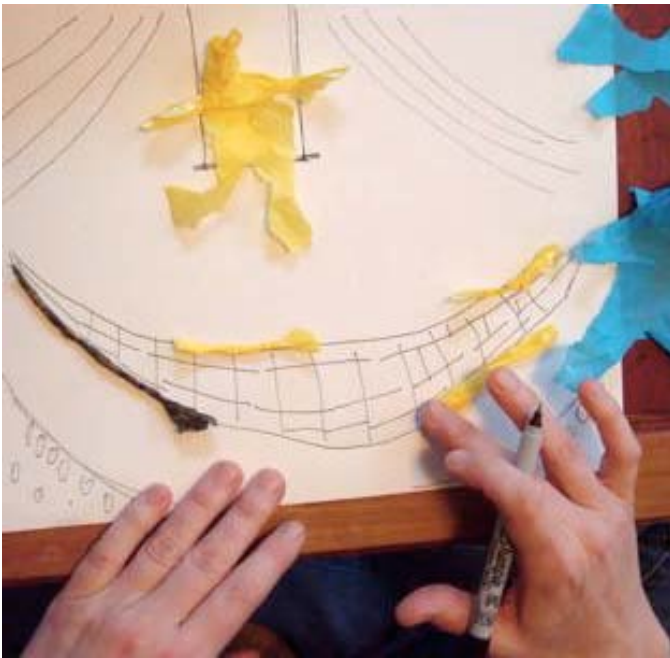
Guide: His strength is a part of you. You say you can never trust this part of yourself again, but you need his protection. Can you create a new agreement?

Tina: He needs a brain transplant. He's a big blockhead who can't talk, needs to go back to school, find a therapist to teach him about the body-mind click. I'll throw him out, then maybe I can fly the way I want to. *[She puts him off the stage.]* Good riddance!

Guide: If his strength is important to you, can you give him a new job? How might you use his strength as support?



Tina: *[She brings him back on stage, and starts weaving a net.]* That's it! He can be my safety net. I never had a safety net before; that's a perfect use of his strength. *[She starts to weave a net and sees that pen lines are faster. She tears out a little piece of his blue and puts it in her heart.]* There, that feels right. I have his strength and support and he has a place in my heart.



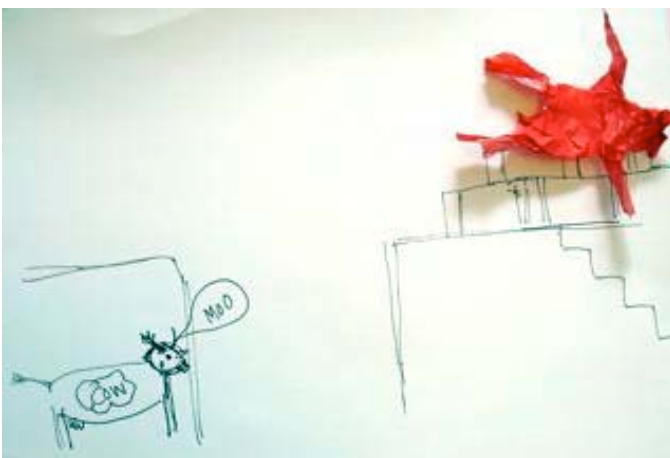
Guide: Is this transition something you can use in your daily life?

Tina: I need to stop feeling divided.

Guide: When did you learn to be divided?

Tina: I always had to take care of things. I've always felt divided.

Guide: Can you show me the divided Self? *[I give her a new sheet of paper. She draws the hayloft, a ladder, and a cow in the stall below.]*



Tina: I had to hide in the hayloft to be alone with myself. It was my escape place. I'm eight.

Guide: Can you talk to the eight-year-old?

Tina: She won't come down.

Guide: Ask her what she wants.

Tina: She says it's safe up here. It's my kingdom. I want to live with my grandparents who let me be myself.

Guide: Ask your eight year old self what it would take to get her down to talk with you.

Tina: She says, "Keep me safe."



Guide: Does she trust you to keep her safe?

Tina: Probably not

Guide: Ask her, how you can win her trust?

Tina: Practice and training and rehearsals. If she'd grow up, we'd be together intuitively.

Guide: Sounds good. It looks like you had a real need for protection. Maybe you owe your big dumb supporter an apology.



Tina: But I already tore him apart; I took only his heart.

Guide: Yes, but the eight-year-old needs his strength. Can you find a way for these three parts of yourself to live together? Can you integrate them?

Tina: *[Tears a bit of the red eight-year-old and places it in her heart as she cries] Now we are complete. We can do all our creative tricks and jump into the net whenever we need to feel safe.*



Notes: As guide, it is so easy to make assumptions. You may think, as I did at first, that this dream was about her marriage partner being out of touch with her feelings. But the truth is, as guide you do not know what this dream is about. And all parts of the dream are parts of the dreamer.

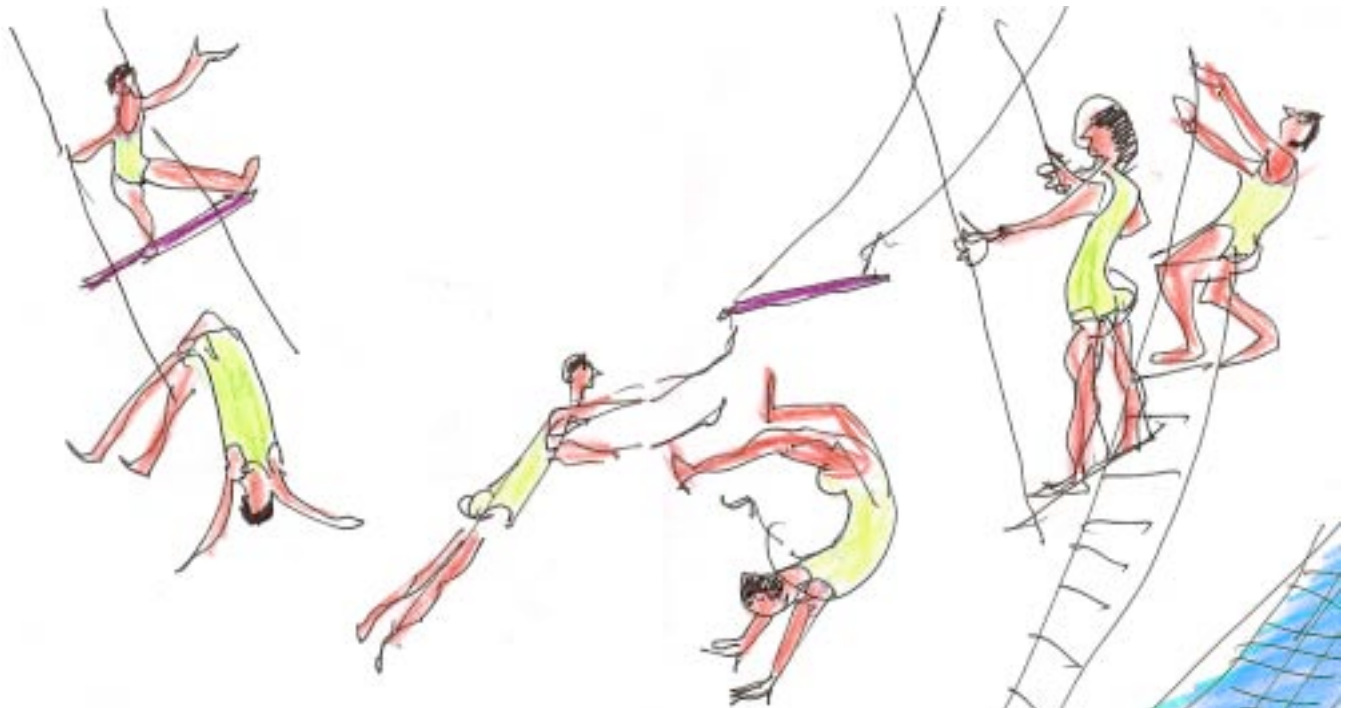
Tina later shared her experience: "After this work, I felt different. I felt less divided. I realized I could perform solo, use this new arrangement to do my thing. Amazing work! I've been in therapy before, but it took forever and didn't help much. This was so fast!"

SIDEBAR

Questions for Evaluation

I believe dreams come for a purpose (a gift? a reminder? a warning? a metaphor?) to help you. After staging your dream and identifying the metaphor, write it down and ask yourself the following questions:

- Was seeing the scene helpful?
- What did you learn from the colors?
- Were you able to step outside the "story" and see a pattern that needs attention?
- Was the part you don't like something you are ready to change?
- Was seeing how your options might change your dream-scene helpful? Amazing? Disturbing? A new point of view?
- As the observer and the director, did you get any new perspectives?
- Did you find an adequate solution? A new solution? A revelation? Or an "Aha!" feeling? Or are you still feeling stuck?
- If you translated your images into their essential meaning, what new meaning do you get from your dream? Can you turn it into a poem?





Children and the Paper Stage

Children prefer to draw their dreams; it is easy for them. They have no hesitation to explain their drawings. I give them black pens so we can photocopy the drawings and so the monsters are firmly imprinted on the paper and won't fade away. Drawing nightmares gets the terror out of the head and down on the paper. On paper, the monster can't get you.

The Unacceptable Divorce

(Joanna, age 11)

Joanna: I dreamed we were at the beach. My mom and dad were arguing. When we came home, they were really mad at each other. Then they got divorced. I was crying and crying. I couldn't handle it. Then Mom came and gave me a hug, and my dog got killed and that was too awful to bear. I couldn't handle that either. Then we went back to the beach and I was hysterical. All the leaves on all the trees turned black. Nothing was right when Mom left. Then when Mom came back, everything turned green again. Then they're on this hill and I'm here with these people from school and with my old friends, and the earth cracked open and started eating everybody. I was on the other side and couldn't help them.



Guide: I see lots and lots of tears. This dream certainly is showing how sad and hysterical you were feeling.

Joanna: Yes. It's totally unacceptable. It makes me remember that I just couldn't do anything to stop it.

Guide: What could you do to help the crying Self in your picture?

Joanna: If I could make my friends land softly, the earth wouldn't eat them.

Guide: Can you think of a way? Use your imagination. Can you draw a solution?

Joanna: Well... I could put a trampoline down in the crack so they'd bounce.

Guide: Try that.

Joanna: *[Draws in a trampoline.]* Now they can bounce back.

Guide: You have found a way to help them bounce back! How does that feel?

Joanna: That's better.

Guide: When there are things we don't like that we can't change, we have to find a way to bounce back.

Joanna: I don't want divorce to happen.

Guide: Of course, but let's work with the dream situation. What would have to happen for you to bounce back?



Joanna: It would help if they could still be friends. Even if my parents can't live together, they could still be friends.

Guide: How will you say that here on your drawing?

Joanna: Um...they're fighting together all the time.

Guide: Give them some words that would help.

Joanna: *[Writes in father's balloon.]* "I love you, but I can't live with you."

Guide: What's mother say?

Joanna: "All right, we won't live together, but we will respect one another. We won't fight."

Guide: Close your eyes again and see what else you'd like to hear that would help you.

Joanna: He needs to say, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you."

Guide: Close your eyes and see what would help Joanna.

Joanna: *[Long silence.]* She says, "I'm very, very sad, but I could begin to accept the idea."

Guide: It's hard to consider your world breaking up when it's all you've ever known. How could you help this crying part of yourself? What would comfort her? *[Joanna is trying not to cry, wiping tears away.]* First she needs to cry lots and lots of tears, and that helps. Can you comfort her in this drawing? After she stops crying she might think of something or someone who could comfort her.

Joanna: She could go off to college.

Guide: How many years before you go to college?

Joanna: Six years.

Guide: What are you going to do while you're waiting?

Joanna: I could live with my grandmother.

Guide: Put your grandmother into your picture. *[Joanna draws in a lively colorful grandmother with red shirt and green slacks.]* What's she saying?



Joanna: "It's not the end of the world."

Guide: Say it again so everyone hears it.

Joanna: *"It's not the end of the world!"*

Guide: Now, what about the dog and the axe?

Joanna: I don't have the slightest idea who did that. My mom, maybe, but she loves the dog.

Guide: Close your eyes and ask the dog what's going on.

Joanna: The dog says she doesn't feel dead but she's very hurt. She says she's innocent. She says I could take away the axe and burn it.

Guide: Who else is feeling innocent like the dog?

Joanna: My mom. And me, I guess.

Guide: Who feels axed?

Joanna: I guess I do, but it's probably my fault.

Guide: If you think it's your fault and you also feel innocent, that could be confusing.

Joanna: That's it. I'm really confused.

Guide: How will you help the dog in the picture? *[Writes in the dog's bubble, "I'm hurt but not dead."]* You've really done some hard work. How does this feel?

Joanna: I'm relieved, but I still can't accept that my parents are divorced in my dream. I'm afraid they really will. That's the problem. It just couldn't happen and it did happen in my dream and I feel to blame.

Guide: Dreams have a way of showing us some of the things we fear that could possibly happen. If it should happen for real, you'd feel better knowing that you were not to blame, that it's not the end of the world, and that your grandmother could comfort you and be of help.

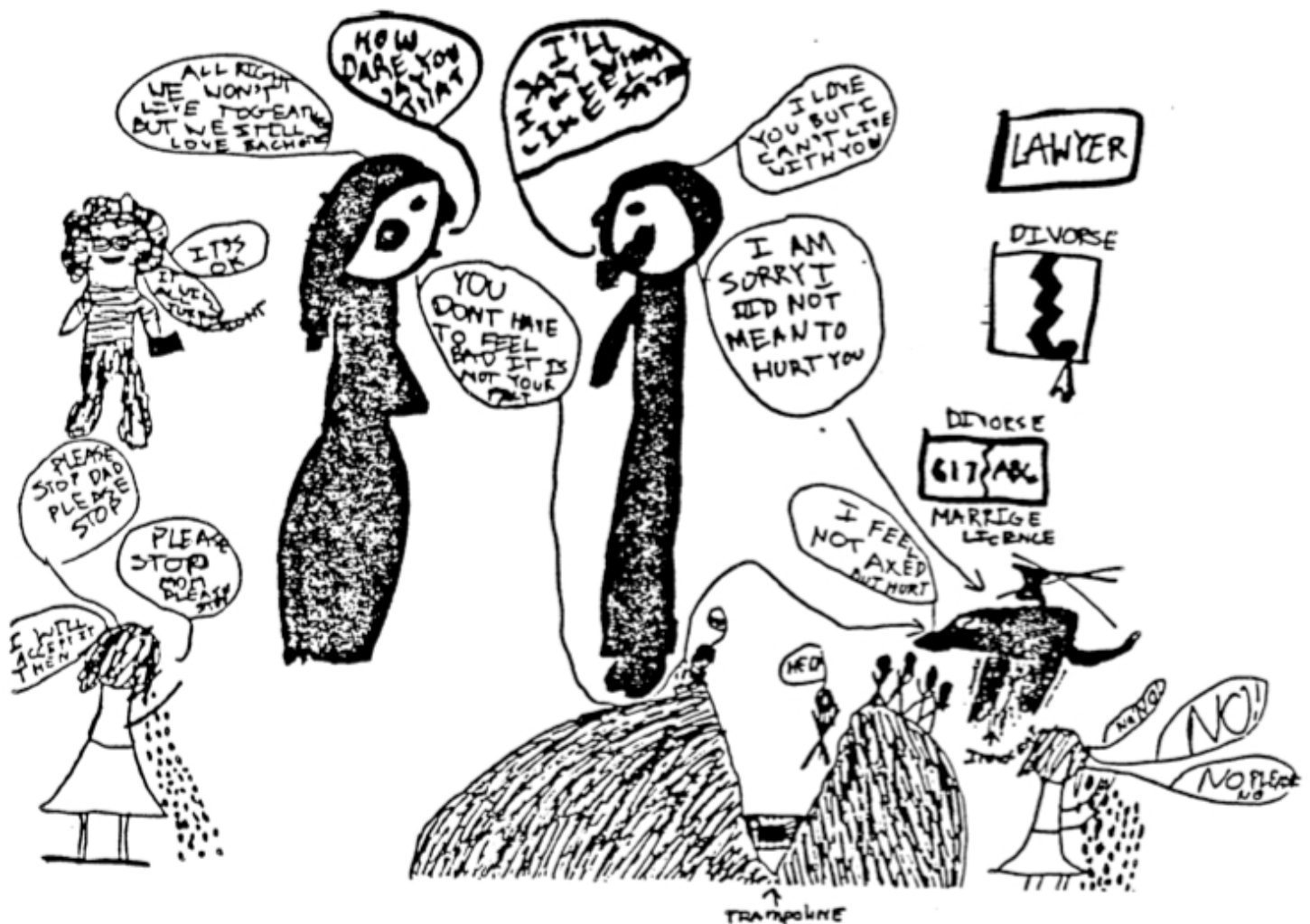
Joanna: Yes. I'd like my dad to say that it's not my fault. *[Writes it in his balloon.]*

Guide: Dreaming something doesn't make it happen. Dreaming just brings up a worry so you can get acquainted with it. Sometimes dreams do warn us about the future. But whatever happens, you are not to blame and you do have some ideas about bouncing back. It's not the end of the world.



Notes: For most children, the idea of divorce is unacceptable. But in these times, divorce is all around us, and children are rarely consulted until it's upon them. It helps if they have some neutral party to go to for support during the period of upset and transition. In Joanna's school there was such a high percentage of divorced parents that the children put together a book to express their feelings and their roles in divorce.

There were many elements to consider about this one dream. Start by acknowledging the strong feelings of the girl, who was obviously very upset. We stayed with the dream situation and worked with the various parts of it. With closed eyes, she heard the wisdom from her granny. Her dialogue with the different characters, including the dog, let us know she was innocent and still alive.



CHAPTER 4

Harvesting the Metaphor, Finding the Message

Hidden in every dream is a metaphor that relates to something going on in your life. Can you find it? What can you learn from it?

The metaphor in a dream stretches your mind and expands your understanding. Milton Erickson, one of the most ingenious therapists of our time, says, “*Metaphors engage normal comprehension-making mechanisms of the mind more effectively than logical speech.*” Metaphors intrigue the imagination, allowing new options to be revealed that re-frame the subject in a new light.

The metaphors in our dreams often hide our own identity, distancing our focus so we can see it. Dreams may reframe an internal conflict in a way that appears impersonal, making it easier to hear criticism or unpleasant truths about ourselves. The dream metaphor allows us some polite distance from that which we do not permit ourselves to acknowledge: a fault, a weakness, or a character flaw we can’t yet see. Most of us understand feelings better and relate to them more easily as a detached observer than as the direct subject. Seeing the dilemma and listening to it speak is less personal than *being* it. Dreams seem to protect the fragile ego. Therefore we start by focusing on the imagery rather than probing what it masks.

Often we do not know how we feel until a dream tells us. We may not know we are jealous, lonely, frightened, or angry until our dream points it out. If you look at the dream as a life-position statement, the metaphor offers a remarkably accurate observation about the dreamer’s state of affairs, often from a fresh point of view. Dreams seem only to state the problem, not to judge it. The judgment we add to it ourselves.

Sometimes, when urgency is a factor, dreams use bizarre paradoxes, either shocking or humorous, as a way of getting your attention. A woman dreamed she was holding the door against her Self who was opposing her from the other side. That is the way many of us go through life, opposing ourselves. Many of us hate the Self we think we are supposed to be.

Mark dreamed that his left foot was nailed to the floor. As a life-position statement, Mark’s job was to satisfy that image. But it was not simply a question of un-nailing the foot; his foot said that if it got un-nailed, Mark would flee, *take off, never to return*. That scared the

part of Mark that loved his kids and wanted to be considered a responsible father. We are all made up of many parts, and dreams often come to show us those parts that are at war with each other. Mark recognized the dream as a metaphor for his marital situation. To negotiate responsible freedom, the nailed foot needed understanding and balancing before it could trust its freedom.

By dialoguing with his foot, Mark learned more about the origin of this polarized feeling. When he was a child, his father suffered a stroke, and the children were required to sit at table as long as it took their father to eat. This restriction on his youthful energy nearly drove him crazy; it felt like having his foot nailed to the floor. This dream as a life-position statement showed Mark how polarized he was between the needs of others versus his own. Having learned this at ten, he didn’t realize he was free now to negotiate a fairer resolution with his wife and children and with his responsibilities in general.

Sometimes the ego is so in need of face-saving that the emergency dream is cast full of secondary characters. Because the emergency in the dream is happening to someone else, we can get acquainted with the problem without feeling implicated and defensive. Whenever you dream about someone else, stop and ask yourself, “How might this relate to me?”

The dialogues in this book will show you many kinds of dreams and different ways of finding the message. Interpretations are often incomplete, but as long as dreamers keep in touch with their own feelings, the interpretation will not be wrong. What seems most important to me is the choice of image that gets caught on the dream hook and delivered up to the day-mind to process. We must ask, “why this particular image today?”



The Big Draft

(Connie, age 25)

Connie restaged a dream in which she was chased by a "Big Draft." This force pursued her around a big house of many rooms. Connie looked in every room for the source and couldn't find it. On her Paper Stage, Connie represented the draft as a big crumpled wad of dark blue tissue paper. She was unaware that she chose the same dark blue tissue paper to represent herself. (Color affinities are instinctive.) When asked to describe its power, she grabbed a bunch of crumpled colored paper from the scrap heap and placed more around it, expressing her rage and fury at its massiveness that obliterated the entire scene.

Guide: What does that feel like?

Connie: Like I'm drowning in a big mess. I've closed every door and window, and still I can't find where it's coming from.

Guide: Dissect the "mess." Find the positive elements and name what they have been doing for you. Find the pay-off. [Connie pulled out some blue strips and called them "strength;" a swatch of red was "vitality," a bit of black was "structure."] Close your eyes and ask yourself who directs this power.



Connie: My father.

Guide: How?

Connie: He forces me to work, keeps me feeling cold, angry and frustrated.

Guide: How does it feel now that you know who governs the draft and you've named some of its assets?

Connie: That has dispersed some of the energy. I feel warmer already.

Guide: Speak to the draft.

Connie: Get off my back! You keep me running. Instead of chasing me, I could use some of your power.

Guide: Become the draft. What are you doing for Connie?

Connie (as Draft): I control her life. Everywhere she goes, I can find her. I push her around, direct her, oppose her, thwart her and take what I want. She is mine.

Notes: Often issues from childhood continue to pursue us as adults, especially if we have constructed our adult lives to serve our childhood strategies. When the old way is the only way a person knows how to experience the Self, it is hard to change until the pay-offs of the old strategy have been recognized. By taking control of the power of the draft for her own benefit, Connie took authority back from her father's voice. Once people understand the loop that hooks them, they can transform the fear into a warning. Once a person has understood her trap, she can never return to innocent ignorance.

SIDEBAR

Quick Dream Interpretation: A Poet's Shortcut

Let's suppose that the dream-maker has searched your experience-dictionary and chosen just the right images to evoke the feelings that contain the message. Ask: Why has my unconscious given me this dream? What do the images represent? If this dream relates to the way I conduct my life, why has it come today?

To write the dream message, you must turn the dream inside out. Translate the images back into feelings and the feelings into words. Here are the steps to harvesting the message of your dream:

- 1) Write your dream story. Shrink the important part into a short paragraph.
- 2) Underline the important images.
- 3) Translate each image into its essential meaning.
- 4) Rewrite the dream paragraph using the new essence words.
- 5) Read the translation out loud, and you will have the true meaning of your dream.

Rafting to China

(Vin, age 45)

Vin, a poet with a history of breakdowns, loss of reality, incarceration and divorce, came to work on her writer's block, and brought this dream:



Vin: Buddha appeared. The clarity and light around him was beautiful. He offered me a ruby. I was so thankful. I accepted the gift. I told him of my gratitude. Then I set about to get a raft, to take me to China.

Guide: Which image would you like to look at first?

Vin: The ruby is the image most charged.

Guide: What does this ruby represent?

Vin: A gem of great value, a distillation of clarity.

Guide: Say more about it.

Vin: Rubies are red. The color of warmth and passion.

Guide: What is the Buddha?

Vin: The person of highest wisdom.

Guide: When this person of highest wisdom appears to you, what does that mean?

Vin: He must think I'm OK. He offers me a gift.

Guide: What's the meaning of the gift?

Vin: Clarity, beauty, passion. I feel radiant, filled with gratitude. I feel legitimate. I wasn't, you know; I'm a bastard.

Guide: He has made you legitimate. Can you accept that gift?

Vin: Well, yes, but my mother can't.

Guide: What will you find by rafting to China?

Vin: It's my wooden raft. It's like the one we used to pole around the pond when I was a girl. We made it of boards tied onto air barrels. It means freedom...I'm headed for freedom.



Guide: How old were you on the pond?

Vin: About twelve. It was wonderful. No one ever interfered. We could imagine we were going anywhere. We dreamed of rafting to China. When I was little, my grandfather read me a story about the Chinese Emperor who fell in love with his singing Nightingale. He loved his Nightingale so much, when she left him he was in despair. I too knew those feelings of despair when I lost my mother. I was illegitimate and a burden to her, so she went away and gave me to other people to raise. I have been in despair ever since. Then when my foster mother got sick, they sent me away again, this time to an Institution. I was so miserable I looked at the wall until I saw China. If it hadn't been for China I'd never have lived through it, but somehow I did. I visited China on my wall often. My grandfather's story of the Emperor saved my life; it let me know someone understood my despair. Someone else had suffered and knew those feelings. That's why I want to go to China where people love nightingales and can communicate such deep feelings. No one ever talked about feelings with me. All they talked about was being good, clean, polite, obedient. And if I was not, there was always the threat of being sent back to the Institution.

Guide: Can you begin to trust the Buddha now? He must live inside you; he can always make you legitimate. Compassion is the Buddha part of you, which you have been waiting for others to give to you. Perhaps your dream is showing you that you can begin to give it to yourself. The gift is already yours. The thing you give away to others is very likely the thing you need to give yourself.

Vin's Translation Glossary

Buddha = the legitimizer, who bestows value

raft = the vehicle of autonomy and freedom

ruby = distillation of clarity

Emperor = feelings of despair

red = warmth and passion

China = a place of deep understanding

Translation

Compassionate wisdom
validates my legitimate worthiness
bestowing upon me the gift of clarity
I am moved in gratitude, empowered
with thankfulness, passion, and radiance.
My savior returns me to childhood
powers of Imagination that freed me,
saved my sanity, gave me life,
grace, peace, fulfilled my longings,
helped me understand grief and loss.

Vin's Poem

Most ancient wisdom
Who reveals my worth
Infuse me with radiance
That I may find my home
Rafting to clarity

Notes: Beware of your own interpretation of another person's dream imagery. In Vin's dream, China was not the ancient walls, or Mao's Communism, but a young girl's longing for love and understanding equal to that expressed by the Emperor for his Nightingale. Who could have known that but the dreamer?

In a letter of thanks, Vin wrote: "Working through this dream gave me an opportunity to experience the Buddha in myself. Advice in a form I can use, delivered by the legitimizing Buddha. Appreciation of my resourceful creative twelve-year-old who saved me, kept me sane, gave me a place to hide in time of despair. It reminded me of my Grandfather whose love of this story gave me a life raft to cling to until I could help myself. Working on this dream was a way for me to look into the mirror of myself, for help and permission to be alive."

Vehicles as Metaphor

Cars that we like or want are often a symbol of our preferred lifestyle or body image. Meredith dreamed that her new lover would get her out of the low class neighborhood, which, in the dream, was where she had lived as a girl. He promised her a stylish Peugeot. The Peugeot was her symbol of "security, reliability, non-showy elegance, and the feeling of monetary well-being."

At sixteen, when she told her father she was pregnant, he had turned her out of the house. She had spent some hard years living on welfare, always hoping that some good fatherly man would rescue her and heal her abandonment. After working on this dream, she realized that she herself had to become the good father and give herself the kind of care she was waiting for. She had to stop waiting for a man to repair this deep hurt and erase her shame.



Martin, an attractive young man, came to see me about a dream that worried him very much. He was a sports coach and drove the school bus at a junior high school. "I'm driving my bus full of girls. They think it's a joyride, but coming down the hill I discover I have no brakes. In order to keep the bus on the road, I have to go faster and faster. I am so occupied with handling the curves I'm not even afraid, yet I know I'm going to have to crash sooner or later; it is the only way to stop. I was racing so fast I woke up terrified."

The dream was sufficiently frightening to prompt the bus driver to come for help. He confessed he had initiated some of these girls, "handled their curves." He said he was so trusted and admired by these girls that he had no fear of exposure. But apparently at a deeper level his dream observer saw he was headed for disaster and crashing was the only way to stop him. He said he had no idea that working on this dream would reveal his secret and begged me not to report him. Martin was worried he'd lose his job and agreed to seek help immediately.

The vehicle in your dreams is not only a metaphor of the desired self-image or lifestyle, but often a warning to check your inner workings or the condition of your organs. Pauline, a young woman, said "I dreamed I am driving an old fashioned car that has no steering wheel. My mother is driving from the back seat. The vehicle is rolling into traffic, but I don't know where the brake is. I am helpless and also worried because a doctor told me cervical cancer would keep me from getting pregnant. I don't know how

to stop or what to do and wake up crying, furious at my mother and scared I have cancer."

In the course of working with the images and testing her options, she encountered several obstacles. First she put her mother out of the car. Then, feeling she still needed her mother's support, she moved her out of the back seat into the passenger seat. That didn't help because all her mother knew how to do was back seat drive. When she asked it to speak, the car said, "I have a rumble seat." I asked what a rumble seat meant to her and she told me she'd gotten pregnant at fifteen fooling around in the rumble seat of an old car. That pregnancy had caused her mother to take total control of Pauline's life.

Kids who have not been informed that they are in charge of their body or haven't learned birth control by puberty often get pregnant. Pauline was treating her body the way her mother had treated it: with fear, shame and restrictions.

To start the repair at the dream level, Pauline said she needed to install the missing steering wheel and brake. Then she needed to get her mother out of the car and stop depending on her for guidance. She decided to learn self-defense. She felt her body was creating an emergency to awaken her. Two years later, Pauline said this dream had helped her get into therapy and take responsibility for herself. She said she didn't have to have cancer or need it as a contraceptive.

Piss and Poop Dreams

Piss and poop dreams are rarely mentioned but are very common. Our dreams are not prudish. This function that every one of us deals with every day is normal and often innocent. In dreams it may be shocking or not at all embarrassing until our socialized day-mind notes it was done *in public*.

When you interpret this act, take into account the circumstances and the attitude you are feeling in the dream; it may be a child's attitude. My son at two found his poop made good finger paint, and my grandson at three had to hide under the table in order to let one out. The dream may be about an evaluation of your product. Did you inherit your mother's attitude towards your natural functions? Was your product "dirty," or did you do "a good job?"



I put out a call asking dreamers what piss and poop meant in their dreams and got quite a variety of responses: shame, self-exposure, anger, embarrassment, relief, satisfaction, worry, fear, celebration, insult, rage, dirt, and disorder. One woman has dreams of toilets that have no holes, but she has to use them anyway.

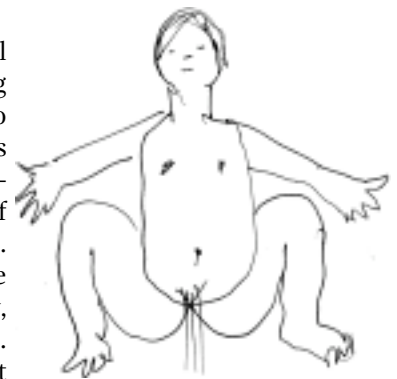
Sometimes it served as a show of power. One man told me he pissed on the Oracle in Greece to establish his own power over the dream's authority figure.

Is it a masked insult you couldn't make with words, that just snuck out while your inhibited brain was sleeping and here it is on the chair of your boss, or at the floor of the big party? Carl Jung tells of his famous world-shaking excrement dream that shocked him at age twelve, when he envisioned an enormous turd falling from under God's golden throne to shatter his father's church. After the fear and shock, he said he experienced great relief and freedom from the limits of his father's sterile religiosity. Later Jung wrote:

"Anyone who wants to know the human psyche will learn next to nothing from experimental psychology. He would be better advised to abandon exact science, put away his scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart throughout the world. There in the horrors of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels and gambling-hells, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than textbooks a foot thick could give him, and he will know how to doctor the sick with a real knowledge of the human soul."

Underneath our socialization we are still animals, and as Jung noted we are bound to earthly habits. Animals get important information from one sniff of another's excrement.

They can tell if the other animal is healthy, sick, or a fertile female. Some animals bury it immediately. Others use it as a calling card, marking territory. Poop and piss can symbolize a public means of expression, sometimes hilarious! One of the things that astonishes me about peeing in dreams is feeling I have totally relieved my bladder, and yet when I wake up the bed is not wet. *Who is in charge?*



Flying Dreams

If, as they say, “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,” consider this: in our primal development, we all have the residual tail, gills, and wings, as well as other as yet unknown possibilities and talents of the creatures that live in air and water. If that is so, then it is no wonder we are able to fly in our dreams and breath under water without instructions or hesitation. We just do it like the little bird when it is ready to fledge, and the little fish when it emerges from the sack.

For many years I have been collecting flying dreams. As I travel in air planes I ask “how do you fly in your dreams?” I am amazed to discover there are hundreds of flying styles, positions, conditions and tools that help people get off the ground in their sleep. Some flyers said they can only get a few inches off the ground, but high enough to avoid obstacle or a threatening enemy. Some flyers who had medical operations found their body hovering above the operating table. But I have an amazing collection of flying styles. I will share them here in the hopes that my readers will enjoy some new adventures.

The styles of flying include flapping, soaring, sitting, lying, swimming, flopping, breast stroking, dolphin kicking, whale tail snapping, and yoga levitation. Old fashioned chicken flapping, that uses your elbows like chicken wings, is popular but doesn’t get you much higher than the branches of trees. Fish tail flopping in air sounds awkward and bottom bumping might get you somewhere—but what do you bump, the clouds?

Assisted flying, also called method flying, is using guide ropes to get started or taking giant strides for take-offs. Some dreamers use sticks, magic wands, bed riding, carpet cruising, floor grabbing, and back packing. The most original are the blood pressure cuff pumping and the man who flew on his refrigerator.

A craft teacher I knew said in one of his dreams he invented a dream dousing rod. By holding two cross sticks together he found he could steer through space as though he is on a bicycle. My physicist friend says he can fly weightless by sucking in his “gravity sensor”. That allows him to rise into outer space without any body restraints. Some of these weightless dreamers know how to leave their bodies and let their spirit soar in the atmosphere like the Yogis who levitate.

While working with kids on my children’s nightmare book I found that children of the space age fly to the planets, walk in space and some get lost in broken space ships terrified that they will never return to earth. My neighbor, the physicist, said he could ball up and shoot through the astral-dome into the black hole to have a look around.



I have stories of dreamers who fly on air currents like gliders. Channel flying they say is like hang-gliding: “climb the hill where the winds are strong, wait for the right current to lift you off the ground, it’s easy.”

Altitude flying and barn storming is a macho style, with fancy twists and turns, plunging straight toward the earth and pulling out of the dead fall as he hears the audience clapping.

Umbrella and balloon flying doesn’t work unless you are Mary Poppins. Gurus in India call it transcendence.

Some dreamers float through walls and down the stairs head first. One man realized he needed no arms at all.

A woman from New Hampshire, says, “risk it naked, for flying upside down and it is delicious to just let go.”

A San Francisco dream worker at the Association for the Study of Dream said she can do orgasmic cartwheeling and ecstatic orgasmic aero-batics. She has invented a dream pill and can teach her olympic routine to curious customers.

There are those who fly to see and those who fly to feel. Some flyers go somewhere, and some go nowhere. In one of my dreams, I found myself happily sitting on the window sill of an ten story apartment house over looking Central Park for no reason I could find, before I learned to decode my dreams’ images.

Recurring Flying Nightmares: A pilot came because his recurring dream of was about not being able to get off the ground. After talking to the images he found that his plane was too heavy, the runway too short, the plane too crowded and if he didn’t do something about his load he was headed for a heart attack.

Emergency flying: A woman from the mid-west flew East in time to say good-bye to her father before he died that morning.

Telephone Wire Flying: This dreamer says she flies but never above the telephone wires because she likes to stay in contact. My oldest son said when he was little he’d dream he could hover above our heads in earshot but out of sight. When loosing power—in mid-air, you have to wake up before you hit the ground, and usually means you have unfinished business.

Flying In The Body Of Others: You can tandem fly by strapped yourself to somebody’s back like a sky jumper.



CHAPTER 5

The Importance of Recurring Dreams

The Dean of a small college forbids himself to dream because of a terrifying boyhood nightmare about death. He said this nightmare has been chasing him ever since he was witness to a freak accident that so frightened him in childhood he has been unable to talk about it, he dares not confront it. He has mastered a system whereby he does not sleep more than five hours. He thinks this prevents his dreaming; he instructs himself to wake before the dream can enter his mind. He is content with his system. He uses the extra time to write. He has published many books driven by this obligatory arrangement. He wants no part of this dream work.

Recurring dreams deserve your attention; they are full of insights like festering wounds they erupt again and again, haunting us for years. When we wake up, instead of pretending that our dreams are only “figments of our imagination,” we can look for the metaphor that may describe our *modus operandi*.

When old traumas reach the threshold of consciousness through dreams, it must be that the unconscious believes it is time to face the buried issue. How many times do you need to be told something is bothering you? ***Wake up and do the work!***

The best way to stop dreams from recurring is to satisfy the image and complete the mission. Try closing your eyes so you can see the scene in your mind’s eye. When your position in the dream empowers you, change happens. In order to effect change, one must often return to the source, as the child part of the Self remains traumatized even though one has moved into adulthood.

Here are recurring dreams, with a brief description of how the dream image relates to issues in the dreamer’s life, and how to change the patterns in their lives so the dreams stopped coming.

Russell (age 22)

“I had recurring dream with similar themes throughout childhood. In this version, I am standing in the middle of the Roman Coliseum, elevated on a fifty-foot pillar. While I am waiting for the lions to enter, water pours in from all sides and rises up to within ten feet of me. Then the pillar cracks, plunging me into the whirlpool, which sucks me down. *I realized it was telling me that I am constantly battling*

expectations I can’t meet; and who put me on that pedestal, me or Dad?”

Ann (age 50)

“This dream started in childhood and I dream it still. I dream of a tidal wave. I climb a palm tree to escape. Everyone is lost but me. *I guess I am a loner and need to read the warnings or find a safer environment.*”

(As I listen to New Age thinking about the new uses of “Tidal Wave Power,” it occurs to me that the tidal waves that scare us to death in dreams can also be seen as a source of power. How can we use our tidal wave power so it doesn’t swamp us but can be channeled into energy to further our projects? Sometimes it helps to turn a terror around to find its positive potential.)

Dan (age 39)

“This recurred when I was thirteen and fourteen and haunted my adolescence: I am at the base of a mountain. One road goes straight up to the top, where a fierce soldier is waiting to do battle with me. The other road is a shortcut, full of brambles and rocks, and an old witch who wants my cock in her toothy vagina. I am afraid she will pull it out of shape, like the nose of the elephant’s child, until I have orgasm. If I take the road straight to the top, I must do hand-to-hand battle with the soldier. I must take his knife to eviscerate myself, from pubic mat to sternum. *If I want to get to the other side of the mountain I have to avoid shortcuts, but I am afraid of the monster at the top.*”

Judy (age 35)

“Recurring dream for six years: I dream that while walking to Granny’s house there is a hairy monster gorilla waiting for me in a tree. Every night I dreamed this, I got closer to the gorilla. On the seventh time, he jumped out of the tree and got me in his arms and carried me to my father. I thought my father would save me, but instead he said to the monster, ‘don’t worry. My daughter won’t hurt you.’ The gorilla said, ‘It’s nothing personal, I’m just doing my job.’ I felt betrayed. How come my father comforted the monster instead of me? I’ve never forgiven him for this. *I often feel betrayed.*”

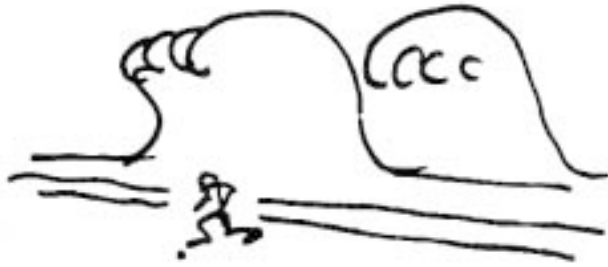
Bob (age 33)

“For years I’ve had this dream that I go back to my old school and they give me this test and I fail it. Then I wake up and say to myself, ‘You didn’t fail it then, but you might fail it now.’ I feel bad about it all day. *I’m constantly battling fear of failure.*”

Alice (age 65)

“My recurring tidal wave dream started when I was four; I almost drowned at sixteen. It comes back now and then and got much worse at thirty. I am usually on a ship or a beach and a huge wall of water rises

up. Sometimes I am frozen with terror, even after waking up. The last time I dreamed this, in my late thirties, I turned to face the wave and it turned into a cliff of earth, like the Cliffs of Dover. I never dreamed it again. It seemed resolved."



Linda (age 23)

"I dreamed this often, over a period of two years when I was seven and eight. I walk out my front door to my schoolyard across the street. All the faces of my family, friends, priest, Sandy Becker [the TV comedian] — everyone I recognize — are hanging like masks flat against the brick wall of P.S. 11 in Staten Island, New York. Suddenly, a Terrible Sheik chases me. He forces me to put my head down on the block. Just before the knife falls on my neck I wake up. The last time I dreamed this, my mother suggested I pinch my thighs to make myself remember that it was only a dream. It worked. I never had the dream again. *But I often get myself in places where my head is on the block.*"

Mary (age 42)

Had recurring dreams of her stepfather slipping into her room at night to fondle her in a way she knows is not right. She dreams she is paralyzed. Though she is now a grown married mother of three children, she still has this feeling of powerlessness. It wasn't until she restaged the dream and gave her child-Self permission and the power to shout "No!" that the dreams stopped coming.

Jim (age 33)

"I dream often that someone has mortally wounded my little white dog. I am shocked to watch him stagger away from me, collapse, and slowly expire. The last time I dreamed this, my dog tried to contact me by attempting to bite me."

As Jim worked on this dream, he saw himself as the wounded little dog and tried to stop the bleeding with his hand. He suddenly realized this dog was the part of himself that asks for contact in a biting way, because, "I am afraid of rejection, violence, withdrawal, isolation, and death."

George (age 60)

"I dream often of being lost, especially when I'm on

a traveling sales trip staying in hotels. This time I dreamed that I walked around the block and couldn't find my hotel. I tried several streets and became panicked because my flight was due to depart and my ticket was at the hotel. While working on this dream, I remembered that when I was five I lost my mother in a store. That panic is still in me. It can hit me any time I'm in a new city feeling lost. It often paralyzes me when I travel alone."

When George returned to the source, he asked the lost boy what would help him when he can't find his mother. The boy said, "Draw me a map." So now George makes a point of having a little map handy, so if the panic hits him he has this reassurance in his pocket. You may laugh, but old traumas can create the same feeling they did when you were five.

Cora (age 60)

"For thirty years I've had this dream. I dream I hear the cry of a lost child somewhere inside my house. Each time I have this dream, I search the house for the crying child but never find it...until this workshop, when I was asked to draw it and step back inside that scene and ask the lost child where I could find it. With my eyes closed, I heard it say, 'Look behind the mirror.' In the mirror I recognized myself. It was me as a child, crying because I never took time to draw and paint, which I loved. I never had time for me. I closed my eyes and asked the little face in the mirror to forgive me. She said she'd been waiting for years for me to make room for her to play. We both cried to think of how many years were lost. 'It's not too late,' she said, 'Let's begin today.' On the way home from the workshop, I bought paints and brushes and promised we'd spend a part of every day from now on playing with my new art materials. If I ever hear that crying child again, I'll know to look in the mirror."



The Professor's Trap

(Professor, age 65)

Prof: I have nightmares that paralyze me. Sometimes while awake I have panic attacks that feel like these nightmares.

Guide: Describe one of the nightmares.

Prof: I dreamed I was in a deep trap. People were standing around observing. It was cold and hard for me to breathe; I was trapped in the hole. A woman came with an oxygen mask and I woke up paralyzed with fear.

Guide: Show me the nightmare. Show me the person in the trap and the color of the panic. Make little symbols here on the Paper Stage. It will help to see your nightmare on paper.

Prof: *What color is my panic?* Sounds pretty silly, but I'll try anything to get rid of these nightmares. *[On his Paper Stage, he makes a trap with a figure inside.]*

Guide: Close your eyes. Go back into that scene and see how you might get yourself out.

Prof: No, I can't move. I'm too small. I'm supposed to wait to be helped.

Guide: How old is that small part of you in the trap?

Prof: Oh god, it's about two.

Guide: What happened to you at two years old?

Prof: I don't know.

Guide: I'll bet you do. You spoke of a mask.

Prof: Oh yes! I remember that I had my tonsils out and the nurse said if I moved I'd die. I never forgot that. I was paralyzed with fear.

Guide: Say more about that day when you were two.

Prof: I didn't realize I was a child in the dream, but sometimes, when I'm anxious, I still freeze like that.

Guide: What might be making you anxious now?

Prof: I've been invited to be a keynote speaker at a convention in Hungary. But because I've been on sabbatical six months, I feel out of practice speaking in public. I'm afraid I might have a panic attack.

Guide: Let's go back to the dream and talk to the little boy. Ask him what he needs to get out of the trap and unparalyze his body.

Prof: No, he can't move. He's afraid he'll die.

Guide: Close your eyes and tell the boy you are here to help. Ask what he needs.

Prof: The boy says probably the only thing that could help is to hear a strong voice.

Guide: What would the strong voice say?

Prof: It would say, *"You did a good job! You didn't move! You saved your life! That was a stupid nurse! She should not have told you that you might die!"*

Guide: Can you say that to him?

Prof: I don't have a strong enough voice. It has to be a big strong woman's voice.

Guide: Do you know anyone who has a voice strong enough to free your paralysis?

Prof: *[muses for a bit]* Yes! Bella Abzug. She could do it. *[Bella Abzug was "born yelling;" a very powerful lawyer, Congresswoman, social activist and defender of women back in the 70's and 80's.] I loved they way she defended her causes.*

Guide: Make an image that represents Bella's strong voice and give it to the boy.

Prof: *[looks at me in disbelief]* How could that help?

Guide: Try it and see. *[The professor makes a stout red image with a big mouth, a big hat and a lot of power, and gives it to the figure of the boy in the trap.]* Tell him whenever he feels frozen, like he's going to have a panic attack, he can hear Bella's voice defend him. I think this connection you made with the little boy may cure your nightmares.

Prof: I had no idea there was a connection with that childhood trauma.

Guide: Freezing saved his life. You are still using the same strategy. You'd better fold Bella into your wallet just in case you need that strong voice.

Prof: OK, if you say so. This is the strangest session I've ever experienced.

Guide: Let me know if it works.

Notes: *A couple of months later, I got a call from the professor. "I had to tell you," he said, "it worked! As I got to the podium, all those experts looking at me, I felt the panic closing in. I remembered Bella was in my wallet. I touched the edge of her red skirt and she shouted 'Go for it, Baby!'"*

Feeding Hitler

(Julie, age 35)

Julie: I've been fighting Hitler in my sleep for years.

Guide: What does he want?

Julie: Everything.

Guide: Why not try feeding him?

Julie: Feed a greedy pathological tyrant?

Guide: Any force inside you who masquerades as *Hitler*, so hungry for power that it threatens to annihilate you, should be asked what it wants.

Notes: *This dream had been plaguing Julie for twenty years. The more the Hitler in her dream threatened her, the more she feared and resented him. When I asked her if Hitler sounded like anyone she knew, she said he had the voice of her father, a very powerful, wealthy man blind to the needs of a small dependent daughter so privileged she "should need nothing and uphold her distinguished family name." But Julie's schoolmates said her father had made his fortune by taking advantage of the "little people."*

Unmasking Hitler modified his tyranny. Julie stopped using the family name in order to establish her own identity. To fulfill her wish to be effective, she chose to train as a psychotherapist who took care of the underprivileged. From her own suffering, she was able to counsel others striving for individuation.

Listen to the enemy. The enemy has the key.

The Undelivered Birthday Cake

(Marjory, age 38)

"I had this dream since I was seven, on and off for thirty-one years, especially after my dad died. It always makes me cry. It doesn't sound important; it's childish, I know; but it keeps coming back.



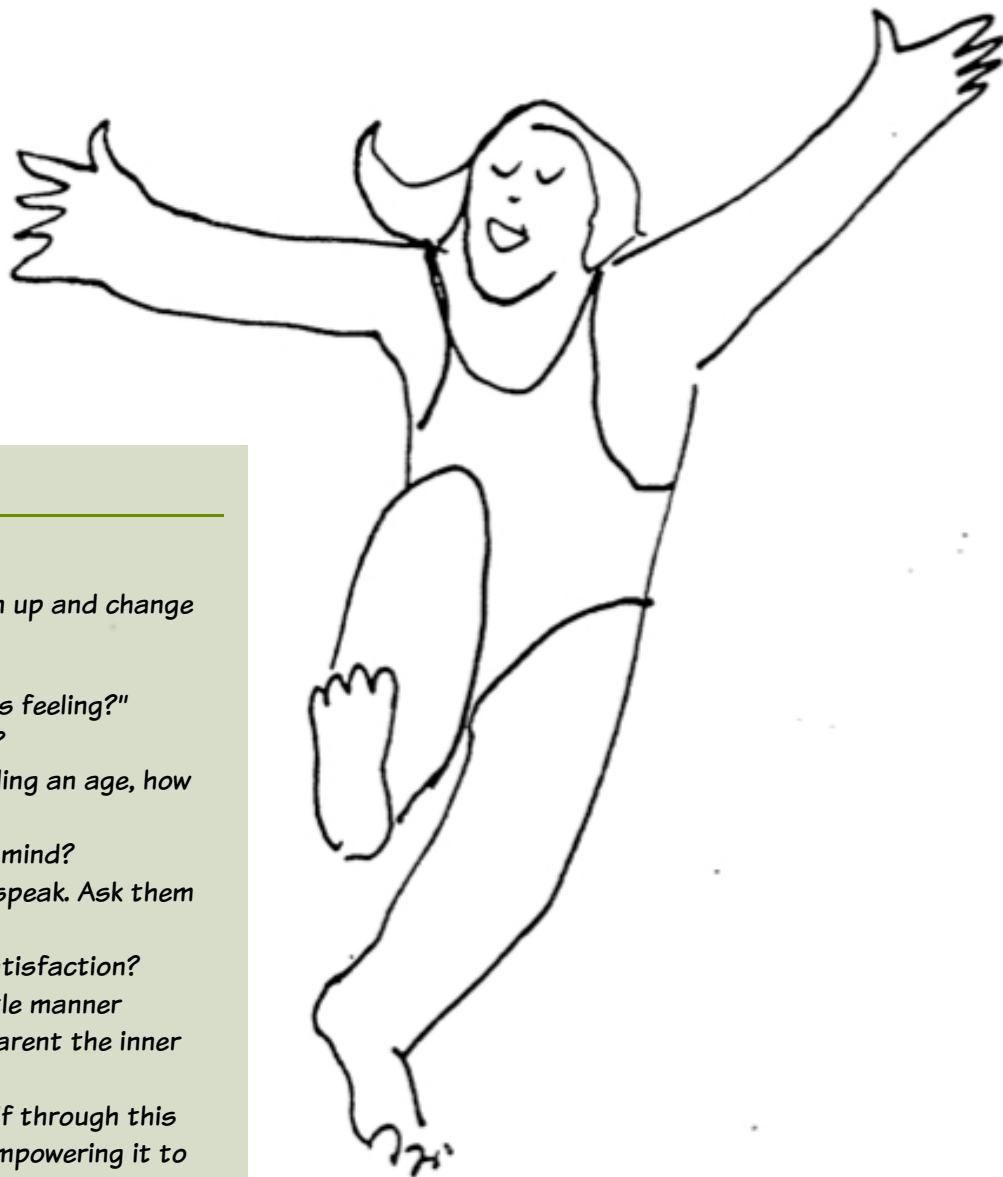
"I'm a child, walking through the woods, carrying a birthday cake. I made it myself for my father. I'm on my way to his castle to deliver it when some wild Indians jump out and scare me. They steal the cake and destroy all my work. Even after all these years, I am still upset every time I have this dream. I want so much to show my father this cake and tell him I love him. Now he is dead, I'll never be able to do it. I always wake up crying.

"For years I thought this was a foolish dream. I heard about this dream workshop. I was afraid to tell this silly dream out loud, but when we were asked if we had a recurring dream, I had to tell it.

"When I closed my eyes so I could imagine myself back in the woods, I became the seven-year-old girl that used to be me. I held her hand. I gave her a stick to defend herself. I told her to shout at the Indians because *today*, we were going to deliver the cake. Together we made those Indians stop dead in their tracks. "*You let us by!*" we said. "This cake is for the king and must be delivered whole." They shouted, "Only if you give us a piece of the cake." We agreed to save them a piece after we delivered it to Father. The minute they said OK, they turned into my younger brothers and sisters. I was the oldest of five, and the others always got to Dad first. Now it was my turn. We marched single file straight to my father and gave him the beautiful cake. He was amazed that I made it myself and that I'd waited so long. I sat in his lap and never felt happier in all my life."



Notes: *Recurring dreams are like a messenger who keeps tapping on the door. When you dare to open the door and listen to the message, you may solve an old mystery and put the dream to rest. Marjory's embarrassment about a "foolish, childish" dream bothered her until she took it seriously enough to work out this solution. She wrote me several years later that she had gotten married. She wanted to tell me how important the resolution of this dream had been to her. She felt that delivering the cake to her father, even though it was just a symbolic act, had had a lasting effect, totally changing her feelings about her father. Talking to her father in this dream session had filled her with love and changed her life forever. She said, "I talk to him often when I feel left out or too embarrassed to express my feelings for fear of looking childish. Even when the people you love are gone, you can still visit them in your dreams and in your mind when you close your eyes."*



SIDEBAR

Help for Recurring Dreams

Strategies that will help to open up and change the recurring dream:

- Ask, "What is the source of this feeling?"
- How does it want to be healed?
- Ask, "If you could give that feeling an age, how old is it?"
- What other memories come to mind?
- Invite anger, hurt, and fear to speak. Ask them what they want.
- What are the conditions for satisfaction?
- Council the stuck self in a gentle manner appropriate to that age. Re-parent the inner child with compassion.
- Go back and walk your hurt Self through this trauma, gently defending it, empowering it to defend itself. Be ready to help the child-Self negotiate a fair deal.
- Childhood medical operations, family deaths, injustices, and losses, are especially common causes for unreasonable-seeming behavior. Any time it seems as if you are over-reacting, it may be due to the re-stimulation of a childhood trauma.
- Get a witness to audience the scene. Declare yourself publicly, if it helps defuse an old hurt.
- Use your experience as your own creative raw material. Write it, dance it, sing it, or paint it. That will release a bundle of locked energy, like a muscle you didn't realize you were holding tight.

CHAPTER 6

The Art of Guiding

When working as a guide for other people's dreams, it helps to start by finding the metaphor. Don't assume you know anything about the meaning of the image. Careful use of the dreamer's own language when guiding helps to keep your assumptions from interfering with the dreamer's process. Joining the dreamer wherever the imagery takes you establishes that the dreamer is in charge and the guide trusts the dreamer's authority and leadership. Only then can the dreamer afford to reveal the process and the obstacles in the way. These obstacles must be dealt with first to clear the path to a resolution. The dreamer's feelings are the guide's guide!

Asking questions rather than suggesting solutions is very important. The guide's role is to help the dreamer acknowledge what they already know, but don't yet realize that they know. Stimulate the dreamer's imagination. Reframing a problem often sheds new light and opens the door for a new attitude. Indirect suggestions can help the dreamer move out of a stuck place. Get the dreamer to name the pay-offs for remaining stuck. Trust the dreamer to make the best choice possible according to their circumstances.

Ask how the dream relates to the dreamer's life. Ask, "What is the desired resolution for this situation?" By treating the dream as a message-giver, the dreamer moves into a position of receiver rather than victim. Change starts with self-empowerment. In time, people are led to their own wisdom.

The Robber Fish

(Jim, age 25)

Jim: I am walking on a beach, naked, holding my swimming suit in my hand. I come upon a pool of water and a big fish leaps out, grabs my swimsuit, and swallows it. I am angry. I want to find a big stick and beat the fish until he coughs it up.

Guide: Close your eyes. Speak as the fish. Ask why it did that.

Jim (*as fish*): I didn't do anything. I just liked the bright color and leapt for it.

Guide: What is your essence as a fish?

Jim (*as fish*): I am benign, impersonal. I mean no harm. I like bright things.

Guide: How old are you?

Jim (*as fish*): Ageless.

Guide: What do you feel about Jim's anger, wanting to beat you with a stick?

Jim (*as fish*): Awful. I am innocent.

Guide: What will happen if he beats you?

Jim (*as fish*): I'll be driven into a corner of a small pond, where I cannot escape his wrath.

Guide: How could you empower your benign innocence?

Jim: I don't know. Find the fish a bigger pond to hide in?

Guide: Does he have to hide?

Jim: I guess so.

Guide: Is being driven into a corner a familiar position for you?

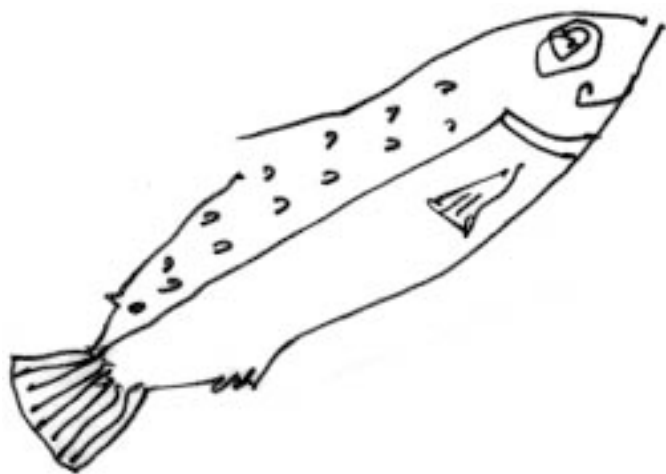
Jim: Yes, I guess so. I often feel unprotected, vulnerable, too exposed.

Guide: What about Jim enjoying a naked walk?

Jim: Well, he likes being naked, but he wants to keep his bathing suit handy in case he needs protection. Without it, he is over-exposed.

Guide: How old is this aspect of Jim?

Jim: Maybe three or five.



Guide: What does this five-year-old need?

Jim: Protection and privacy. He needs to learn how to defend his innocence and pleasure, I guess.

Guide: Since you are in charge of solutions, how will you provide protection and privacy?

Jim: I need a wise person to teach him, to coach him.

Guide: Keep your eyes closed. See yourself as that coach. What does that five-year-old need first?

Jim: *[After a long pause.]* That feels very strange...thinking of being the coach.

Guide: An unfamiliar role for you?

Jim: I expect the coach to be someone else.

Notes: *We all wait for salvation and permission to come from someone else: a parent, the boss, our mate, the doctor, God, or another authority greater than our own. Until one day we realize we are the only one who can play that role for our waiting child-Self. Being there for our Self is such an alien idea. Protecting and validating the Self is difficult, especially when adults, teachers and parents, have been the official coaches all our lives. Good children are the kids who give up their power easily; this is one of the more common survival strategies. The price, though, is paid in adult life when the good children realize they never learned to defend themselves. We have unclaimed powers that we are still waiting for others to give us.*

In this session, it took me some time to find the right question to help Jim understand the message of his dream. There are times as a guide when you don't know what to do or where to go. Sometimes it's better to admit that and put the session on hold. When you move on, the dreamer may find his own way.



Trapped in The World

(Thad, age 11)

Thad: There is a lot of confusion everywhere. Everything is trying to get all the people killed. I am running to try to get out of the way of the shooting. All the other people are dead. It's impossible for me to find a way out, so that's the problem. I'm trapped in the world.



Guide: You certainly do look trapped in confusion. Is it everywhere?

Thad: No, it's just in that part, but I can't get out. I can't just hop on a plane to somewhere else.

Guide: How can you make yourself safe enough to go into this picture and help the trapped part of yourself?

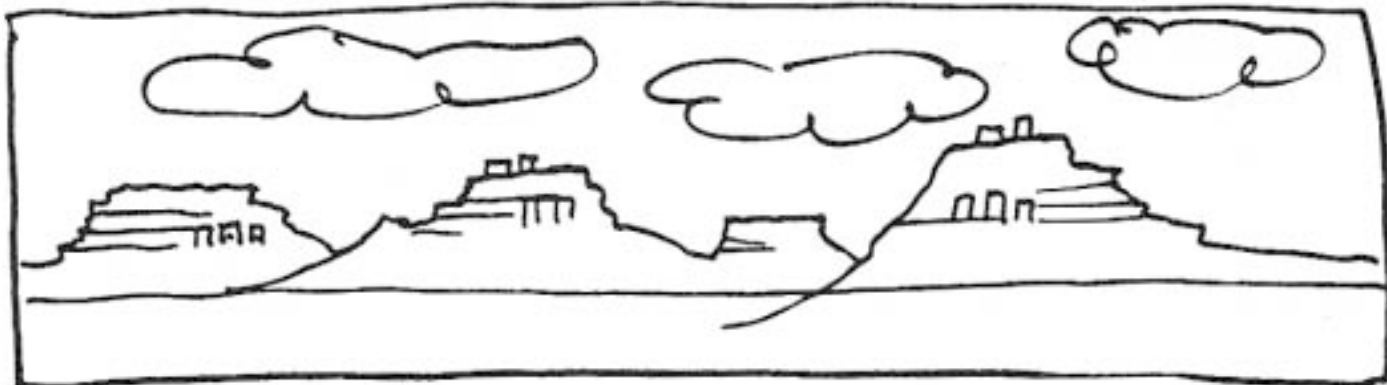
Thad: I could find a box and hide inside it so I can think. *[Draws a box.]* But not for long, or I can't breathe.

Guide: You're in charge. Do whatever feels safe. Be kind to that trapped boy. How will you help him find a safe place?

Thad: If I go inside my head, I can think of a place I really like in Arizona.

Guide: Good. Go there. Give your trapped boy a little rest from the confusion.

Thad: OK, I'm there. It's very flat all around and all of a sudden there is a very thin mesa that seems to be balanced very lightly, and everything is very flat for miles around and then there's another mesa, and another, and a soft wind that is really nice.



Guide: Get a good deep breath of all that peacefulness and balance. Really take it into your lungs and heart, into all the troubled places, so it feels like you're there in the soft wind and sun.

Thad: Right...it's getting hot. That's real; I can feel it on my skin.

Guide: That's something you can do for yourself whenever the confusion gets to be too much for you.

Thad: I also like the idea of leaves all over a big green lawn. That helps me too.

Guide: How about drawing these safe places and hanging them up in your room so you can remember them when you feel trapped in the world? *[Thad draws the mesas.]* While you're in this safe place, is there anything you'd like to say to the monster of confusion?

Thad: I can talk to him long distance. He is saying, "Nothing can stop me."

Guide: Ask what he wants.

Thad: He wants death.

Guide: Ask what else he would settle for. Violence is a waste of people and the good earth.

Thad: He wants the world and all the buildings.

Guide: What do you think is wrong with him that makes him so destructive and greedy?

Thad: *[Closes his eyes. Long silence.]* Might be lonely.



Guide: See if that's it. Listen some more.

Thad: That's it. He's lonely.

Guide: How can you help the lonely part of him?

Thad: Make some friends.

Guide: Can you show him? Close your eyes and see what making friends looks like.

Thad: Well, I'd start by not running away because I'm scared that he's going to kill me.

Guide: He wants you to dare to stay a minute, listen, and not assume he's going to kill you?

Thad: That's what he wants.

Guide: Would you be able to try that?

Thad: Yes, I could, but he doesn't really want to be friends. He wants to be left alone.

Guide: I see. It's important to understand exactly what someone wants and not assume you know.

Thad: I could try to leave it alone. After it messes up, it will go away.

Guide: First it has to mess up?

Thad: Yeah.... Those mess-ups are a pain.

Guide: Do you think there is a way for it to get privacy and attention without messing up? Your wisdom can help you give him some advice.



Thad: Show him how to make friends? I'm not very good at that...I'd tell him my name.

Guide: Tell him your name. That's a good start. Do you want to tell him how he scares you?

Thad: No, he couldn't take that from me. You can't get to him. If you got that close, he'd get you.

Guide: Does he know Arizona?

Thad: No, but I can show him what he has got here.

Guide: What has he got there?

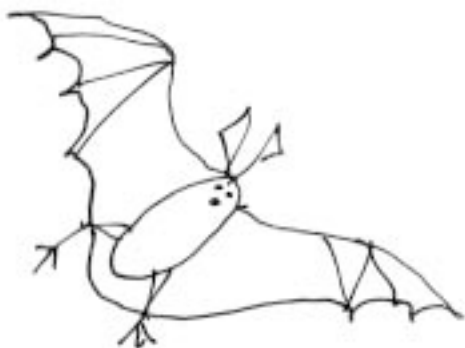
Thad: He's got the beautiful ocean, the Sierras, the green grass. Wow! He disappeared the minute I said that. I don't think I have a solution, just a more cheerful picture. That helps, though.

Guide: Are you still in the box?

Thad: No, I got out of it when I went to Arizona.

Notes: *Thad's dream depicted a state of confusion and helplessness, where adults are no help. He needed to know he could look to himself for safety. I suggested he find a safe place where he could think in peace. From a position of safety, he could begin to learn how to make friends. Thad was able to talk a little bit about being alone and confused, "messing up" as a way of getting attention. He saw that when he feels lonely and isn't good at making friends, the world can be a confusing trap.*

Sometimes there are no real solutions available at the moment. As guide, one needs to be sensitive to the dreamer's readiness to confront danger and consider change. Do not take the dreamer any further than feels safe to him. Thad needed time before he could speak to his monster. Even then, the contact was tentative, and in the end, he withdrew. Evidently, that was all he could handle for the moment. The guide must be satisfied that changing one small aspect of the nightmare empowers the dreamer and defuses the impact of the fear.



SIDEBAR

A Tool Kit for Dreamer and Guide

The tools in this kit are based on the ability to allow yourself to visualize an image. Everyone can do this! Relax!

Ask: Where do you find yourself? What are you seeing, feeling, hearing? What feeling does this scene provoke? What image would describe that feeling?

If you are unable to visualize, ask resistance to be your guide. Always join the obstacle. Ask what needs to happen for you to receive an image from within. Imagine a picture of your parents, your childhood pet, someone who loves or hates you. Listen without trying. (When I hear, "Ann, you are so stubborn!" immediately I see a five-year-old tiger holding ground. What do you see?)

Closed-eye visualization allows the dreamer to:

- "See" feelings.
- Ask for help from your higher Self.
- Speak to the lost, forgotten or alienated child-Self. Validate the inner child that is holding onto old hurts or beliefs. Use consideration and practice loving, where none exists. Experience the unconditional loving parent by giving it to yourself.
- Enter areas of fear and deal with them from a place of safety. Call upon helpers or borrow the powers of specialists. Explore alternative ways of being. Reframe old patterns. Test options, rehearse, negotiate, change.
- Befriend the enemy as a mirror of your projections; gain its power through compassion or understanding.



Meditation helps you:

- Find your center.
- Become a conduit between earth and spirit.
- Become the witness rather than the victim.
- Expand boundaries.
- Make the impossible possible.

Listening to your feelings:

- Puts you in touch with wants and needs.
- Recognizing feelings is the first step toward Self-acceptance, Self-compassion, Self-forgiveness, Self-esteem, Self-trust.
- Sometimes just allowing a feeling to exist is a new experience, a new permission.

Problems hidden in metaphor are less threatening:

- A mask for the innocent self who is not ready to know.
- A place to deposit the unacceptable.
- A disguise for the disowned, feared, and evil parts of one's self.

Re-staging dreams using art and Autodrama permits you to:

- Direct the scene and play all the parts.
- Reverse roles with the antagonist.
- Hear unspoken truths from the unconscious that bypass words and censors.
- Witness the feelings beyond the mind.
- Harvest projected knowledge.

Dialogue is a way to retrieve unconscious material:

- Information from people no longer living.
- A way to speak to absentees.
- A way to "hear" from objects that mirror our projections and tell the truth that no one else dares to say.

Role reversal:

- Forces us to hear the other side of an issue.
- Helps us locate projections we put on others.
- Is a way to negotiate synthesis and reunite with estranged parts of our Self.

Self-parenting:

- Is a catharsis.
- Heals traumas.

- Empowers the "victim."
- Apologizes to the "abandoned" self.
- Makes up for omissions.
- Negotiates amendments.
- Fosters Self-trust.
- Creates new patterning.
- Allows for integration and re-balancing.

Change can mean:

- Loss as well as gain.
- Health instead of illness.
- Stress control.
- Sensory awareness.
- Creative new ways of being alive.
- The end of injunctions.
- Life itself.

Some tools that help us get to change:

- Humor.
- Meditation.
- Visualization.
- Breathing.
- Chanting.



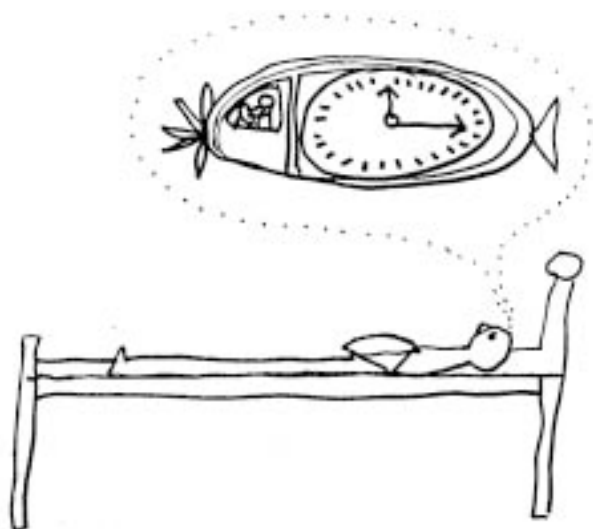
CHAPTER 7

The Benefits of Re-staging the Dream

Dreams are personal dramas of self-expression. Recreating the dream allows the dreamer to re-experience it. The act of defining and repairing the dream issue plants a seed of change in the dreamer's reality. Once the seed is sown, the idea grows by itself. The willingness to redefine the issue makes the change real, even though it's only a drawing or torn paper. We can take responsibility for the things we know and risk new feelings.

Re-enacting the story forces the dreamer to take responsibility for change. Creative options force you to re-think and reframe. Separating the frightened Self from the strong part of the Self frees the dreamer to act. Fears are calmed by finding a creative solution equal to the imagination of the night-mind. Changing just one thing is usually enough to get the dreamer moving towards a self-empowering solution. Marjory, in "The Undelivered Birthday Cake," (page 27) gave her younger self a stick and shield. That was all she needed in order to defend herself so she could deliver the cake, which made a lasting change in her life.

Only the dreamers themselves know the usable answers. The concept of sequential progression and correctness is as important to dream guiding as cleaning a wound before it can heal. Speeding up time, allowing the mind to see *the passing of time* satisfies the dreamer's sense that the proper hours, days, months, years, have passed before the next step can be taken. It is possible to go back and forth in time at will.



The High Diver

(Ana, age 40)

Ana has recurring dreams in which she finds herself on cliffs, promontories, or a high diving board, from which she is expected to have the courage to dive.

Ana: I'm on a mile-high diving board with no steps to get down. It would kill me to hit the water from that height, but I know they expect me to do it. My father and his friends will soon tire of waiting. They are about to leave for cocktails, leaving me there as night falls. I'm naked and paralyzed with fear. I hate myself for not having the courage to jump. My life is threatened either way. If I don't jump, I will fall off in the dark of night, alone. Better to risk jumping while they might save me if I drown.

Guide: How does that feel?

Ana: Impossible! I can't do it...I've got everyone's attention and I can't perform. I'm the world's worst coward, afraid to risk my life even though *they* think I can do it. I feel abandoned.

Guide: How old is feeling abandoned?

Ana: I'm ten, naked in front of my father's club friends.

Guide: Put your grown-up Self up there beside the ten-year-old with consideration. What will you say to her?

Ana: I'd say, "You are right not to dive. This is too high for anyone. Maybe you can do your exhibition dive without risking your life. Find a more comfortable level. In time, you can raise the level according to your confidence. Do you really want to perform for Father anyway? He doesn't seem really interested in your performance and it's cocktail time."

Guide: Ask Ana the child what she wants.

Ana: She wants to show her father the dive she learned at camp. Her parents are divorced. Performing is how she gets her mother's attention. She wants to attract her father by performing, too.

Guide: Expectations often put us in places too high for comfort. If your ten-year-old thinks she has to meet those expectations or be left behind, what would satisfy the part of you stuck in this situation?

Ana: I can dive from the intermediate level quite well. I want my father to notice I'm a good diver, but we're divorced. He has a new wife who has never had

children. She resents us kids—me, especially. We have to spend July with her so Father can see us. They say I'm a clone of my mother whom he must hate if he divorced her in favor of this new wife.

Guide: Let's return to the dream. Close your eyes and find a more comfortable level for a ten-year-old. See how that feels.

Ana: I did it. I lowered the board. That suits my confidence. That feels perfect. I don't feel set up with no way to get down. But his guests have turned away; perhaps this isn't the right way to get his attention. He is too busy with his new life. But I can get down now and do a dive for myself.

Guide: How will you translate this metaphor into a guide for your waking life situation?

Ana: When I find myself feeling set up, over-challenged, in need of attention, I'll adjust my expectations to agree with my confidence, even if I only get my own approval. Even though it seems lonely, it feels safer.

Notes: Undoing early expectations is often the grand moment of autonomy. Ana's dialogue revealed the myth that kept her stuck in the double bind. Ana had dreamed this type of dream since childhood, but it had never occurred to her that she had the right or the power to change the expectation. She realized that performance that had won approval from her mother didn't work anymore. Rather than condemning herself for lack of courage, she honored her fear as a guide to safety. As she restaged this dream, Ana gave herself permission to take responsibility for her life. From then on, she said, "My life became my own design."

My House Is on Fire

(Molly, age 5)

Molly: I dreamed my house was on fire. I was inside, and so was my cat. My dad was at the office. My mom was at the store. I woke up, screaming, "Help! Help! I'm going to burn up!" I was petrified. I thought my cat and I would wake up dead.



Guide: Let's look at your drawing. What is that little face in the window saying?

Molly: "Help, help! It's really scary to be inside a burning house." I'm scared to look at this picture.

Guide: How will you save that little girl in the picture?

Molly: I'll have to get her out of the house, even though she's not allowed to leave the house when Mom and Dad are out.

Guide: Good idea. Can you draw yourself outside of the house?

Molly: Yes. I'm on the street, but I can't do anything.

Guide: Why not?

Molly: Because I'm not allowed to cross the street, and my mom is across the street at the store.



Guide: Isn't your cat still inside? What are you going to do? It certainly looks like an emergency, Molly. What are you allowed to do in an emergency?

Molly: I could find someone...maybe a policeman. I'll draw a policeman. He can cross me.

Guide: I see you can think for yourself. Then what?

Molly: Now I can run and get my mom in the store.

Guide: Close your eyes and see yourself doing that. What do you see?

Molly: I can't get in the store.

Guide: Why not?

Molly: Because the doorknob is too high for me to reach.

Guide: What will you do? Close your eyes and see yourself finding a solution

Molly: I got a box to stand on.

Guide: Good idea. Draw it in.

Molly: It worked. I got a box and opened the door. I found my mom. She was upstairs. [Molly writes "Hi, Mom" into her picture.]



Guide: Now what? Is that the end?

Molly: Mommy! Mommy! Call the fireman! Dial 911! The house is on fire and the cat will burn up! Quick! Quick!

Guide: It looks like you're not so helpless as you thought. You can dial 911 yourself.

Notes: Pay close attention to the obstacles that dreamers pose on the way to a solution; they are very important to the success of this work. Obstacles must be seen as our best guide to the integrity of the solution. They represent the omissions that can keep the dreamer stuck.

Molly has three obstacles to overcome before she can accept a solution: 1. She can't leave the house without permission. 2. She can't cross the street alone. 3. The doorknob is too high for her to reach. This should alert the guide that there are certain conditions necessary before Molly can solve the nightmare's dilemma: 1. Permission to think for herself in an emergency. 2. Permission to speak to strangers when her parents are not available, in order to cross the street. 3. Permission to trust herself to solve the doorknob problem, and encouragement to risk the challenge. Only when these three conditions have been met is Molly's integrity satisfied enough to allow her to save her cat's life. Do not think her perverse or resistant. All of these steps are essential to her learning process. Without permission to override parental rules, she is helpless.

Some children are very literal. It is a form of protection. If you follow instructions to the letter of the law, you think yourself blame-free. That's why house rules can be even stronger than common sense. Most children try to be good, and feel guilty when they break the house rules by switching into self-motivation. Reenacting the dream was a rehearsal for new behavior. Molly said, "When I got home from the dream workshop, I showed my picture to my mom and we decided it was time to have a fire drill like they do at school, in case of emergency. I can think for myself."

The solutions that are the most satisfying are the ones we can use in our waking life, but it is not something to force. If the dreamer creates a fantastic solution, perhaps that is what they need for the time being. In any case, there is healing in symbolic resolution.



Hearing the Dialogue: Role-Reversal

Don't argue with your dream; just listen. Everything on your stage has a point of view, since every image in your dream contains an aspect of yourself. When given the chance to speak, people, animals, monsters, and even objects often reveal hidden truths. The dreamer can hear them better from the position of observer.

We are capable of that which we can imagine, even though we may not act upon it except in dreams. Reenacting your dream on the Paper Stage can help you discover your polarities. Both sides of the polarized Self need to be acknowledged. Since all of the voices can be considered a part of the dreamer's projections, a fair settlement on the Paper Stage is symbolically as valid as an act in real life.

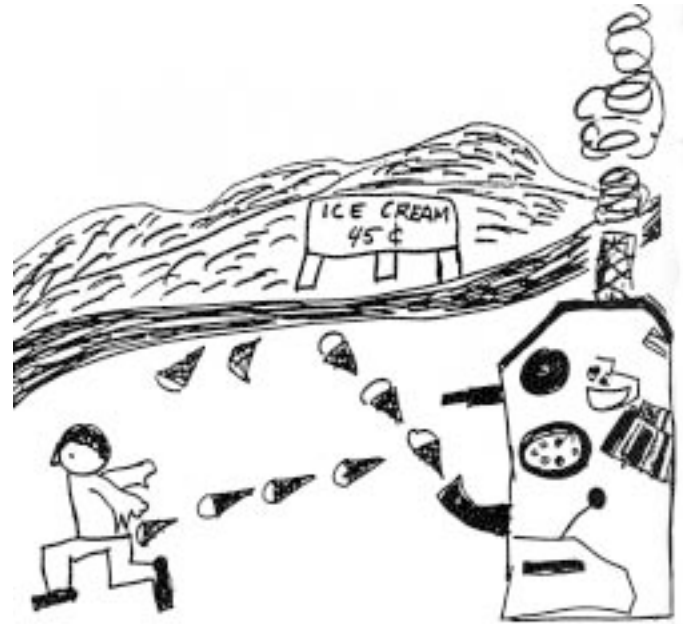
In my dream workshops with children we have to find a safe way to confront and dialogue with the monsters in their nightmares. Giovanni, a nine-year-old Bahamian boy, came to see me several days later to give me his drawing of a bear that had been chasing him in his dreams. "It was the same bear that came before. I ran as fast as I could, but I couldn't get away. The bear roared and roared until I had a headache. When I got tired, I couldn't run anymore and thought I was going to die. Then I remembered what you said about drawing the dream and talking to the monster. Next time he came back, instead of running, I asked him why he was scaring me. He said he was just trying to get some attention. 'Every time I go into someone's dream,' he said, 'they run away. You are the first person who stood up to me. I have no one to talk to so I get very angry. Now we are friends.'"



The Ice Cream Shooting Machine

(Everett, age 11)

Everett: I dreamed that a big ice cream machine was mad at me. It bombarded me with ice cream cones. I was real scared, even though ice cream is soft. I had to run away or get hit.



Guide: How will you make yourself safe enough to talk to the ice cream machine?

Everett: *[Closes eyes.]* OK. I've got an invisible shield.

Guide: Keep your eyes closed and ask it why it's so mad at you.

Everett: It won't tell me.

Guide: Ask it to talk to that boy in the picture and say why it's bombarding him.

Everett: *[As the machine, in a very angry, exaggerated comic voice]* If I've told you once I've told you a thousand times, I work around the clock doing nice things, making you treats, and all you do is run away.

Guide: Have you ever heard that voice before?

Everett: Yeah.... Sounds like my mom.

Guide: Close your eyes and let the boy speak. What does he say?

Everett: You bombard me. Now I've got this shield, you can't hit me.

Guide: Is there a solution to this angry situation?

Everett: The machine needs to stop throwing things and stop being mad at me, shouting all the time. Maybe it needs a rest?

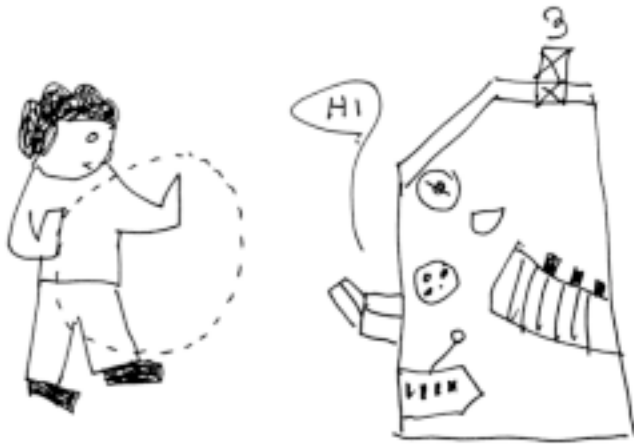
Guide: Close your eyes and see if that is the answer.

Everett: Yeah. But the machine says it can't rest or everything will fall apart.

Guide: Is that true?

Everett: Maybe.

Guide: Ask the machine what it needs.



Everett: It says it needs some rest but no one will help while it rests.

Guide: Would you be willing to help?

Everett: If it stops shouting at me, maybe.

Guide: See if you can make a deal.

Everett: The deal is that I could help a little each day if it stops being angry.

Guide: See yourself trying that.

Everett: I'll try, but you can't depend on machines.

Guide: Then talk to your mom.

Notes: *Negotiating and practicing a new behavior helped Everett come to understand that running away was part of the problem. When he dared to confront and listen to the screaming, flashing, ice cream-shooting machine, Everett was able to hear for the first time his mother's point of view. He tried to negotiate a solution that would work for both sides, even though he wasn't sure he could trust the bargain.*

The Alligator's Revenge

(Nina, age 10)

Nina: I am riding in a canoe with a friend—but it's also my father. They are both in my dream. I remember falling out of the boat and this alligator came to eat me. This is me screaming, "Help!" I know he is coming to eat off my legs. He can catch me even on the land. I can't get away. This alligator said he is the king of all alligators. When I asked him why he wanted to eat me, he said, "'Cause your father killed my wife."

Guide: Your father killed his wife?

Nina: Yes. You see, my father is an importer. He has to kill alligators for their skins, and my class is studying endangered animals. So when I had this dream, he had the right to kill me because it's against the law to kill alligators.

Guide: How are you going to help the girl in your picture?

Nina: I don't know.

Guide: You are certainly in a difficult spot. Try something.

Nina: Well, I would like to tie him up and contact the canoe.

Guide: How will you do that?

Nina: Yell "Help." [Writes "HELP" on her drawing.]

Guide: That's a start. What's next?

Nina: I'll start to swim, but the canoe is too far away. I think I'm going to swim to land instead. It's nearer...but these birds are mean. He's king of everything, even king of the birds, 'cause alligators can go on land, too. I can hide up in a tree and try to convince the alligator that I won't hurt him if he won't hurt me.

Guide: How are you doing that?

Nina: I'm talking to him. He says, "No way! You've killed my wife and I'm going to kill you," and I said, "I didn't kill your wife, my daddy did." Alligator says, "Well OK, I'll give you one more chance." I guess that's why I'm still alive.

Guide: It must feel bad to be blamed for your father's actions, and even harder to tell on him.

Nina: Yes.



Guide: Does that happen often to you?

Nina: Sometimes, yeah.

Guide: Tell the alligator about it.

Nina: Well, sometimes my class blames me. We get in arguments about the things they think we do, something bad, and we really don't. Now the alligator begins to like me a little. He knows I'm really sorry about killing endangered animals. But I'd still feel better in the canoe.

Guide: What does your father say?

Nina: I overheard my father say there was a king-sized alligator in the Everglades. Its skin was worth a lot of money for someone like a king. So he went out and caught it. He didn't realize it was the alligator's wife. He did mean to kill the animal for a lot of money. They make pocketbooks, very expensive ones.

Guide: Close your eyes and bring your father into the picture. Talk with him.

Nina: He says he has to earn a living to feed us kids.

Guide: What would you like to say to him?

Nina: If I use my imagination, I'll ask him to make a potion to make the alligator come back to life. He says he'll try, but it won't work.

Guide: Hmm...

Nina: He's giving the potion to her..... Her eyes open! She says, "Where am I?" I say, "You're at my house." She says, "Where is your house?" "A long way from here, but I'll take you home." I say, "Daddy, can we bring her home?" He says, "Yes." So now I am clean. I'm back home. It's all right.

Guide: So you resuscitated the dead wife and explained your innocence. Anything else you want to say to your father?

Nina: Don't kill anything. Let's grow plants and sell that. Don't ever kill an alligator again.

Notes: *In their contacts outside the home—with friends, school, church, TV—children are exposed to a variety of value systems that are often in conflict with home practices. Children often feel confused and guilty when they come to believe their parents are acting immorally. At the same time, they may feel compelled to defend their parents' actions, leading to further confusion and guilt. Understanding the source of the conflict and talking it out lets kids discuss difficult problems together and prevents bullying.*

CHAPTER 8

When Stuck, Borrow a Helper

There are things we can't give ourselves. Sometimes it is simply permission to be alive. Often it is some kind of gift we don't think we deserve, like being successful. For me, it was buying an expensive jacket from India. When money is tight, I leave myself out. But in this case, I argued, the jacket would be a handsome thing to wear when leading my workshops. I could not decide between the one in red and the one in blue. The argument went on every time I passed the shop, until one day I tried them on again and a voice said, "Take them both." I was shocked. Where did that voice come from? It was the voice of my inner lover; he had come to me in a dream giving me more generosity than I'd been able to give to myself. The idea was so outrageous that I bought both jackets. I have never regretted having a generous lover inside, someone who thinks me worthy of whatever I most need.

Recently I had another amazing dream: a very nice fatherly man came to my studio to see my work. He liked it so much he said, "You need a Patron. I will invest in your ideas if you make a list of the things you need and about how much money will get you going." I was thrilled. "It isn't so much the money," I said. "What I need is the help. I don't seem to be able to get help with the things I can't do well. I need a typist, a manager, an assistant who will edit my writing and correct my spelling. Someone who will send out my work to the right person so it gets seen." At that moment, I woke up. I was so excited I continued to make my list, including all the little things I'd need, like a file cabinet. Then I listed the manuscripts I wanted to get published, the competitions I thought I should enter, the new projects I was eager to start. I closed my journal and forgot about the dream. Five months later, I came upon that list in my journal and discovered I had already done four of them. All I had needed was an investor who believed in me!

I tell children that they have an inner guide, a loving voice within them that has their best interests at heart. When they need help, they can go to the loving place inside and listen. When asked to call a helper, children sometimes invoke superman or other imaginary helpers with super powers. But I prefer reality and encourage them to draw on specialists such as lawyers, counselors, judges, or firemen. Sometimes it may be an animal spirit. Employing superpowers may help for a while, but in the end they are less satisfying than a self-empowering solution. Help can come from someone the dreamer knows

well: a friend, a favorite teacher or relative. Joanna, in "The Unacceptable Divorce" (page 14), is consoled when she draws her grandmother into her picture and asks for advice. Let the dreamer supply the dialogue: they know what they need to hear better than you do.

When no solution is apparent, you can call on a guide, a higher being, or anyone you think may know the answer. The dreamer knows what kind of help is needed. With the help of a borrowed therapist or healer, you can conduct healing sessions in your imagination.

It helps to close your eyes. A seventy two-year-old man at one of my talks tried this and opened his eyes in tears. "My mother was there. She held me for the first time since I was two, when she died. I thought I'd never see her again. No amount of therapy ever gave me a moment in her arms like this."



The Open Wound

(Elly, age 49)

Elly came to see me after her relationship of five years ended. She said her feelings were so murderous, so out of control, they frightened her. She felt so severely wounded she couldn't get out of bed for several days. She saw herself as an open wound.

Elly: I feel like I'm falling apart. My whole front is wide open. It looks like all my organs are falling out. I need a very good doctor.

Guide: What very good doctor have you got in mind? Allow that doctor to guide you in this operation. Describe the doctor's process step by step.

Elly: I have a doctor in mind. He puts me to sleep. Now I am asleep. Then he puts all the organs back where they belong.

Guide: Put the scene you are describing into slow motion, so you miss nothing.

Elly: The intestines are back in place, but the stomach looks enlarged. It's not right. There must be something inside.

Guide: Ask the doctor what he thinks.

Elly: He'll have to open it up.

Guide: What's your hunch about what's inside?

Elly: An irritant. *[A smile breaks over her face.]* I know what it is! I see cinders, little black cinders!

Guide: What will you do about them?

Elly: Remove them.

Guide: Good. Remove the irritants so we can look at them.

Elly: OK, they're out. But I'm not sure what to do next. I don't know which way to close the wound, from the head end or the body end. It's more of a spiritual problem than a medical one.

Guide: Who would know how to close the wound?

Elly: A healer. I need the laying on of hands. *[With eyes closed, there are always long silences. This gives time for the feelings to develop and the integrity of the inner scene to move the emotions of the client.]* Yes, the laying on of hands pulls it together. I have put my body to sleep. She is asleep. But at some other

level she is listening and watching the healers take good care of her. That is where my trust begins. It helps when I think someone else is doing it.

Guide: How do you feel?

Elly: Much better, like the poison is out. I feel wounded, but whole.

Guide: Do you feel like looking at the cinders?

Elly: I know exactly what they are all about. They are from the schoolyard when we were poor, when my aunt wrenched me away from my foster family, who I thought were my real family. This woman who said she was my aunt came and took me away to her school. The school she ran was too poor to have surfacing in the play yard, so she used cinders. It hurt when you fell. They are still in my knees. She was very cruel.

Guide: It hurt to be wrenched away from people you thought you belonged to.

Elly: Yes, that too.

Guide: Could you find that little girl in your mind and tell her that?

Elly: She won't listen. She can't trust anybody.

Guide: Ask her how you can gain her trust, now you have found her.

Elly: She says she has been waiting a long time.

Guide: Tell her now is a good time to start.

Elly: She wants me to apologize.

Guide: For what?

Elly: For not being there when she needed me.

Guide: Are you ready for this new responsibility? Ask her how you will know when she needs you.

Elly: She says whenever that open wound feeling comes, that is the sign.

Guide: Ask her if she can give you a warning before it gets that bad.

Elly: When she feels depressed, that's how it starts.

Guide: When she feels depressed, you will listen and not let it get to the open wound stage? You will give her some hands-on healing?

Elly: I'll be there for her. I'll keep her in mind. When she yells, I'll close my eyes, see her orphaned and wretched, and stop being mean.

Notes: *Symbolic surgery produces symbolic healing. Though we see no blood and feel no stitches, the body seems willing to feel that a change has taken place. It is exciting to see over and over again how people know the path to their own healing. When re-balancing is channeled through the child-Self, change can take place in an instant. If we can learn to trust this inner guide before things get out of hand, we may not have to give our bodies up to the surgeon or medication, or escape through drugs or obsessive behavior. We may cure our own neurotic "addictions" with compassion rather than brutal control or self-punishing extremes.*



Writer's Block

(Peggy, age 27)

Peggy: I'm an A+ student, but I'm suddenly unable to complete my commitments for graduate school. I've got writer's block. I've been managing alone since I lost both parents when I was eleven. I took comfort in the belief that nothing could be that bad again. But at thirteen, when my aunt died, it was a blow below the belt. I'm good at making dynamic transitions, but I can't make the small ones. I have no tools, no experience with little transitions.

Guide: Shall we start there? Small transitions? Relax and get a sense of yourself. Go back to a time when you could make small transitions in childhood. Just see yourself making a small transition. See where that thought takes you.

Peggy: I'm five on the first day of school. The teacher checks off children who are claimed by their new teacher, but no teacher claims me. I am the last to be left there all alone.

Guide: How does that feel?

Peggy: I'm worried that no one will claim me, wondering how this can be, what mistake has been made. Maybe I can call my mother at her office. I don't have her number, but they can look it up because I know the name of where she works.

Guide: You really can take care of yourself, even at five.

Peggy: I had to. We lived in a very big house, and my room was far from everyone else, so if I needed a blanket, or needed my mother, or was sick, no one could hear me call. I had to get up and get what I needed as far back as I can remember.

Guide: Your early training in self-reliance must have been a help at eleven when you lost your parents.

Peggy: That's part of the trouble. I was praised for being so self-reliant, but little did I know that praise would be all I'd ever get. Unless I screamed for help, which I never did.

Guide: Have you come screaming for help today?

Peggy: Yes, I am forced to. I've come to the end of my rope.

Guide: That is good. It is good to know one's own bottom line. Close your eyes. Take your adult Self back in

time to the schoolroom, and claim your five-year-old. Acknowledge her; ask her what she wants from you, now that you can hear her and are willing to come to help her.

Peggy: She wants some praise and credit for being grown-up so young. I see now that acting grown-up and having to be grown-up are different things. It meant she could never collapse and be helpless, never rely on anyone else, or allow herself to feel inadequate, lost, or scared.

Guide: Could you be there now for the eleven-year-old? Let her collapse, feel her losses. Let her get some rest from being so grown-up.

Peggy: She can't collapse. She might die.

Guide: That's what she believed at eleven. People who collapse die, like mother, father, and your aunt. It's time now to create a new law for people who need a little rest, collapse time, from acting so self-sufficient and grown-up.

Peggy: I don't know how.

Guide: Who do you know who does? Have you ever seen it done well?

Peggy: Could *you* help me?

Guide: Yes, you can bring me into your scene. Close your eyes and see what Ann would say.

Peggy: Oh, Ann said, "Try the TV. The one you used to watch all the time while your mother was dying."

Guide: Is Ann's suggestion a good idea?

Peggy: Perfect. It helped me before.

Guide: What is the TV saying?

Peggy: The TV says, "All I can say to people like you is that if you don't relax a little, you'll be as good as dead. If you just let yourself rest a little now and then, it doesn't need to get so big. Instead of calling it a failure to live up to your standards, think of it as modifying expectations so you don't miss out on all the fun in life."

Guide: Sounds like the Ann in your mind has good advice. Ask the five-year-old what she wants.

Peggy: She wants grown-ups to be responsible and dependable.

Guide: What advice have you for her when grown-ups are not dependable?

Peggy: That's a problem. At thirteen, when her aunt died, she felt angry that she had been so deluded. She promised to take my mother's place, and I believed her promise.

Guide: Ask Ann how you can help that deluded child.

Peggy *[as Ann]*: There are always going to be scary things that can happen, but a child shouldn't have to take total care of herself.

Guide: Is your adult Self willing to take on some of this caring?

Peggy: That isn't good enough.

Guide: What would be good enough?

Peggy: She just feels mad, as though all the goodness has been used up. She doesn't trust anyone.

Guide: Ask the child how to earn her trust.

Peggy *[as child]*: She has to apologize for scaring Peggy when no teacher claimed her because the name on the list was Pegine. That was awful; it made me feel unwanted. She'd have to pay more attention and catch the scary things before they get too big.

Guide: Are you willing to make that agreement?

Peggy: Now we're both scared.

Guide: Back up a bit, then. Can you make your agreement smaller, more realistic?

Peggy: Can you help me? Oh, I will use the TV again. It says, "The best thing for little agreements is to prove trust."

Guide: How will you do that starting today?

Peggy *[as child]*: OK, there is another way. She doesn't have to die to get some help. She has to take me with her, share responsibility for knowing what we want. If she'll do that, then I'm willing to trust her. I'll know that goodwill is not all used up.

Notes: *So that was Peggy's fair bargain: validation of the child's used-up goodness and the need to become her own trustworthy protector. When I commented on how she had found her solution two weeks ahead of our agreed-upon ending time, she said that she was born two weeks ahead of schedule, before anyone expected her. So why shouldn't her "self-birth" perpetuate her expertise for delivering surprise?*

The Borrowed Therapist: Lifting Blame off Mother

(Ann, age 55)

On the train to New York City to see my old mother, I was reading "My Voice Will Go With You" by my favorite therapist, Milton Erickson. I wished for one hour with him, even though he had died a year before. I knew he could help me. I was ashamed at fifty-five to still be so angry and full of blame at my mother. I closed my eyes and begged Milton Erickson (M.E.) to help me heal my "Mother Blame" with some of his wonderful "Uncommon Therapy."

In my self-induced trance I heard his voice say, "Tell me how it was when you had your mother all to yourself." Immediately I began telling him my story.

me: I was three when I was sent to Grandmother's house to play with her button box for too many days. When I returned home, "the Little Man" had been born and my room was *his* room. I'd been moved upstairs, far from my parents' warm bed.

At three, Father wheeled me in my little cart to playschool, where you learn when you are ready. But my six years of creative freedom at New York's progressive schools didn't focus on the three R's. At ten, I was switched to an English girl's finishing school where girls wore uniforms and curtsied. Mother said it was 'the only school that would take a ten-year-old who couldn't read or tell time.' After being good at all the arts, suddenly I was a remedial problem, a failure, a slow learner in the bottom of this new system.

This dramatic school change happened the same year my parents divorced. Daddy left home with his desk and our Chinese rug; he no longer made pancakes on Sunday mornings. On Christmas Eve, we went to see him and meet his new wife. I was shocked to see his desk and our Chinese rug in this strange lady's apartment. Nothing was explained except the word "divorce."

One day Mother and her new friend drove us kids to town for ice cream. While we licked our cones in the car, we got peach ice cream and a stepfather all in the same half hour it took the justice of the peace to pronounce them man and wife. It didn't feel right to find him asleep in Father's place. And Mother was pregnant again, too.

Mum loved watching me shine in the plays produced by the King Coit Children's theater school. But being a performer distanced me from my

peers and siblings, who found me self-centered. I was a lonely child steeped in the dramas of the maiden wronged from my mother's experiences and our wandering father's example. The song she sang at our bedside was 'Careless Love, Careless Love, oh, Careless Love.' When my classmates went off to college, I went to work and never did learn to spell...

I was using my poor mother as scapegoat for my adult feelings of betrayal and abandonment. Finally, Erickson's voice stopped me.

M.E.: Forgive your mother. She had the courage to take happiness when it finally came her way. Ask her forgiveness for blaming her for taking her advice, when your dreams had already given you warnings against your marriage. Ask forgiveness for blaming her for society's judgment when you almost made choices that would saddle you with an illegitimate child. Under those conditions you can forgive yourself for not having the understanding or courage to follow your heart.

We are all the product of our culture and limited by the models of our time. In her day, women had little freedom; they lived through their children. There is *no blame*, just compassion that leads to forgiveness. Thank your mother for modeling excellence, fairness, decency, and creativity. She was always there for you, saying, "*You can do it!*"

After I told her this whole story, we laughed, and she said all the things I'd been waiting to hear her say, that shared the blame, that validated my childhood grievances.

The "M.E." of "me" knew exactly what I had to do in order to lift blame off my mother.



Finding an Animal Guide

When working with a big group of children, I use guided imagery to help them find animal guides that they can call on whenever they need wisdom or advice. (It also works with adults.) This is just another way to access inner wisdom. Often the message they receive is something the child could not hear from the parents, teachers, or other adults in their lives. But as it comes from a friendly animal, it is easier to take it in.

I invite the kids to close their eyes and go, in their minds, to a quiet safe place and listen. Perhaps an animal or spirit has something to tell them, something that will be of help. "Accept whatever comes," I say, "even if it's not what you expected, and listen to the message. When you can repeat the message, open your eyes. When everyone is awake, we will share our messages."

The feedback is quite astonishing. It is rare that nothing comes. Usually the messenger has come with helpful advice. Georgie said a pig came and told him, "Come play with me! Dirt will not hurt you. It's fun to get in the mud." Arden said a lioness was nursing her cubs and invited her to come and cuddle into the pack and be loved like the cubs. Joshua said a mosquito landed on his arm and did not sting him because it knew he did not mean to hurt his sister anymore.

During a dream workshop at his school, Johnny told me he played the fool in class to get people to laugh, but no one liked him. When I asked him what the fool was doing for him, he said "The joker in me keeps me from feeling. That's what the grown-ups do in my family. That's how we get along." He said he gets the most attention when he acts crazy. I asked him to close his eyes and invite the animal who has the most wisdom to come into his mind and help him figure out what to do about this. When he opened his eyes, he reported that the owl had come and told him, "It's hard to be smart. You are too smart to act stupid."



The Possibility of Past Lives

We were twenty-three therapists attending Morris Netherton's Past Lives Conference in Maine. Five of us had a chance to work on personal problems. A young woman named Greta worked on her inability to carry a pregnancy beyond eight weeks. Her fear of pregnancy, the vulnerability of dependency, plus her basic mistrust of men, seemed to produce a chronic condition that ended in miscarriage. No medical explanation had been found. In her guided trance session, Greta "retrieved" from her past scene after scene in which she had been destroyed during pregnancy, or sexually threatened in girlhood: once in an earthquake, once in a concentration camp, once raped in childhood.

Each scenario verified the panic that Netherton calls traumatic material from past lives. Netherton guided Greta to re-experience the traumas. He helped her acknowledge that these events had occurred in other lifetimes. He suggested that this terror need no longer run her life, as she was no longer in danger.

Before her birth, Greta's mother had had a miscarriage in Germany during the Nazi regime. We know that children and mothers often are so deeply in tune during early life that mothers believe they have X-ray vision and supersonic hearing; they know what their children are feeling and vice versa. When a woman conceives, she recreates the universe. It really doesn't matter if you believe in past lives; it is enough to get profound validation for your personal "myth." In Greta's inner scenario, the key words were: "I'll never live through it. I'm helpless. What difference does it make if I live or die?"

Imagine the possibility that we do carry into this life particles of all life since the beginning of time...that our genes are recycled and our atoms contain the potential of all forms of life. ("Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.") Consider the nine months we spend in the uterus, where we learn the restrictions and permissions of the people awaiting our birth. Imagine what the baby assimilates from the mother's emotions, attitudes, and actions, not to mention her digestive system. The fetus absorbs millions of sounds, feelings, and tensions. It hears the raised voices. (Float with your ears under water and listen to yourself speaking or singing. You will be amazed at how amplified the sounds from outside the body are when heard inside a water container much like the womb.) Just as the size and shape of the aquarium governs the growth of a goldfish, so the attitudes, the circumstances of the waiting family affect the child growing in the womb.

A collection of case histories in Netherton's book *Past Lives Therapy* shows how quickly the unconscious (or the imagination) "retrieves" a scenario that validates a person's assumptions. Netherton works with obsession, disease, stuttering, ulcers, epilepsy, sexual problems, alcoholism, and relationship conflicts. I witnessed

his clients feeling remarkably helped, if not cured, or realigned by his guidance through birth memories, prenatal recall, and "past life" recall exercises.

When the emotions are moved by reliving these experiences at a feeling level, the Self believes them. Even if you don't "believe" in it, it can still work.

Nine months after the conference in Maine, Greta bore a healthy son. *However anxiety chooses to be comforted, by fantasy or truth, why not use it? What have you got to lose?*



CHAPTER 9

Self-Parenting: Returning to the Source

Most of our beliefs and behavior patterns are set in place early, often in an emergency situation when no other option is available. These strategies worked at the time they were acquired and are indelibly set in childhood habits. By adulthood they may have lost their logic or become obsolete, but they are still automatic. Not only do we unconsciously do to ourselves what was done to us, but we teach others to treat us that way too. We recreate the scene of our childhood traumas over and over, choosing the players that suite the roles. It is a subtle trap, very hard to exit.

Only through awareness can we update and change old strategies. Dreams often bring them to our attention using metaphors. Change seems to take hold most effectively when the inner child is reached and released from the episode that caused this behavior to be adopted in the first place. (As the *user-friendly* Macintosh word processor says when I try to change my page setup, “To create change you must return to the source.”) Return to an episode when the strategy was set, and work from there.

Self-parenting that takes place in the imagination has a way of convincing the body that it has actually experienced a feeling. This is especially valuable for feelings that may have no previous model, like unconditional love or the feeling of being understood perfectly and defended fairly. Self-parenting may be the only way to get what you missed in childhood and have been waiting for parental substitutes and other authority figures to give you ever since. The inner child is guardian of the symbols that represent feelings. When we are cut off from our inner child, some parts of the Self are lost. Returning to the source allows old wounds to open and heal, freeing up the inner child whom you have ignored or overlooked to trust you, advise you, and to mature when ready.

Erika, a 35-year-old student, was feeling nervous about returning to school to get her Master’s degree. She had developed writer’s block. She came to my workshop fearing failure. As we went back in time to find out more about her fear of failure, we came upon the scene of how she was ridiculed in front of her fifth grade class. Although she had long since forgotten the insult, the sting was still hot. With closed eyes, Erika re-experienced the scene in which her teacher had mocked her, saying, “How stupid can you be, not to know, by age ten, that you don’t write ‘I’m’ with a small ‘i!’” In order to validate her child Self, she guided her shocked and wounded ten-year-old Self through a defense that validated the mistake and put the teacher in her place.

Resistance on the part of the client usually means the client’s integrity system is out of proper sequence. When Erika was asked to enter the traumatic scene where she saw the teacher pointing at her, she said, “I can’t see Erika anywhere. I only see the teacher and the class of students laughing.” The guide asked, “What needs to happen to allow the ten-year-old to appear?” Erika replied, “I’d have to find her before or after the ridicule, because she was feeling so humiliated in that moment that she simply disappeared. It’s as though she stepped out of her body to avoid the intensity of the shaming.”

Issues like this do sound trivial, but when childhood ridicule has the power to govern fear of failure by avoidance for twenty-five years, it becomes very important. Through this exercise Erika came to realize how she herself had been ridiculing her imperfections for most of her life. The stuck child-Self may have been avoiding all possibilities of failure for all those years, or seeking validation through every relationship, looking for mother’s or father’s missing acknowledgment in every authority figure, boss, mate, therapist, doctor, and friend. But true autonomy doesn’t come that way; change can only take place when you provide validation for yourself. Defending the undefended child is a healing experience that opens self-respect.



SIDEBAR

Disowned feelings

We learn to disown our feelings immediately after we are born. We are told:

- "Don't cry."
- "You don't really feel that way"
- "You shouldn't say that."
- "You don't want to hurt your brother."
- "You have nothing to cry about."

These negations of our feelings are among the first things we hear. Negation becomes a way of life; rather than knowing our feelings from within, we depend on being told what we should feel by others. In time, the baffled feelings turn into self-abuse. Eventually they find some way to be heard: nightmares, disease, or accidents. Be kind to yourself. Remember, your feelings were put on hold early in life. It was the price of approval.

didn't want to be a father and the baby who didn't want to be born. She knew this was a very high price to pay for her relationship patterns.

Jan's dialogue with her inner child helped her find a way to stop this pattern. In order to satisfy the crying child, she had to understand why she kept choosing men who didn't want families; she had to stop setting herself up for failure, abandonment, and grief. Her eight-year-old Self revealed that she pushed the men until they left in order to fulfill her dream scenario. Jan acknowledged that her eight-year-old's expectation and fear had been running her life. She had to re-parent the crying child whose father had left his family exactly the way the dream remembered. At the same time, Jan became aware that she had repeated the same act of desertion upon her fetus. She began by giving the crying child herself in the place of her father. It was time to break the cycle of doing to herself what was done to her.

Advice from the Unborn Child

Jan (age 24 and pregnant) came to work on a recurring dream in which she saw her father drive away in his car and never come back. She stood crying at the window, watching him go. "There is a child inside me who has never stopped crying," she said. "My man told me from the very beginning that he was not ready for marriage or fatherhood; he warned me not to test him. But since we'd fallen in love, I was sure he'd change his mind. I wanted a baby and it was so easy to just get pregnant. He did not change his mind. When I told him I was pregnant, he left on a trip and that was that."

By the time she came for help, Jan had been alone for six weeks and had decided to become a single mother. "If I can't hold a man, if he is always going to take off, then at least I can have a baby of my own." Jan went back through her history to tell me how many times she'd had men leave her. She had a pattern of choosing men who were not interested in marriage, then testing them in a way that drove them away. When Jan talked with the budding baby forming inside, she got some shocking new information. The baby voice said she did not want to come into the world until she had a father.

The baby voice frightened Jan, robbing her courage to face parenthood alone with a baby that didn't want to be born. When she returned for the next session, she had terminated the pregnancy. She felt she could better live with the act of abortion than defy both the man who



Reframing Faults

A baby comes into life defenseless except for four major powers: to breathe or die, suck or scream. Screaming brings either relief or resentment and rough handling. (Perhaps the fifth power of the baby is endurance, and the sixth power is to try to be invisible.) It's amazing what babies can do to survive; they can learn to endure the pain of hunger in order to avoid abuse, or to tolerate roughness in the name of attention. They survive by avoidance or compliance. Even the pampered, well cared for children eventually come for help. They may be feeling over-observed, overindulged, spoiled rotten, or so deeply bonded to the loving parent that they can't get free. Their methods of escape may be drugs, depression, self-abuse, worthlessness, or guilt for the embarrassment of riches, with no right to feel needy.

Children can't know their rights or what is "normal" until they have other homes to compare with their own experience. Even in court, small children often won't betray their parent's or guardian's abusive treatment, because the risk of losing even negative attention from the only parent they know is far more frightening than the abuse itself. Besides, children usually believe they are to blame and deserve the mistreatment because they have been told they are bad or unwanted.

At Shepard Ginandes' "The School We Have," a therapeutic center for disturbed adolescents, we offered a lot of creative role rehearsals and healing. These young people were survivors of incest and homosexual abuse. Many were from middle class privileged homes. They discussed the ways in which they were bribed, neglected, and initiated, and how their guilt, shame, and loss of Self caused violent self-hatred and self-abuse. One boy said his father insisted that all boys had to learn to perform fellatio, so, if he knew what was good for him, he'd better comply. Another boy admitted that having submitted to his father's domination he, in turn, abused his younger brothers. By age twenty, he felt so addicted to self-abuse, self-betrayal, and self-hatred that he made several attempts at suicide.

There are many styles of suicide. An illegitimate girl tried to eliminate herself by starving her body. A boy who was "supposed" to be born a girl disqualified the male in himself by acting and dressing like a girl. A young man who had been told his birth imprisoned his parents in marriage pretended he didn't exist by denying his right to be alive. *If I'm invisible...if I have no feelings...if I don't exist...then I can live a little longer.* When you consider the amazing variety of childhood survival devices, you must marvel at children's resolve to stay alive

When we treat the problem, the symptoms disappear; treat the symptoms, and the problem is suppressed or blocked, and is forced to find another way to express itself. We operate on ulcers without curing the cause, only to find tension collecting in a different organ. We

sedate and medicate ourselves so that the body is out of touch with the message of pain. Return to the inner child; become the new parent. Lift a band-aid off some old unfinished wound.

Throwing the Self Out

(Rod, age 33)

Rod: I dream I'm driving and I'm unable to escape from my wife. Everywhere I go, she materializes. If I run for my life, she follows. Even if I hit her, she just stays there. I speed away in my car and she turns up on the seat next to me. This dream made me so crazy I shoved her out the car door, and still she wouldn't drop off. Finally, in tears, I open my own door and throw myself out. I woke up in terror.



Guide: What are you feeling as you speak?

Rod: Scared. Crazy to the point of suicide. My wife is my prison. I'm locked in bondage, duty, and expectation.

Guide: Have you ever felt like this before? Look through your early history. What comes to mind?

Rod: Yeah, I'm sitting at the dining-room table. I'm about nine. My father nearly died of polio, and when he got home from the hospital, from then on everyone had to eat as slowly as he did. No one was allowed to leave the table until he finished. Meals took forever.

Guide: Close your eyes. Become that boy.

Rod: Sitting there is driving me crazy. I'm so frustrated I could murder. I had to learn to do something with my restrained energy. I'd push my food all around

the plate and jiggle my legs to keep from going crazy with impatience and frustration.

As Rod connected with this boy, his legs began to jiggle. When asked to allow the jiggling to amplify, he began to run in place. He was running so fast, it looked as if he were having a tantrum in his chair. He dared not stand up, lest he vent his rage.

Guide: Can you appreciate what a clever survival technique this is? You learned to run in place rather than die of frustration. What needs to happen now? It is time to empower that nine-year-old boy. How will you release him safely?

Rod: It's not safe. He'd run away and never stop. If I got up, I'd run so fast, I'd leave that kid far behind. I hate that boy I was.

This session took place near the ocean's edge on a stormy day with dangerous surf. I had no idea what risks Rod might take if he stood up. I asked him to keep his eyes closed and let his adult Self sit down beside the nine-year-old prisoner whose legs were now shaking beyond control. I told him he could release the boy from bondage on one condition: that he move in slow motion. He was responsible for seeing that the boy didn't go crazy or risk danger. He was instructed to empower the boy to move safely, taking care of one small part of the rage at each step...nothing more than he could handle.

Rod: I gotta move. I gotta move or I'll kill myself.

Guide: You're in charge of this man who is ready to throw himself away, as well as this boy. How are you going to let him get up and keep him safe, in control?

Rod: Don't know. My legs are running; my body is paralyzed. *[His legs were running in place. He looked out of control.]*

Guide: Stay inside and decide. You have a choice: to stay locked in this bind, running in place, crazy with frustration, or to agree to put this scene in slow motion. You can give yourself limits. You can keep control. What is it going to be? Give this crazy part of yourself directions he can follow.

Rod: I'll try it in slow motion. He is to get up, go in slow motion down to the water, until it touches my feet, and come back, without opening my eyes.

Guide: You're in charge, and I am going to trust this boy who has controlled you so long to lend his expertise to this task that will liberate him. Do what you

agreed to do as though you were learning to walk for the first time. Enjoy the workings of your legs. They have never had this permission to move freely since you were nine. Be considerate, they were paralyzed by grief, polio, impotence, and compassion as well as frustration. Liberate them with equal compassion. Are you ready? In control?

Rod: Yes.

Guide: Remember, the boy will be guided by you in blind faith. This may be your best chance to begin earning his trust. Don't disappoint him.

Rod was in a trance state. He got up and moved one foot in front of the other towards the ocean. He was a big, powerful man; in no way could I have stopped or even helped him if he broke his promise. I felt he was invested in his agreement, but one never knows for sure about suicide threats, or what act might explode out of rage when a person is caught in the grip of a tantrum. Rod walked until he dropped out of sight at the water line, where a ledge blocked my view. After a few breath-holding moments, he started back. When he returned, he embraced me and sat in silence, sobbing. After a long silence, I asked him if he'd like to stop for the day or continue helping the boy.

Rod: Let's go on. I'm shaking.

Guide: What are the shakes telling you?

Rod: I'm scared.

Guide: Let the boy shake. Tell me your feelings about this scared nine-year-old boy.

Rod: I'm afraid I could kill him, since I can't kill his father.

Guide: Talk to the boy. Can you see him in your mind? Describe him.

Rod: I can see him, all right. I hate his guts! He's wearing that shirt he hated. He's got that crew cut his mother made him get to save money. He's fat and angry and he hates himself.

Guide: Ask him what he needs.

Rod: He needs to stop going to the icebox. He needs to wear what he chooses and to let his hair grow so he doesn't look like a convict.

Guide: Satisfy him now, in your mind. Give him what he wanted back then, when no one listened to his needs.

Rod: I'd let him choose his own shirt. He's a different person. He's handsome and useful.

Guide: Ask him what else he needs.

Rod: He needs to be trusted.

Guide: How will he know that he is trusted?

Rod: He'll know when his feelings are taken into consideration.

Guide: Are you willing to consider his feelings now?

Rod: Yes.

Guide: Then take him to the car in your dream, before you throw yourself out the door. Ask this handsome and useful boy for guidance. How can he help you in your extreme frustration?

Rod: He asked me what I'm afraid of.

Guide: What are you afraid of?

Rod: That I'm trapped for life and I'll go crazy. It feels like death!

Guide: Ask the driver-Self what he needs.

Rod: He needs space for himself...distance ...separateness. He needs to get out of this marriage. It's a prison. He hates his son. He doesn't have time for him and that makes me feel guilty. I've just gotta get out, fast, or I'll die there.

Guide: This is an emergency. Before he throws himself away, how are you going to disengage that frantic man from his duties? Ask the clinging wife what to do.

Rod: She doesn't want him to leave. She's afraid he'll never come back.

Guide: Feels like a double bind, doesn't it?

Rod: *[Is moved to tears.]* It feels hopeless.

Guide: That's the old feeling, the one the fat boy was locked into. Here and now you have new options. See if you can empower the man. Let the boy guide you. Remember the way you unlocked your legs? What's the first step? Use slow motion.

Rod: I guess I need to feel OK about taking a break, about being here at this workshop when my family needs me, not feeling guilty to take time for myself.

Guide: Tell that to the woman beside you in the car. See if she can hear that.

Rod: She says what makes her cling is that she's afraid she'll never see me again if I take time for myself.

Guide: You were afraid if you started you'd never stop. She's playing it back to you, isn't she?

Rod: That's right.

Guide: Is it possible that the clinging wife is in fact a piece of your own fear?

Rod: I guess so. Yes. I just didn't see it. All I saw was restraint.

Guide: See that restraint as a childhood life-saving device. It was a survival strategy, the only one available to you at the time. How did restraint help you?

Rod: Restraint kept me paralyzed. I couldn't leave the house. It made me feel guilty if I wasn't serving my mother, trying to keep my paralyzed father from feeling bad. Guilt kept me working every minute of the day: a job after school and another on Saturday. It kept me locked up. It kept me from any sex life whatsoever until I married my wife, and then I just repeated the bondage until now. That's why I had to come here. I thought I'd go crazy if I didn't get away. And I don't care if I never go back.

Guide: What about your son?

Rod: I feel guilty about him, but we're not close. I don't see him much. He's out of the house most of the time, and I'm busy working.

Guide: Sounds like he's having some of the freedom that you didn't have.

Rod: I'll say!

Guide: How does that make you feel?

Rod: Resentful, but glad for him.

Guide: Close your eyes and bring him into your mind. Can you see him?

Rod: Yes. He wants me to play ball.

Guide: Are you willing?

Rod: I don't have much time for play.

Guide: Try it. Start today. Give yourself permission. See how it feels, just a little. Baby steps, like walking to the sea.

Notes: *This put Rod in touch with the part of himself that wouldn't play and the part that wanted to play but couldn't take responsibility for doing it without outside permission freeing him from his sense of duty. By separating these warring parts, by investigating the metaphor from the dream images, Rod was better able to listen to his inner conflict, which he had projected and blamed on his wife his son. He experienced the first steps of self-permission. He validated the restraint strategy that had worked throughout childhood but was now killing him, forcing a life-or-death solution so terrifying that he witnessed his own suicide in his dream reality. In the end, this dream may have saved his life.*

People drive their Selves with brakes on until the brakes break down. Some of us are lucky enough to get the emergency call in a nightmare, and others us just drive into a telephone pole. Either way, we force ourselves to stop.

Be Gentle with Addiction

We are all addicts of something. Some of us are addicted to misery, confusion, anger, self-destruction, alienation, abandonment, self-pity, accidents, or bodily ailments. Some are sexaholics and some are sexaphobics. The list is endless. We don't recognize our own addictive behaviors readily, but each of us has some form of addiction. Can you name yours? (Read "The Games People Play" by Eric Berne and "Knots" by R.D.Laing. They are full of games and familiar examples that mirror the Self we are blind to.)

That which we most dread to be called must contain some truth, or we wouldn't fear it. One of the secrets of the EST training was facing the fact that many of us are stuck trying to change the world in order to make ourselves *right*. If we design a world to accommodate our faults and lacks, we structure a life based on compensation. As we take responsibility for our *needs*, as we give ourselves the thing we are waiting for, we can better balance our relationships.

Consider your fault a symptom, not the disease. The minute we credit the fault with its assets (its pay-offs), it will begin to relax its grip. You will have to give up the assets along with the faults which have been providing you with excuses that free you of responsibility, excuse you from leadership, protect you by creating distance, etc. Can you get what you think you want (love, money, attention, fame, gratification, harmony, companionship) without your old way? Yes! You can learn a new approach. To effect change, it helps to talk to the inner child, return to the age where this behavior took root, and explore new ways to satisfaction.

Go slowly; rehearse change; find out if you can cope with what change is going to mean; you may like your old expertise better. Will getting the love you think you want frighten you, bore you, make you feel burdened, false, unworthy, obligated, threatened, dependent? Will getting the money you desire be worrisome, create paranoia, force you into philanthropic responsibilities, cause jealousy, resentment and expectations? Who knows, maybe no change is better. Don't give up your crutch until you can balance without it.

Comfort yourself with the notion of innocence. Yesterday, you were hating your faults and kicking yourself. Today, you understand you couldn't have made it through childhood any other way. But tomorrow, when you repeat old behavior, you are a conscious offender. It is time to modify the workaholic, the isolationist, the perfectionist, the need to always be late, right, best, first or last.

The Zen master says:

To live consciously is like being offered a second life, new perspectives, new scope, creativity, humility. Being ordinary is a more spiritual path. The more you know about yourself, the more you will know about others. Begin a life-long love affair with your Self.

The Lightning Bolt

(Sylvia, age 27)

Sylvia, twice married, now separated, described a tremendous feeling of anxiety. Unable to control her need to bolt, she had a habit of fleeing from close relationships. She was afraid she was incapable of maintaining any intimate connection.

Sylvia: The feeling I get grips my chest and tightens my throat. I feel like a lightning bolt. I'm terrified I'll explode if I don't leave.

Guide: Become the lightning bolt. Describe your powers.

Sylvia: I am not so big but tremendously compact and intense.

Guide: What might you do if you could direct that power in a creative way?

Sylvia: I am afraid of it. It could destroy me. It is overwhelming.

Guide: Can you relax your body totally? [*She sinks into a mass of pillows.*] Take the lightning bolt out into space, whatever it requires for safety. Make a safe theater in which to experience that power, and describe what is happening. Remember, you are in

control. You can stop and start at will; you can put the whole scene in slow motion if you feel it getting out of hand.

Sylvia: Wow, I took it way out into outer space, and it didn't seem to want to go off. It started to spin into a wild dance. It felt great!

Guide: What felt great?

Sylvia: Having all that space to use freely. I didn't need to explode.

Guide: How old is the lightning bolt?

Sylvia: Four years old. I see a small girl in the kitchen with a knife in her hand.

Guide: What do you know about her?

Sylvia: I know she is hysterical. She is trying to defend her father. Her mother is screaming for her to get out of the way. Her father is drunk and abusive. She holds her parents at bay with the knife. It terrifies them and she is terrified to be that powerful.

Guide: Sounds like a child who has deep feelings.

Sylvia: I didn't realize a four-year-old could have such deep feelings for her father. I didn't understand what my mother was doing to keep me from his love. She served me to him like a ping-pong ball that he slapped away. Then she would control me and direct me so it was us against him.

Guide: When you feel ready, allow your grown-up self to step into that scene and ask the child what she needs.

Sylvia: She needs to help her father. She loves him so much, but her mother misrepresents her to him. Mother tells on her, which is making Father hate her, so he becomes critical. Then her mother can pretend to be her ally.

Guide: Ask her what she wants from you, now that you are there to help.

Sylvia: She wants to put down the knife, but she can't.

Guide: What will allow her to put down the knife?

Sylvia: They'd have to make more space for her, stand back, give her room to be herself.

Guide: See that happening now.

Sylvia: That's better. They both moved back. She can put down the knife.

Guide: Just keep asking her what she wants.

Sylvia *[as child]*: Don't hug me! She doesn't want to be touched. She doesn't trust me yet. *[Sylvia waits in silence.]* But maybe she'd sit in my lap if I don't hold her too tight.

Guide: Try that. Follow the child's integrity.

Sylvia: Yes, I can hold her loosely in my lap. She's settling in.

Guide: How does that feel?

Sylvia: It's so simple I can hardly believe it. She is so compatible, not at all her angry self.

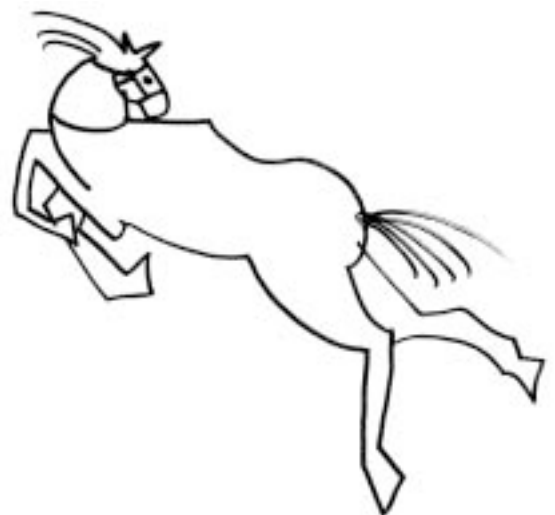
Guide: Perhaps she was never given a chance to be herself.

Sylvia: That's right. Amazing, so agreeable!

Guide: Next time you feel cramped and need to bolt, what do you need to do?

Sylvia: Give myself space. Be gentle.

Notes: *It is very frightening for a child to experience power over her parents. The power of the knife shocked the child Sylvia as it frightened and controlled her parents. This experience left her with a sense of power she was afraid of. The same thing happens when a boy holds a gun and people are paralyzed before him; he is shocked that he has that much power over adults.*



Making Things Wrong: A Survival Strategy

Some people are caught up in the habit of not letting anything be right. People who do this discover they can control everyone around them by keeping them hopping, serving, trying harder, and apologizing. If nothing is ever right, it is like chasing the carrot designed to stay just out of reach. It is a weak person's power strategy. If you can bust the code, you will find it has little to do with rightness and a lot to do with insecurity and the need for power. Some marriages are based on this game, for it is a strategy that takes two to play. It is infuriating to witness, especially when the one who wants to please is blind to the wiles of the criticizer, the perfectionist.

People often unconsciously give you the key to their issue in the first conversation. Look for the metaphor. "When there is a big Mack truck coming down the road, baby, I'll be right in front of it," Carl said with authority. "It's the story of my life." The victim stance is a popular life position and a common survival strategy. It guarantees negative attention, courts advice, and attracts "helpers." Not only is Carl the victim, he is also the Mack truck, a hit-and-run driver in relationships; it works both ways. He has just done to you what was done to him, and he probably feels quite innocent.

Negative attention was Carl's childhood expectation. He is proud of being "in the wrong place at the wrong time," and he habitually creates the wrong place. As a survival strategy, this has worked for over fifty years, keeping his marriages short and affairs brief. He "prefers living alone anyway," he says. "I'd rather be the victimizer than the victim."

Behavior addicts who prefer to stay in their patterns are impossible to help. Readiness for change usually comes out of desperation, illness, divorce, or depression. And self-disgust may speed it up.

Making Things Right: Taking Responsibility for Satisfaction

At a conference for the Association of Humanistic Psychotherapists, we were learning how to take responsibility for *getting things right, just the way we wanted it*. We were asked to focus on a feeling, some non-threatening small act we could ask a partner to do to our hand or face that would feel perfect. We closed our eyes in order to imagine what it might be that we'd enjoy to satisfaction.

I remembered a slap in the face my father had given me when I was eleven. I could still feel it smarting. It brought tears to my eyes as I relived the scene. "I shall never forget. It was the summer my father divorced us and married a lady we didn't like. We had to spend all of July with Father, even though his new wife resented us. One day, I took an apple from her fridge, as I was allowed to at home. When the cook complained, our stepmother scolded me for talking back. When my father came home from work, his new wife said I'd stolen the apple and sassed the cook, and done it deliberately to upset her dinner plans. Without checking out the truth, Father slapped my face. He had never, never used violence against any of his children, so I was shocked. That slap is still there thirty-five years later."

My partner, taking the role of my father, smoothed that slap away with three gentle fingers, saying, "I'm sorry I didn't take the time to ask you for your side of the story. I was torn between my love for you and the respect my new wife expected. I should have taken you aside and talked it over, explained that her house had different rules." He smoothed the sting away, and instantly tears began to flow. The feeling of forgiveness swelled in my heart as the insult was corrected. "Please forgive me," he said in the name of my father.

I said, "That's OK, Daddy. I understand now you were forced to defend your new wife. You had to side with her. I know how difficult your marriage was, how trapped you became in her jealousy and drinking. I understand now that you had to choose between her and your visiting children; she had to come first. But that insult lasted a long time, and I couldn't forgive you." This was such a powerful healing that I wrote it down and showed it to my father all these many years later. He was shocked and very apologetic. By satisfying this old hurt and getting it right, I could finally let go of it.

I have witnessed this kind of resolution with numerous clients. As they complete unfinished business, as they clear up old wrongs, replace omissions, new energy is released. Some deep healing takes place. It may appear self-indulgent to tend to petty childhood hurts in a world so busy with important things, but hurts don't melt with maturity, and resolution heals.



CHAPTER 10

Children Empowering Themselves



I knew that dream re-staging would work as well with children as it does with adults. Having published a number of books for children, I thought that writing a book on nightmares would be a good way to explore this process. Several private schools were interested in a pilot program, and over the course of two winters, we invited about 200 children, ages five through thirteen, to attend my workshops where we would focus on dealing with nightmares. I used the same basic approach as I do with adults, except that, because children are natural, spontaneous artists, they preferred to draw their dreams onto the Paper Stage.

When the dream has been captured on paper, I reminded them, it can no longer harm you. The next step is to help the child feel safe enough to reenter the scene in order to confront the enemy, ask why it came, and negotiate with it. If the child does not feel safe enough, the guide can help find a way to create protection by drawing in helpers or tools (a shield, a cage, or a telephone may help) that shift the victim into a power position. Nightmare sufferers are often in a victimized position and usually need permission to defend themselves.

Drawing the picture helps the child step outside of the victim role and become the negotiator, the director, the problem solver. We give the images in the drawing a chance to speak, and after the child has heard all the points of view, it is clearer what needs to happen to create a solution. The situation in the drawing begins to move.

These rehearsals helped the kids experience the cause and effect of their actions and beliefs. The results were so satisfying and empowering that the children brought in their school problems to solve as well as their nightmares. We'd hit upon a visual method for negotiating resolution, a method so simple it requires no specialized training or equipment. You do not need a degree in child psychiatry or dream therapy—just paper, colored pens, patience, an open mind, and a sympathetic ear.

The children's dialogues and drawings in this chapter and throughout the book are offered with gratitude to the children who taught me to have tremendous respect for their honesty, intelligence, and creative originality. And to remind adults that children, new as they are to this life, do possess innate integrity and the knowledge of what's right for them. When given permission to trust themselves, given their own organic timing and a sympathetic ear, they will find their own best answers.

The Tractor and the Baby Tree

(Mindy, age 5)

Mindy: I dreamed that a big tractor came right by, and ran right over the baby tree. It wasn't very nice.



Guide: Your drawing is very clear. If you Close your eyes can you let the tree and the tractor speak. What do they say?

Mindy: The tree says, "Why did you do that? I don't like you for knocking me down. I am planted here I can't move out of your way. You should look out where your going." The tractor says, "I'm more important than a baby tree. You're in my way. I've got work to do. I didn't ask you to be planted there."

Guide: How does that make you feel? *[Mindy cries.]* Can you think of a way to help the little tree?

Mindy: Well.... *[long pause with eyes closed]* some trees have fences around them. I could draw a little house around the baby tree until it gets a stronger trunk. If I make a glass roof, it can get light. The tractor won't run over a house. *[She draws a house around the tree.]*

Guide: Close your eyes and see how that is working out.

Mindy: *[Closes eyes, long silence.]* He doesn't run into the house. The tree says, "Hmm. Maybe when I get bigger I can give the tractor some shade so he can rest. and we'll make friends."

Guide: How do you feel now?

Mindy: I'm not so scared of him anymore. But sometimes I feel just like that little tree.

Guide: Can you tell that to the tractor or to someone else, the next time you feel run over? Do you think there is a message for you in this dream?

Mindy: I have feelings, too?



Guide: Are you brave enough to say that next time you feel run over? You could use the tree's message as a signal to speak up and remind people that you have feelings, too.

Notes: We know that many kids come into the world unplanned, unwanted, and sometimes even cursed and blamed. When welcome is withheld throughout pregnancy and even long into childhood, don't think for a minute that children are ignorant of these feelings, even if they are unexpressed. I am convinced that many of us carry a body memory of early rejection from the muscles in the womb and the sound of angry voices images such as Mindy found in her dream are hidden in therapeutic work.

Metaphoric feelings are important to listen to. feelings are real! Molly knows a tree in the tractor's path is not the trees fault. We can't change the circumstances of our life position but we can learn to defend our right to be here. The child who is not helped in this is forced to bend or sacrifice in ways that can crush self-worth. Symbolically healing or defending such a picture empowers the child. It is a rehearsal of self-defense, that confirms her right to negotiate.



Violence and Negotiation

Violence is common in dreams. Dreams are about the only place you can get away with outrageous acts. We often do things in dreams that would put us in jail in waking life. When re-staging nightmares, killing the monster may be the child's first instinct. Boys particularly love to spear and bloody the wretched creature. Sometimes it feels great to kill the monster, or Hitler, or whoever the enemy may be, but usually killing troubles our conscience afterwards. Killing scares us because it is so final. It is not comfortable for children to have full power. Besides, the problem with killing dream monsters is that they often return another night in retaliation, more terrible than before. When you ask children if they think killing is the best solution, they will usually rethink the problem. Generally they feel better about outsmarting the monster, controlling it, restraining it, or negotiating with it.



Since the monsters in our dreams often reflect negative parts of ourselves, if we kill them, we kill the part of our Self they represent. If we are to learn to live with our own inner violence, anger, and hurt feelings, let us start by befriending our monsters. Talk to your monsters, the monster may offer a new insight. Our enemies always have the most to tell us about ourselves. We will never get the monster's message or understand why the dream sent this kind of messenger.

Dreams of violence are usually telling us about our emotions...*that we feel angry enough to kill*. In ancient times, killing would have made us heroes. Killing was thought to be brave and manly. But we know now that war no longer works. Communication has shrunk our planet so that one person's actions can have global consequences. Our only hope is that all the peoples of the earth will learn to talk to one another before we destroy our common resources. I tell children, "You who will be tomorrow's leaders need to learn new and better ways to keep peace. You can start by listening to the arguments that go on inside yourself. Learn to exercise peacemaking skills in your body, starting with your nightmares."

Encourage the child to listen to the monster's point of view, the monster almost always becomes more human. When Everett dared to confront the Ice Cream Shooting Machine (page 14), upon hearing its point of view, the machine became quite reasonable. The dreamer may recognize a parent's complaints. The monster is often a mirror of our own unacceptable emotions we have had to repress.

The art of negotiation and persuasion are skills we rarely teach at home or in school. Children are encouraged to see parents and other adults as absolute authorities who don't always know best. Isn't it time to teach our children the art of negotiation, Not all dreams can be approached from this pacifist standpoint, but practicing the art of negotiation is a good place to start.

The Exploded Teacher

(Kerry, age 10)

Kerry: This guy was whipping me. He stole a car. The car hit a rock and exploded. He died. I was scared because this guy was really Rob, my gym teacher. He deserved something for whipping me and I was good and mad at him. In fact, I hate his guts. But a dream like this really scares me because he was killed. I saw him explode. It was like it really happened, like I *made* it happen.

Guide: He was whipping you?

Kerry: Yeah, 'cause he likes to. He's like a sergeant. I'll grab his whip out of his hand and break it in half. *[He draws the broken whip.]*

Guide: What kind of help do you need? How will you make it less scary?

Kerry: I'm going to get the principal! He's big and he had a grudge on Rob anyway.

Guide: Good. Draw in the principal and ask what he thinks.



Kerry [as Principal]: I want to talk to Rob. Rob, you're fired!
So he drives away in his car...and explodes.



Guide: How does that make you feel?

Kerry: Well, it got rid of him!

Guide: Yes, but the way it happened in the dream scares you. Sounds like you don't want to wish death on anybody even if you are angry with them.

Kerry: That's true, but it's what happened in the dream. I didn't make it up! ...Or did I? It felt real in the dream. Did I make the dream?

Guide: The dream shows you that you feel angry enough to kill or explode Rob. It's easy to kill in dreams, but if it bothers you afterwards, maybe you can try another way. It sounds like you know something about explosions.

Kerry: Yeah. I explode easily like my Dad when I'm mad. And I'd explode Rob too if I could.

Guide: How does this thought make you feel?

Kerry: Guilty

Guide: What would make you feel better about Rob?

Kerry: Well, let's see. We don't need to kill him, just whip him back. [Draws Rob being whipped.] That's Rob crying from the whipping. OK, that gets rid of him. But I still can't get that explosion out of my head.

Guide: That gets rid of Rob, but not the problem of exploding him. What else could you do with your anger, so it won't hurt you nor kill him? Try another way to satisfy your feelings.

Kerry: Get whipped by the army.

Guide: You want the army to punish him?

Kerry: Yeah, send him to boot training. Let the sergeant whip him. [Closes his eyes and slams his arms around.]

Guide: What happened?

Kerry: Yes, the army whipped him good! *Wham, bam, slam!*

Guide: How did that feel?

Kerry: Better. Maybe his parents used to whip him when he was a kid. Maybe I could go back and tell his parents that whipping made him mean and they shouldn't whip kids.

Guide: Try that.

Kerry: OK, I'm back a couple of years. OK. [Closes his eyes, allows the picture to materialize, then opens his eyes.] Yes, they said they did whip him. Now they say they're sorry; they won't do it again, so now he can stop whipping other kids.

Guide: So you don't need to destroy him? You need to understand him?

Kerry: I guess it will feel better in the end if I can understand him.

Guide: Does that help you get the explosion out of your mind?

Kerry: Yeah, I guess it would feel better to understand him and undo the explosion.

Notes: *Haven't we all been shocked at the violence of our own rage at one time or another? We scare ourselves sometimes, and the picture stays in our mind and bothers our conscience. Killing the enemy cuts off any chance of discovering the source or cure for our anger, and prevents resolution of the dream. I always suggest trying other ways to satisfy anger, but it's important to spend the anger first, in a safe way that does not hurt one's self nor violate another person. Maybe making a series of drawings of violence might help, or you can beat the devil out of a mattress with a stick, or chop wood, or close your eyes and take your tantrum out into space and let it explode where it will do no harm. When the rage is spent, then look for alternative methods of satisfaction. It will feel better.*

Learning from Fear

Fear can save your life. It is part of the body's normal defense mechanism, telling the body it needs to protect itself from real, anticipated, or imaginary danger. Fear is partly instinctive, but it is also a learned response. The physiological reactions associated with fear are rapid heart beat, loss of breath, paralysis, or muscle tension as the body prepares for fight or flight. So when a child has a nightmare, you can assume it will take a little time just for the body to resume its normal functioning. Patience and comforting are the best help. This is not the time for punishment or threats; don't say there is nothing to be afraid of, and don't call the child a scaredy-cat or a coward. Consider fear simply as a good guide. Discuss the fear with the child and help them deal with. Don't forget, you were there once, too small to defend yourself, too insignificant to count in the world of powerful human law-making giants.

As adults, we are generally able to get over our fears, learn to live with them, or at least hide from them. Many adults fear the dark, fear abandonment, fear rejection. As maturity and experience bring a better understanding of the environment and our powers and right to defend ourselves, many fears tend to diminish. But the fears of small children threaten their very existence, and can render them totally helpless because they are so dependent. Very young children may not even understand that they have dreamed. For them, there is no distinction

between a dream image and reality. No amount of searching the bedroom will make them feel safe enough to go back to sleep. After all, what's going to prevent the boogeyman from coming back again? Lights usually help, as will the presence of an adult.

Older children can better differentiate between dream and reality. On the other hand, as their fears grow more sophisticated, they also become more difficult to express and to deal with. What solution is there for a child whose parents abuse them, or whose parents are involved in bitter arguments? Fear of global nuclear warfare is very common in older children, as are fears of death, violence, and racial injustice. The least we can do is acknowledge the child's awareness and try to address these concerns. School and family discussion groups help.

I am constantly amazed by the complexity of feelings expressed by children in their dreams. This should remind us that children are total *people* in their own right, no matter how small and inarticulate, no matter how adaptable and willing they are to dismiss their fears and feelings in order to please adults or keep their place in school and family.

It is my belief that if we have received a dream or nightmare we would do well to process the feeling which the dream describes. Sometimes it is hard for a child even to dare to draw a terrible dream or to think about it again, but if a dream has that kind of impact, the only way to dislodge it is to talk about it.

It is helpful to point out that one can separate the strong part of the Self from the scared part. This is a new concept for most children. It establishes the idea that even when you are scared, you have strength to call upon. We rescue the stuck part by empowering the strong part. The scared Self can also be helped by creating protection such as a shield or a way to communicate without risk of harm. In "Trapped in the World," (page 30) Thad used an imaginary telephone to call the monster long distance. In "The Ice Cream Shooting Machine," (page 37), Everett chose an invisible shield to allow him to get close enough to his attacker to talk to it. The kind of protection the child chooses will indicate the kind of help they need in waking life.

Because most of us have had little success coping with our own nightmares, we often feel impotent when we try to help our children. Not knowing what to do is a feeling most teachers and parents prefer to avoid or deny. I hope the stories in this book will make you feel more comfortable in not knowing the solutions to your children's nightmares; it is not your responsibility to know. All you are called upon to do is to listen and provide the tools, and join your children in the spirit of the explorer. Answers have to come in a way that the child can use them; children will recognize solutions that suit their readiness and their skills of the moment, and will reject those that don't.

The Sister-Napper

(Albert, age 12)

Albert: I heard footsteps and the rattling of chains, then this monster burst through the wall and grabbed my sister. I was so scared, I froze.



Guide: You were so scared you froze. If you could have moved, what would you have done?

Albert: I'd have taken a boat anchor and hooked it into his back like this. [Albert draws an anchor in the giant's back.]

Guide: What is your sister saying?

Albert: "Help! I feel helpless. The man is a giant."

Guide: If you could get help, what would you do?

Albert: Even though my sister is a nuisance most of the time, I don't want to see her killed. She thinks I can save her, but there is nothing I can do. Look, I'm an ant, and he's got her.



Guide: If you could talk to the giant, what would you say?

Albert: I'd advise him to scare her a little, but not to scare me.

Guide: What happens when your sister is a little scared?

Albert: I like it when she is a little scared. She needs me to defend her, and that makes me feel grown up. But not when big monsters are around. Then I can't handle it.

Guide: How does it feel when you can't handle it?

Albert: It makes me feel very small. I hate to feel like an ant. [Redraws the giant too small to frighten him, but still big enough to scare his sister a little.] He said he'd just scare her a little bit from now on.

Notes: Children are often frightened by their own feelings of fear, paralysis and powerlessness, especially when they think someone is depending on them to defend or save them. This dream tells the truth. If we know the threat isn't real, we can all enjoy playing the hero, but if a real giant kidnapped our sister, we'd be too scared to move. When the dreamer is unable to move, it helps to ask what they would do if they could move. These as-if scenarios are very useful. They trick a person into action despite their paralysis.

Death Comes in my Room

(Todd, age 12)

Todd: This is a story of Death. He comes to my room often. He's scary and black with red eyes. It's hard to draw Death as scary as he really is in my dream. He bothers me almost every night. It started when I was six years old.

Guide: What do you know about death?

Todd: Lots of things died in my room: guinea pigs and gerbils. And my little brother almost died when he turned blue and choked on a carrot.



Guide: Would you draw that story so we can see it? *[Draws his fourteen-year-old brother reading to him and his four-year-old brother in bed. His little brother's face is blue.]*

Todd: We noticed he wasn't talking. He looked funny. I ran for help.

Guide: Would you draw what happened next?

Todd: While I was gone to get Mom, my big brother did the Heimlich maneuver on him and he began to breathe. *[Draws the Heimlich maneuver.]*



Guide: Draw what happened next.

Todd: My brother got headlines in the newspaper. *[Todd draws the headlines.]*

Guide: How did it feel to have your brother get all the attention?

Todd: Well, he saved his life.

Guide: What do you think that six-year-old Todd in your dream deserves? Close your eyes and ask him what he wants.

Todd: He says he wants some attention.

Guide: You mean he deserves some credit for helping to save his brother's life?

Todd: A little. He was the one who noticed and ran to get Mom.

Guide: Draw the little six-year-old Self getting what he deserves. Can you close your eyes and see that scene?

Todd: Uh huh. He might get a hug from Mom. Better yet, my father is saying, "You both deserve credit for saving your little brother's life."

Guide: Good. How does that feel? Ask the six-year-old Todd if that's enough to get Death to stop visiting you at night.

Todd: Not really.

Guide: Close your eyes and see what else he needs

Todd: He needs a little more attention.

Guide: Can you give him that now? Give it a try. He was left out of the drama and deserved a place in it. He was the first to see the emergency, he ran for help. Six is very young to have such a close visit from death. Many people don't experience that until much later in life. See if you can draw yourself comforting that scared six-year-old and satisfy his needs. Give him the attention he deserves so he can grow up without death in his room. You can tell Death that you have learned to respect him, but you don't need him to visit you any more.

When I came back to see Todd, he had several discarded drawings of a stiff embrace. The drawing he kept was one of two heads together. He was too embarrassed to hug himself, but he did tell himself he'd done a good job for a six-year-old.



Notes: Children know what is just. It is very satisfying for a child to practice the words of self-defense that justifies or validates his part of the story.

Death in dreams is sometimes a foretelling or a warning, but sometimes it simply alerts us to the fact that we can die and endings are inevitable. Death can also imply new beginnings, or suggest a rite of passage.

Death encounters in childhood are very sobering. Few of us prepare our children at all. We think if we protect them from it they will be spared. In Italy, my son's first-grade reader had many stories about the death of grandparents, babies, other relatives, and animals dying. I was shocked at first, but now I think it wiser than our avoidance of the subject. It helps to talk about death before it confronts us, especially so close to home.

In my work with children I often use guided imagery, especially when we need wisdom from a higher source. Wisdom and good counsel often come to us in the form of an animal. The summer that Todd was with me, we'd end the class with a thought to grow on. I would ask the group to allow wisdom to take any form it wished and give them a message for the day. The group had been talking about death dreams. Todd's wisdom came in the form of a big Clydesdale horse that showed him how to stand and dare to be bold and strong. On another day, his wisdom came to him in the form of a red fox who said not to be so fearful and serious- to run, to play, to dare to love life. Are we not our own best guides!

Guiding Children

If you are going to play the part of the guide for a child, do not diminish their fear. Don't presume to understand the situation. You are simply a follower who asks simple questions like: *What do you suppose the monster wants? If you could talk to it, what would you say? What would he/she/it say? How will you get the frightened Self to feel safe enough to protect itself?* You can commiserate, suggest new angles, and accompany the dreamer, but let the dreamer find their own answers. Encourage them to try several possible solutions.

Children have their own integrity and find their own answers according to their own readiness. As guide, encourage autonomy so the child learns to empower themselves at whatever level they can handle. The key to arriving at a solution is to respect the child's concept of what comes next. Think of it like a game of pick-up sticks: what stick can you dislodge next without disturbing the pile? The guide patiently follows the child's sequential steps towards the solution. Don't mistake detours and obstacles as resistance; you may be asking the wrong question or going in the wrong direction.

When guiding, I try to call upon my higher wisdom in order to gain an overview that is larger and fairer than my personal limitations and projections. Ideally I am not so much a teacher, but merely a vehicle free of ego that lets the spirit of wisdom speak. This often frees me of the urge to rescue the dreamer or control their process. I try to release my investment in change and resolution; some people need to stay stuck a little longer. Despite my best intentions, this doesn't always work. Rereading the dialogues in this book, I recognize how I have often used leading questions, indicating that I had my own idea of where things should go. Maybe you can remember to check yourself by observing my mistakes.

The impact of Thad's dream, "Trapped in the World," (page 30) hit me very hard; I feared I'd met the child who spoke for all of us who sit with the lighted fuse of world destruction deep in our hearts. His picture illustrated the despair I feel when I let the nuclear threat rise up in me. As guide, though, it was important for me not to express my feelings or to project my own interpretations, and so I restricted myself to the routine questions. I asked him what he needed for the boy in this picture. He said, "I need a place to hide so I can think." Since he could handle that need, I continued to stick to my questions: "Where will you hide so you can think?" And he created a box, and explained that the confusion was only in a certain place, not worldwide, as I had thought.

Most children are very literal. The best approach is to work with the imagery provided by the dream, without disturbing the underlying symbolism unless the child makes the connection. As you help the child work through a dream, associations may be made with their waking life, like the robot in Timmy's dream that

sounded like his father. You may wonder what trouble this caused when Timmy got home from the dream workshop. Unmasking the metaphor is fine when it's spontaneous, but not when it's driven by the guide's curiosity or desire to help.

The aim is not to analyze the child, the dream, or the imagery, but rather to approach the dream story as a problem to be resolved in a way that satisfies the dreamer. The aim is to alter behavior that keeps us stuck. The manifest content of a dream is material enough to start with.

SIDEBAR

Useful Questions for Guiding Children

- *How do you feel when you look at this dream picture?*
- *How can you make yourself feel safe enough to reenter this scary scene?*
- *If it's too scary, try drawing yourself outside the picture.*
- *Close your eyes and let the monster draw itself.*
- *What will you do to help the Self that is in the nightmare?*
- *Close your eyes and see yourself getting help. What do you see?*
- *Create some helpers to give you courage. Draw them in.*
- *Call upon a specialist who knows about these things.*
- *Ask the monster what it wants from you.*
- *If you can't control or tame something, what else could you do?*
- *If it could speak, what would it say? (Everything has a point of view.)*
- *If you had some power, what would you suggest?*
- *What could you do if you weren't so frightened you woke up?*
- *If there was a fair solution, what would it be?*
- *Then what? ... Then what? ... Then what?*

Questions like these keep the child moving toward a solution. Any small change will dislodge the impact of terror a bit. The guide reinforces that the dreamer is in charge.

A Note to Parents and Caretakers

A certain amount of strain is built into every parent-child relationship. Remember that you, the parent, caretaker, or teacher, are very likely part of the child's problem. We all have our own biases, convictions, and mindsets, which we are apt to pass on to the next generation, regardless of whether they are right or wrong for someone else. Something we said or did without realizing it may have given birth to the monster in our child's dream. But we can't let this deter us from trying to help our children. Your willingness to work with the child will help you modify your power over them. You will be amazed at what children can teach you if you are open to learning from them.

If you are a part of the problem that brought on the nightmare, it may be impossible for the child to work through the dream with you. If the child seems uncomfortable telling you about the dream, don't press it. Encourage them to discuss it with someone else. Children are often so locked into fidelity that they cannot betray their negative feelings about their parents for fear of rejection or guilt. (Punishment for me in childhood was when my mother turned her back and left the room in silent disappointment at something I had done or said. I was totally controlled by that "harmless" gesture. It was perhaps more devastating than being whipped. Who knows?)

Empathy can be confusing; close bonds with parents often make it difficult for a child to tell whose feelings they are feeling. When parental fears are added to the children's fears, it becomes that much more difficult for them to find the courage to try new things. On the other hand, there is power in the act of keeping parents worried; it is sometimes a child's only way to get attention (a power that is very hard to give up).

Sometimes parents use their children to help them face their own fears and loneliness. This creates a bond full of guilt that is very hard to break free of. The over-possessed kid may have to move halfway round the world to preserve their own identity. If you're using dream work to control or possess your child, beware. You will soon lose your child's trust. Better to find them outside help. The best advice I can offer to parents in this situation is, "set your children free!" Don't make your children too special and don't try to live through them. If you are pressing the child to grow, change, shine, or realize your dreams, turn that focus around; change yourself, shine yourself, become the thing you wanted to become.

The Toilet Paper Wizard

(Juliet, age 5)



Juliet: I was walking in a cave with my father. I walked until I came to the end of the tunnel. I saw a light and a lake and then I saw a stair. I walked up and up until I saw a giant roll of toilet paper. I tried to pull it down. The more I pulled, the more it pulled me up. My father called me back, but I said, "No. You come up here. There is a giant roll of toilet paper and it's pulling me up." Father said, "OK, I'll come and pull it down," but he too got pulled up. Then I woke up.

Guide: How did this dream make you feel?

Juliet: It felt scary to be alone in that cave with my father being pulled by the toilet paper roll.

Guide: What would have made you feel safer?

Juliet: If we'd been with someone who knew the way, someone who could talk with people.

Guide: What would that someone say?

Juliet: I'd find a creature, a weird creature I'd never seen before, a wizard who knew the place. He'd show me the way out.

Guide: You want to get out. What does your father say?

Juliet: I don't know what my father says. He doesn't talk.

Guide: Close your eyes and go back into the tunnel. What do you see?

Juliet: I see my father. He is always walking slowly. He walks behind me. He goes on down the tunnel.

Guide: Then what?

Juliet: There is a scary black bat with yellow eyes. We're afraid of him.

Guide: What happens next?

Juliet: The toilet paper keeps pulling me up. It won't let me down.

Guide: It seems to have a lot of power over you. What would you like to say or do to it?

Juliet: I could try to make it smaller.

Guide: Try that.

Juliet: It just got larger and stronger, like a mad scientist was doing strange things. I couldn't pull it apart. It won't rip. It looks like ordinary toilet paper, but it isn't.

Guide: Close your eyes and see what you need to do next.

Juliet: I could go back into the cave, get a torch, and burn it, if my father would let me.

Guide: Try that.

Juliet: My father won't let me.

Guide: Why not?

Juliet: He says there is something back in the dark cave that will get me.

Guide: Can you think of another way?

Juliet: I might go up the stairs, but there might be something up there, too, that would get me.

Guide: What do you need?

Juliet: I need some light...but it still pulls me up, even when it's lighter and lighter up there.

Guide: Try another solution.

Juliet: Maybe I could let go.

Guide: Try that.

Juliet: But I fell back.

Guide: Could you make something soft to land on?

Juliet: My father could catch me, but now he won't go down again, so we have to follow the toilet paper into the dark part.

Guide: Follow the toilet paper. Where does it end?

Juliet: I follow and follow.... It takes me all over the place in the dark. I can't see where it wants to take me.

Guide: Where do you want it to take you?

Juliet: To the end, where the light gets brighter. But more and more rolls of paper are pushing me back into the tunnel.

Guide: What would help? Close your eyes and see yourself getting to the light.

Juliet: I need something to cut through it. I can't find anything. All I can think to do now is talk to the King of the Toilet.

Guide: Try that.

Juliet: At the end of the tube I see red eyes and a mouth.

Guide: Can you talk to it?

Juliet: It says to stop bothering it. It wants to see what is in my pocket. All I found was a yo-yo and a rubber ball. In my back pocket I had five dollars and two cents. It says I wouldn't know where to go if I got past it.

Guide: Say that last part again. *You wouldn't know where to go if you passed it?*

Juliet: That's what it said.

Guide: It might be a new sort of freedom if the toilet paper let you go by. You might be in charge of yourself. You wouldn't need your father to walk you to the toilet.

Juliet: I'm afraid because I don't know what's in the dark. If I get past it, it might be a trap. Something inside me says, "No, you might get caught."

Guide: Can you create a guide? You know you can always create a guide when no one is around to help.

Juliet: OK. I've got my guide now. My guide took me back to see what is there in the cave. We saw a big green monster. My guide asks him if we can go by. The monster answers with a funny language I don't understand.

Guide: Ask the guide what you want to know.

Juliet: I'd like to know it won't come after me if I go past it. My guide says the monster should let me go by, so he let me go by. Now he is behind me instead of in front of me.

Guide: How does that feel?

Juliet: Now I don't know what is in front of me.

Guide: What would help?

Juliet: I'd like to rip it off now.

Guide: Try that.

Juliet: I did try, but I can't see what is in front of me because the toilet paper roll is very big. It keeps everything away. It wouldn't be safe to make it smaller. It's used to being in front. If it's smaller, it won't protect me.

Guide: It protects you from what?

Juliet: It has met what's in front and I never have.

Guide: Do you need that roll of toilet paper to hide behind?

Juliet: I guess so. It is scarier without it.

Guide: Ask how long before you'll get the courage to let it stop protecting you.

Juliet: Soon, but not now. First I have to go back home. Then I will come back another day.

Guide: Maybe you can ask your dad to give you a flashlight so you can take yourself to the toilet at night and see what's in front of you in the dark.

Notes: *This dialogue was very strange indeed, with many starts and stops. It ended with Juliet saying she had to go home and come back another day, as if she was not yet ready to take the next step toward a solution. It seemed logical to me that Juliet cut or break the paper to free herself, but Juliet found it was there to protect her.*

What was this nightmare about? Juliet's fear of getting to the toilet in the dark? Or a father who can't communicate or protect her? All I know is what Juliet told me later: "After telling this dream to my dad, he bought me a flashlight so I could pick myself up at night and light my way to the toilet by myself. Then the toilet paper let go of me, and I wasn't so scared as I thought. I felt brave to get rid of the Toilet Paper Wizard."

CHAPTER 11

The Price of Change

The older we get, the more socialized we become, and the harder it is to contemplate change. We get stuck in *other-hood* (*student-hood*, *parent-hood*) and put *Self-hood* on hold indefinitely. We become polarized by extremes. Sooner or later, we feel driven to choose between being who our families, lovers, friends and bosses expect us to be and our own authentic selves. Ask yourself: am I living *my* life, or someone else's vision of it? How can I balance this polarized position? How can I satisfy my Self and pacify the socialized conscience?

Fritz Perls, the father of Gestalt therapy, said, "People have to grow by frustration. Otherwise they have no incentive to develop their own means and ways of coping with the world." One day, with luck, you hit bottom or you wake up, you read a self-help book, you're angry, frustrated, and rebellious enough to consider change at any cost.

Change can occur only when we are ready to drop our childhood strategies and seek out what we need in a more conscious and adult fashion. The price of change is responsibility and the loss of innocence. Once we have acknowledged our repeating patterns, we can never again pretend to be innocent bystanders. We are now the conscious architects of our lives.

Autonomy is the goal of change. The most therapeutic and healing steps are the ones that teach you to hold your own hand, restoring self-trust and creativity. It is a delicate operation to reclaim the lost Self, especially when it was illegitimate or unwanted at birth. "How will I know I'm being myself?" a client asked.

Lots of people know they had the ability to be creative once, but it was thwarted, punished, crippled, crushed, or detoured. It has faded into some sad corner of their being, where it festers like a deprived child. I believe everyone has a right to their originality, but it's up to you to claim this right. Don't wait for outside permission. Don't settle for living vicariously through your mate, friends, or children; dare to find it in yourself.

Many people think they are lacking a quality they desire, like lovability, creativity, or Self-confidence. But if you can recognize it in another person, then the seed must exist inside of you; you just need to nourish it for it to grow. One way to do this is to borrow this quality from wherever you see it and act *as though* it was your own. You can actually begin to exercise it as your "possible Self." Think of it simply as a mislaid permission, an

un-nourished potential, and the borrowed skill becomes your own.

Change is difficult. How can we make it easier? Each of us possesses all the resources we need; the problem is how to access the resources. To make it easier, split an obstacle in half; begin with the little parts. The first step is readiness. Some people need to stay stuck long enough to rehearse and trust alternative options. It is best to rehearse small increments of change in slow motion. (I don't advocate "cold-turkey." You will shock your friends and bewilder your boss.) Sometimes staying stuck feels more comfortable than being cured because of the new responsibility and expectations. Before you can discard a protective handicap, you need to armor the emerging new Self with dependable defenses and boundaries. The body and mind will move towards health if trust and readiness have time to develop.

*"Assume
responsibility for uniting
the old Self with the
possible Self."*

Fat as a Survival Strategy

(Jerry, age 28)

Jerry, a 300-pound young man, came with a dream in which he lost a girlfriend to his best friend because he was too fat to run after her. Jerry said that if he had his best friend's self-confidence, he wouldn't need to be repulsively fat. But because he was insecure, his fatness protected him from the panic of being liked by a girl. I asked if he was ready to experience his inner thinness, to explore what was blocking it. He hadn't imagined a thin Self inside the fat Self, and was eager to try it out.

Guide: Close your eyes. Go inside the fat Self and peel the years back to find the thin Self inside. Don't think about it; just let it appear. However it comes to your mind, describe what you see.

Jerry: Yes, I can see a boy of thirteen, nice and thin, shy, afraid of girls but nice looking.



Guide: Ask the boy what he would need to allow himself to grow up into a thin young man in his late twenties.

Jerry: Oh, he'd need a lot of help. Too much help.

Guide: Tell him we have the time and interest to give him all the help he needs, if he will simply lay out a plan for us to follow. And I will take notes.

Jerry listed all the things the boy needed. It was a long list, starting with substitute parents who were more compassionate, more articulate, more successful at relating than his parents had been. The whole subject of sexuality frightened him. He needed fatherly talks about sex, what to expect, and how to go about it. What do wet dreams mean? He thought he masturbated too much and was afraid it would make him crazy. He needed his mother's approval of his organ since he developed into a man. He needed a buffer against her fears that he could inseminate some girl at thirteen. He needed to know he was a normal and adequate human being. The list went on and on.

To act as his model and teacher he elected the friend who had been his rival in the dream. He said he would need nine years of re-parenting before he would dare to lose his protective fat.

As a trial run, with eyes closed, Jerry progressed symbolically through some of the steps his thirteen-year-old required. He imagined that nine years of good counseling had taken place. Then he said he would like to step into the thin Self and see how it felt. He opened an inner zipper and stepped out through the opening in the fat. He was so present in his inner mind that the act of climbing out made him burst into tears.

He said he couldn't stand the feeling of exposure, so he had to step back inside the fat Self. We discussed the fact that he was in control of the zipper; he could rehearse thinness according to his readiness. He said he needed more time and a guide. His thirteen-year-old agreed to take the job of guide on condition that he could go very slowly. Jerry said he would enter therapy—the dream had given him permission to consider losing weight.

The healthy part of the client becomes the therapist, and the therapist becomes the guide. This process follows the integrity of the client, and that is the only way the client can discover his own power and confidence, learn to trust his feelings, and follow them to satisfaction.

Bugness

(Abbie, age 33)

Abbie: My man has left me. He says it's because I'm an unresponsive person. He complains that I'm never spontaneous. I'm so impatient with my own incompetence and everyone else's that I feel cold and alienated towards everybody. I feel like a bug that blocks out the sun.

Guide: Become the bug. Describe "bugness."

Abbie: I protect myself by finding something big to shield me. I bring it close so it covers me. That's how I keep my presence from making tension.

Guide: Go back in time. Find what it was that caused tension as a child.

Abbie: My mother yelled at me. That made me turn off and go blank. I am a bug that can't make room in my day to conduct my life without being scorched. How can I make room for the spontaneous, responsive woman I'd like to be? I choose men that cause me to become the bug. I need *bug help*.

Guide: Ask the bug to name its assets. What does bugness do for you?

Abbie: Bugness is my way of keeping a low profile. As long as I am unattractive, it keeps me out of trouble, especially with boys. It saves me from confrontation, disguises my feelings, so no one can read me, no one can get to me.

Notes: Some people are not willing to help the alienated part of themselves any more than the parent was. (We do to our Self what was done to us.) Time is needed to create respect, until the child Self can trust the adult Self as helper. Acknowledgement and appreciation are often the beginning of change. As she was able to name the assets and see how she benefited from the pay-offs of "bugness," Abbie could congratulate her child Self for its cleverness and expertise at finding a way to survive her mother's rejection. Bugness as a survival strategy had kept her safe. Now that she understood that bugness was a form of camouflage, she needed to find a way to transform her cleverness into something more attractive and spontaneous.



Anger Before Forgiveness

There are stages to forgiving, as there are stages to healing. You cannot heal a festering wound with a band-aid; it must be opened, drained, cleaned, and sometimes stitched until it can grow together by itself. In the same way, you can't forgive before you've expressed anger. Wherever we take a shortcut, like forgiving without negotiation, the buried anger leaks through and fouls a relationship. Impatient as we may be for things in life to change, our integrity system rejects shortcuts. "Wherever I am folded, there I am a lie," says Rilke.

Some issues demand a full psychodrama performance — maybe multiple versions, and a large audience — before the anger is fully exposed and the hurt released. We are dealing here with dreams or problems that won't be silent, that won't stay under the carpet. The experience of psychodrama is a great luxury. I got rid of a pile of anger by throwing twenty-five battered metal chairs against a stone wall at The Moreno Institute. In one of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's workshops, I watched a man destroy two fat New York City telephone directories by thumping them to death with a nine-inch section of rubber hose.

I watched Zerka Moreno (wife of J.L. Moreno, the originator of Psychodrama) lead a young woman through a tantrum that had been brewing for twenty years. At the height of this protagonist's delirious explosion, as she was writhing on the floor with rage and frustration, Zerka told her to "Get up this minute, and leave the screaming part of yourself there on the floor." Without a moment's hesitation, the woman got up, and looking down at her shadow, she comforted, defended, and negotiated a resolution with her outraged child Self. The rage was a part of her, but not all of her.

With a good guide, a tornado can be released safely by letting it out in manageable bits. Using slow motion keeps the client in control of the power source. This gives the client autonomy from the very start.

SIDEBAR

Conditions for Availability

Personal readiness is the first step towards change. When we are ready, our dreams can show us where the key is hidden. The guide joins the dreamer on his path, stopping wherever the client hits an obstacle. It helps to give the child Self a voice and something in exchange for what it will be giving up. Without substitute gain, change is not lasting.

In the role of guiding, ask:

- What will change bring about, and how can you prepare for it?
- What part of the dreamer is invested in no change?
- What are the pay-offs for staying stuck?
 - What losses may be caused by change?
- What are the conditions needed to be available for change?
 - What roads are open?
 - Who holds the key to change? Who is the permission giver?
 - How will you rehearse new strategies, practice new habits?
- Consider the many ways you might sabotage yourself. Name the antidote.
- Ask yourself how you experience satisfaction, and cultivate the habit.
- Translate a problem into a metaphoric image and satisfy it.



The Goldfish

(Sandy, age 25)

Sandy: I dreamed there were three goldfish in a bowl. Then they multiplied into hundreds. It was so crowded they all beached themselves and began to die. I was horrified at the gooey mess of bodies.

Guide: How does it feel to be a gooey mess of goldfish?

Sandy: I am all icky, covered with scum. My gills are full of muck. I can't breathe. My guts are infected. My eyes are slimy.

Guide: What do you need to do to satisfy the image of these infected fish?

Sandy: Flush them down the toilet, or change their water. No, I will put them in a bigger pond. No, that is too scary. They can't live in the wild. A tank feels better, a big tank. But I'd have to wash each fish to cleanse off all that gook. It will take a long time.

Guide: How long?

Sandy: Two and a half days. Maybe forever. Maybe they don't want to live.

Guide: Ask them why not.

Sandy: Because they're all rotten inside.

Guide: Ask them what they need.

Sandy: They need to be gutted. They need new insides and new eyes.

Guide: Start with the eyes.

Sandy: They need eyes that are not distorted. But if they have clear vision, no one will pay attention to them.

Guide: It sounds like you know something about distorted vision.

Sandy: I had double vision, so my father used to sit and read with me. The defect got me lots of attention. People helped me, did things for me. Special arrangements at school, etc. Even after my brother was born, my bad eyes got me the only attention I could get. But Mother says doctors can now correct double vision. I hate to give it up. But it no longer gets people to read to me, take care of me and do things for me. Maybe I'll have to correct my vision. I'm not ready, but I'll think about it.

Notes: Sandy's distorted vision had been a very useful attention getter, but now was an obsolete survival strategy that was no longer effective. By the end of the session, she was ready to research the possibility of having her vision corrected as her mother had suggested. Being able to see normally might give her the things she now wanted as an adult.

The Baby Destroyer

(Sandra, age 23)

Sandra: I have a horrible recurring dream about babies that break apart in my hands and disintegrate. It's telling me never to have babies. For my graduate fieldwork, I'm working at a home for runaway adolescents, some of whom are pregnant. I don't want to even touch the pregnant girls, let alone their babies. I feel I have a very destructive power, and I am frightened of my ability to destroy an innocent creature.

Guide: How old are you inside that feeling?

Sandra: Adolescent maybe, or maybe nine.

Guide: What are you doing at nine?

Sandra: I was doing a lot of babysitting. I started taking care of neighbors' children and babies at nine. I was very responsible and adult. I liked having that kind of authority.

Guide: What did having that much authority do for you?

Sandra: It made me feel grown-up very early.

Guide: How did that work for a nine-year-old?

Sandra: Well, it alienated me from my friends, my peers, and made me feel lonely.

Guide: What was missing that might have helped you?

Sandra: Someone to talk to.

Guide: What would you have talked about?

Sandra: Well, I thought I was some kind of freak. My mother thought I was a freak.

Guide: Why?

Sandra: Because I developed too early. I got my period at nine. I thought now that I was a woman I had to be all grown up. I couldn't play with children anymore. I was different from my school friends and couldn't tell them. I wouldn't go swimming or to summer

camp because I got my period and no one else did. I just did baby-sitting. It was a very confusing time.

Guide: And you couldn't talk to your mother about it?

Sandra: Mother was afraid something was wrong with me. I heard her talking to a friend on the telephone about me; she wondered if I was a freak or something. Then she called the doctor to ask if I was *abnormal*.

Guide: How did you feel about it?

Sandra: It didn't seem wrong to me. My sister was eleven when she started. I was three years younger, but we both started menstruating together. Then I got breasts. By twelve I looked full grown, the way I do now.

Guide: Close your eyes. Let the nine-year-old speak. Can you see her in her confusion, her isolation? A precocious little adult burdened with the knowledge that she is now a woman capable of conceiving a baby. Ask her what she needs.

Sandra: She needs to know she is not a freak. For her peace of mind, she wants assurance there's nothing wrong with her body.

Guide: How will you give her that peace of mind?

Sandra: She needs to talk with someone, a doctor, who would tell her she was OK, just developed early.

Guide: Someone who knows that southern races mature earlier than northern races.

Sandra: Is that so?

Guide: Yes. In fact, it can work the other way. I was very worried because I didn't menstruate until fifteen and felt myself very slow and unwomanly.

Sandra: Wow! That never occurred to me. I want to find out more about racial differences.

Notes: Sandra got the reassurance she needed from a doctor and was told she'd be a good mother when she was ready to have her own babies. Her choice to work with adolescents, the very age at which her own growth became confused, was unconscious at the time; but you wonder what inner guide draws us to the arena we most need to explore. Sandra enjoyed helping the runaway girls and completed her dissertation based on this work. We counsel best what we have known ourselves.

Dream Yoga

Eastern traditions use meditation and visualization to disconnect the day mind, opening the Self like a conduit between earth and spirit. Re-collecting your drifting consciousness in meditation is a skill that demands practice. It can become a delicious high in the spirit of playfulness. It is a way not to take your "reality" too seriously, a way to dwell in the cosmic joke, allowing space for desire and expectations to slip and slide around in the *now*. Discovering how you interpret and describe the world to yourself can give you more flexibility and humor.

Things can be symbolically true. If something can be imagined, if it is in your field of consciousness at all, the Tibetan Buddhists accord it a certain reality called "*Siddhis powers*." Siddhis powers include seeing into the past and future, reading minds, remembering past lives, connecting with the Collective Unconscious (that which is common to all), and the awareness of extrasensory perception and psychic intuitions.

*It is recorded in China as far back as 300 B.C.
that Chang Chou dreamed he was a butterfly,
then woke and wondered if, as the butterfly,
he was dreaming he was Chang Chou!*



CHAPTER 12

Visual Problem Solving: Other Uses of this Method

This method of visual problem solving is just a common sense way to see and understand an issue more clearly and negotiate alternatives. The same approach can be used to map your life story, your relationships, your arguments, and your feelings about your body. You can map just about any problem and discover new insights. In this chapter we will look at Life Mapping and Body Mapping, using the the Paper Stage; the only difference is that you need a bigger piece of paper and more time.

Life Mapping invites you to document your past, your present, and the future you'd like to envision.

For Body Mapping you need a sheet of paper big enough to outline your whole body. Within that outline, your body will tell you how it feels., you will document your wounds, and wishes. If you will listen to your body's point of view you will have to negotiate a better relationship

Both of these workshops expand applications for the Paper Stage method to help clients in groups as well as one-on-one sessions. The examples in this chapter will give you an idea of what can be gained. The last story is excerpted from a series of sessions in which the client videotaped himself so that he could observe the process that lead to his daughter's recovery.

LIFE MAPPING

What to Do with the Rest of Your Life

For many years I have been part of a women's discussion group, made up mostly of middle-aged women who meet once a week to discuss their life problems and issues of the day. Many were widowed, divorced, or dealing with retired husbands at home all day. They were depressed; their parents were dying or in need of day-care just when they were finished with the child-raising routine. There was no purpose left in their lives. I was hearing mothers and older women asking how to become more authentic.

At 65, my friends and I were wondering "*What to do with the rest of our lives?*" and my students as they were leaving the comforts of of academia for careers in the real world came to map the future they really wanted.



The life mapping technique was so successful that I offered it at Esalen, and as part of Lesley College's Tel Aviv (Israel) Expressive Therapies program. It attracted not only grad students and retirees, but people with HIV/AIDS, cancer survivors, divorcees, empty nesters and restless mid-lifers like me. I asked the participants questions that had been popularized by psychotherapy in the 1970's. "When did you stop being authentic?" "What happened that robbed you of your personhood?" "How do you sabotage yourself?" We used more or less the same questions in all my workshops.

These workshops gave people, a chance to work in a group, to find their voices, explore new possibilities, rehearse their options, and make changes. Some got a job,, went back to school, picked up where they'd left off or decided to reclaim an old passion they had put aside for marriage and parenthood. At Esalen, forty men and women signed up for a one-day workshop. That was too many people for talk therapy; I had to get them working by themselves. I guess that was the impetus for developing this mapping method. Each participant was able to work on their own and then share what they had learned with the group. These workshops were very popular. They eventually became called "WTDO," or "What To Do With the Rest of Your Life."

Day one: On the first day of the workshop, each participant tapes a two-foot-long sheet of paper to the wall. Then they draw a timeline, straight or squiggly, and label the important episodes of their lives starting from birth. Words, photos, and symbols represent trials and successes, family position, rites of passage, accidents and health issues, crushes and sexual awakening, educational pursuits, travel and changes, teachers, mentors and other important relationships. Participants draw, cut, tear, and paste symbols using colors that express their feelings about these people and incidents.

It can be as private or revealing as you wish. By now, everyone has made a map, a symbolic collage that documents their history, telling an authentic story no one has ever seen before. By mid-afternoon, we get to the question “What’s next?” and for that question we wait for tomorrow.

We explore the room full of amazing works of art and share our stories.

Day two: On the second day of the workshop, each participant is asked to observe their Life Map and harvest the valuable lessons and most useable resources from the past combined with the hopes and wishes of the present to make a map of your future.

These future maps become wild celebrations of possibilities and new intentions. A workable plan with a reasonable timeline to help you realize all the things you want to include. Each day there is time to explain what they learned from their two maps.

At the end of each day there is time for anyone who wants to explain what they learned from their two maps. Feedback from the group is a rich sharing of admiration and support. Others give you credit for qualities that you may not have recognized in yourself. We come to realize we are not alone and needn’t repeat obsolete strategies no longer work. Participants discover hidden patterns and motivations they weren’t aware of. One man saw how his behavior had sabotaged his marriage. A woman realized she’d felt so blocked by her sister that she’d never dared take the path she truly wanted and devised a way to change that.

This workshop proved to be a powerful life-changing experience. The AIDS patient made a plan for his declining months that would comfort him. Some of the empty nesters plotted ways to return to college. One woman planned to start her own clothing business; having her designs made in Bali would give her a chance to travel as well. A divorcee whose husband had assured her she’d never make it alone made a list of jobs she could do and the condo she could afford. Within two years, she was able to realize the very scene she had imagined using closed eye imaging. A man who’d spent his life working two jobs to support his family programmed a way to tell his family he needed their help to lighten his load. His son could get an after school job, they could move to a

smaller house as the kids went off to college, and Dad could get some time for himself and his shop tools that had waited all these years.

Life Mapping has proved very useful to couples and families exploring their relationships and conflicts. A family of mixed race came to work out a plan for their move from the Bahamas to England. Josh was a black Bahamian architect with a white eight-year-old daughter. Marsha was English. She was the principal of a local school and had a black teenage son. They were moving from the Islands to London to improve their children’s education and make a better living. It was a challenge to satisfy the wishes of both parents and children. They created a map that included each family member and all their requirements. They reviewed their earning possibilities and symbolized their personal needs and lifestyle preferences. They wanted to live outside London, find good public schools and maybe start a health business. They listed what kind of jobs they could do to earn money. Using this mapping method, they were able to test possibilities and feel if they were workable.

If seeing is believing, then you can do it. You don’t need a class, a group, or a guide to use these techniques. You can map your life alone and refer to these questions to help you move along:

- Is money a factor? If so, how can I make money?
- If space is a limitation, how can I expand?
- If time is governing me, how can I make time for myself?
- When my obligations are too heavy, who could help me?
- How can I put more joy into my life?



Rent-a-Mom

(age 60)

Rent A Mom came originally from Europe. She'd lived in the states for 30 years before she divorced. She came looking for a new life in Boston after her kids were grown. The Cambridge Adult Center advertised my workshop, called *What To Do With The Rest Of Your Life*. It sounded like just what she needed:

"On the first day we were asked to create a time line and symbolize, with colored papers and words, the important episodes and mile stones in our life up to now. As I was the girl in my family I had to take care of my mother who was ill most of my childhood with rheumatoid arthritis. My twin brother, being the boy, was set free (a pattern of female obedience and service versus male freedom that I only recognized much later). Mother died when I was 17 freeing me at last. I went to university and met the American man who became my husband. We moved to New York and I had 4 kids by the time I was 24, too busy with children and schools to realize my husband was drinking heavily. He worked late and came home late expecting me to be at his beck and call. He was irascible, impatient, and emotionally abusive. His rages became intolerable; the children and I learned to stay out of his reach. When his colleague asked me if he was a heavy drinker at home I didn't really know. I'd been married to him for 26 years but I didn't know what was normal behavior. I only realized how serious his drinking had been when his firm told me they were launching an intervention to have him face his alcoholism. I attended Al-anon where I learned about co-dependence and that my imperfections were not the cause of his rages. If you understand that alcoholism is an illness, there are ways to get help and avoid the traps that start the arguments. Al-Anon was an education and hearing other peoples' stories made me realize I had to make serious changes in myself. I had been cared for as an obedient wife, and was told I wouldn't need to know how to balance a checkbook. I didn't even have my own check book; I had to ask for money. I wanted a divorce, but he said I'd never make it on my own. It took several years to complete the divorce. My kids supported me and asked why I'd waited so long to get free.

"Living alone after a house full of kids felt lonely. I had our farm in the country but it was isolated. I needed people and a job, but what could I do?

"A friend suggested I make a list of all the things I was good at and give these skills a name. We designed an ad called RENT A MOM and it got me lots of short term jobs. When the divorce was firm I decided to move to Boston, a city full of opportunities. I got my first credit card, a checkbook, bought a bicycle, rented a room, signed up with H&R Block to learn how to do my taxes, and educated myself. I

put all this history into my Life Map and it took all day to tell the story.

"On Day Two of the workshop we were facing the future and told to list 100 things we wanted in our life—things big and small. I narrowed the list down to 50. Next we were asked to prioritize, to separate what we needed now from later goals. We were encouraged to think of the "impossible" as possible, not to limit our sights for lack of courage, money, or permission. Mapping my past helped me understand what had brought me here. Putting my life on paper was awesome and sharing our stories in the group gave me confidence and clarity. I realized that early disciplines had taught me avoidance. I would dodge confrontation, and could not defend myself."

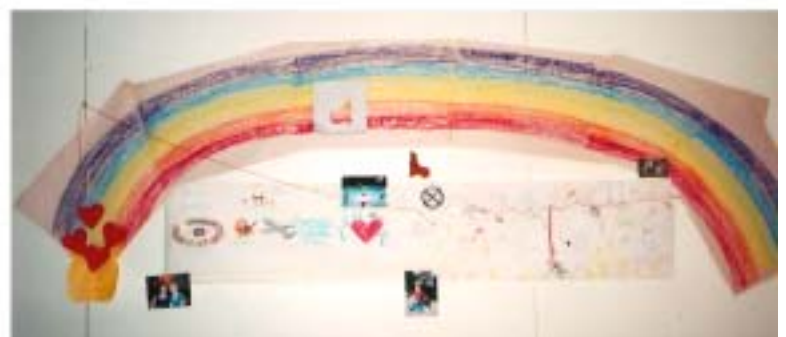
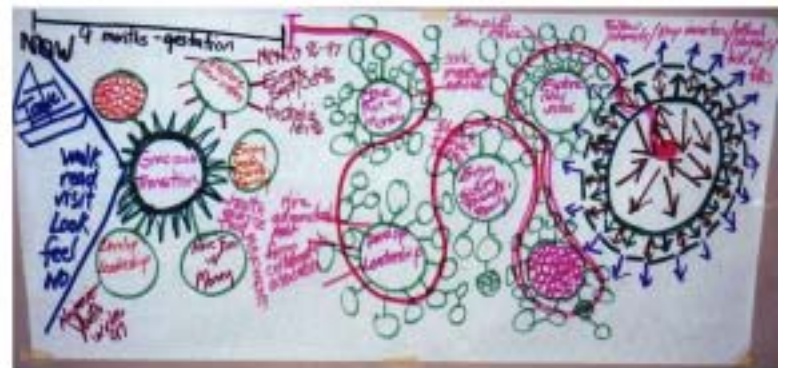
Feedback

"I kept my maps taped to my closet door for a number of years. As I looked at the map of my past I realized my children and I had been through a lot and that without Al-anon, I might not have made it. The sharing of our experiences and group therapy relieved me of blame, and explained how alcoholism had impacted our family. I felt sad for that young woman I was, who had survived such emotional diminishment for so many years. It was my daughter who opened my eyes when she said that I had modeled for her that abuse was acceptable and she was not ready to forgive me yet. "Compromise is a two way street." I had to learn to risk confrontation and dare to defend and forgive myself.

"Looking back at my maps, I had to admire and applaud how I managed to get my confidence back enough to create my own future. Seeing all this on paper was empowering in many ways. It helped me sell our house, buy a car, find a condo and a job to keep me useful.

"Reviewing my future map eight years later, I was able to check off many of the things I'd put on my wish list, and review the list of new permissions I have given myself. I know now I can keep on walking and working on a life of my own."



[illegible]



BODY MAPPING

Symbolic Healing and Self-Balancing

The Body Mapping workshop grew out of the need to befriend one's body, accept it, or make changes. The wonderful book *Our Bodies, Our Selves* had sparked a lot of interest, new information and new permission to own its pleasures. I thought we could find out more about what our bodies want from us, and listen to how we'd been treating them.

Our body is our earth vehicle. We will live inside it an average of seventy to eighty years, maybe longer if we're lucky. I wondered how is it we can deliver a body to the moon and yet know so little about the one we live in. One of the exercises that arose from the "Possible Self" workshops is to listen to the inner voice of the body that is our own, then create a color-coded map that makes visible the body's point of view. This could happen in either a week-long course or a two-day workshop. Participants begin by outlining one another's body shapes onto a large sheet of paper. With their outline taped to the wall in front of them, each student meditates and dialogues with their energy resources, their negative and positive attitudes, and invites their organs to speak. We use art and collage materials to help de-

scribe areas where energy and creativity are available or blocked, and areas asking for protection, permission, encouragement and support. In response to a series of questions, symbols are drawn or pasted on the map to represent the body's answers.

When you take the time to ask it questions, your body has answers that may amaze you. Think of it: your body carries you free of charge, asking only for food and drink unless it hurts; then you have to listen to its feelings. Communication is spontaneous and astonishing, as though one has uncorked the genie. It is as though the body is hungry to use this rare opportunity to be heard. These messages and feelings you have translated into color, shape, and form in order to see and acknowledge them have become an original work of art. What emerges on day one is a map of one's interior feelings.

It is astonishing to step away from this full-size body tracing and observe what you have learned. Body Mapping gives you a chance to see your full-size human self take its valid place in the universe. It is difficult for many of us to give ourselves permission to fill this space comfortably. For some it is a new revelation to say, "I have the right to be here!" Many women in these workshops made a second tracing of how they wished their body was. Observing your body and listening to its voice helps you accept your body as it is and take ownership of it. Whether or not you were a wanted child, it is a *rite of passage* to welcome yourself, make room for yourself, and become your own keeper. The idea of taking responsibility for providing the things that were lacking empowers a new attitude of self-nurturing.



Many people who make full-sized body maps discover, to their dismay, that they don't own all the parts of their body. Some organs may belong to a controlling parent, a family myth, a disease, or a religion. A nun showed on her map that all her orifices were plugged into her church. A graduate student realized that all her accidents took place on the left side of her body because her parents owned the "right" side. When mothers, fathers, children or mates own parts of your body, you may unconsciously attack the part you can't control, the way a fox bites off its trapped leg. Girls who sell, cut or abuse their bodies, starve or overeat, most likely are punishing a body they don't accept as their own.

Befriending your body is the best way to unite your mind and feelings, to learn to work together for health and happiness. The goal of Body Mapping includes finding new ways to care for this earth-vehicle, so that it may run more harmoniously, more creatively, more autonomously, in good balance, cooperation and health. The idea of



establishing a cooperative partnership is a new concept to many who come to map their bodies. We are not taught to love our bodies; we are taught there is always something wrong. But when you accept the body you were given and take responsibility for what you have done to it over the years, you can begin to make the best of it and treat it kindly. Body maps have helped people change their habits, cure abuse, accept implants, and understand their powers as well as their limitations.

The second day of the workshop is spent making adjustments to the Body Maps. These repairs are designed to balance and realign the body so it can function more democratically in a new balance of power. Rehearsing new attitudes creates change. Symbolic healing



and re-balancing, done in this visually concrete manner, has a lasting effect on daily life, attitudes, and relationships. Visualization and dialogue with the organs and the inner Self is simply another way to *re-frame*, *re-think* and *re-balance* the body powers. Obstacles that have kept us blocked can give ground when we step outside and become the helper. At the end of each day, we share our stories and get ideas from one another.

We are all teachers.

Nothing is thrown away. Anything that has had power over the body cannot simply be discarded; it must be recycled into energy and used more positively to benefit the places in the symbolic body that are in need. *Negative energy* must be given credit for saving this body from something worse, which is almost always the case. Once negative energy has been understood and validated for its survival efforts, it is usually willing to move over, to be given a more constructive job. Negative energy can

be seen as a good warning device; listen to it as a guide rather than as the enemy or the victim.

Making these repairs visual is a symbolic commitment to change; the breakthrough is an actual experience. It has a lasting effect because the body, by rehearsing the action, has in fact experienced the feelings. As with dreams, the feeling is authentic although the experience is imagined. This mapping exercise is intuitive. It need not be logical, reasonable, or understandable. We are dealing with feelings; the mind is invited to stay *out* of this adventure.

It is very reassuring in this work to note that no changes are lasting until the feelings are in agreement. People cannot cheat or fool themselves for long in this symbolic process. A visiting psychologist from abroad once asked me what I do about clients who make up stories, pretend, or cheat. I confessed that in twenty-five years, I'd never seen a pretender or a cheater last more than the time it takes to sleep with the lie, because what they get out of this work is much more rewarding than minting the false coin. When we do this workshop at a college and leave the maps hanging on the walls overnight, I have often found that sleepless students had entered the room during the night, impatient to change some rash decision they'd made on their body maps the day before.

Healing and repairs can go on for weeks after the workshop is over. The Body Maps that fill this section are real people's very personal histories. The adjustments, repairs, and symbolic healing are all real.



SIDEBAR

Questions and Suggestions for Body Mapping

With the help of my students, I've created a list of questions and suggestions that may help the individual gain more information.

- What color is creativity? What shape is love? What size is guilt? How big is anger?
- Listen inside. Locate the inner child and the dwelling place of the higher Self.
- Indicate where your parents live inside you, and how much room they occupy.
- What organs want to speak to you? Ask them who owns them.
- Ask the organs, especially the discontented ones, to tell you what they want.
- Let the heart speak to you.
- Dialogue with your sexuality, or lack of it.
- Dialogue with your creativity or whatever is blocking it.
- Dialogue with stress and fear, love and hate, success and failure.
- Locate areas of unfinished business and areas of ambivalence.
- Translate the feelings in these areas into visual symbols. Pay close attention to the colors and shapes that represent the moods of these feelings.

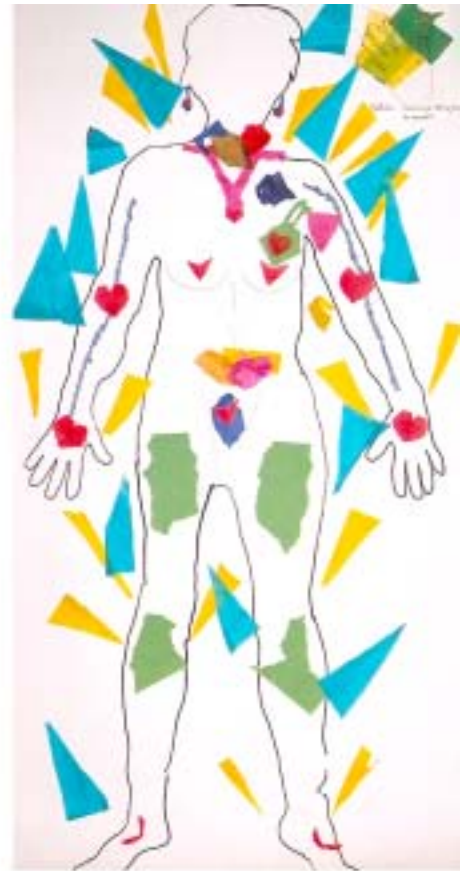




**Three Body Maps:
Before and After Healing**







The Holocaust Baby

(CC, age 30)



This is the map of a 30-year-old woman who was finishing her Master's degree; she was six months pregnant. She felt ambivalent about her pregnancy, torn between the freedom to follow her studies and her desire for a family. She felt bound tight and depressed. She translated this feeling into a series of chains that bound her neck, chest and diaphragm. Her father had been demanding grandchildren for the past ten years, and her body said it was chained to her father's exterminated ancestors. She said her father's possessiveness and demands had forced her to rebel in ways that had made her the enemy and betrayer of her own body. The bound-up feeling grew tighter when she realized that her father also owned her husband, who was employed by him and in debt to him for their home.

After dialoguing with the baby in her womb, she found it threatened with suffocation. Its freedom of growth was restricted by the diaphragm chain, which was padlocked, and her father held the key. Her arms and legs lacked energy and "did not want to hold her up." Her vagina appeared as a joyless "iron vise" which she said she did not control, as it belonged to her ancestors. Since her vagina was not hers, she had felt no qualms about abusing it with many questionable partners.

She observed that her eyes had been "closed since she was four, and her throat was blocked by pebbles." Leaving nothing to chance, she counted the pebbles. There were exactly thirty, "one for each year of father's invasive sexual interferences." The throat said the pebbles prevented her from speaking and defending her feelings. After dialoguing with the pebbles, she made a list of the exact words that would "satisfy the flinging of each pebble at her father." These words were things she had not dared to say to her father, nor to other men in her life in defense of her body's privacy.

Repair and help for “the Holocaust Baby” started when CC opened the closed eyes on the body map. She collected the pebbles from her throat and stored them in her left hand until she felt safe enough to speak the words to defend her personal feelings. The only way she could visualize dropping the chains from her shoulders was by finding a way to relax, something she feared to do lest it make her unguarded and more vulnerable. The only safe and pleasant memory of relaxation she could recall was a visit to the hot tubs in Japan. By allowing herself to recreate this relaxation memory, she was able to visualize the chains dropping from her shoulders. This helped her to breathe more deeply, which loosened the vise on the vagina. But the body reminded her that the chain around the diaphragm was padlocked and her father had the key.

The retrieval of the key involved a long dialogue with the father-in-her-mind, to whom everyone in the family deferred in guilt and fear in order to appease his lost childhood, spent in a German concentration camp during World War II. In order for CC to take possession of the key, she had to take power away from her father and assume responsibility for her life instead of making her womb another kind of concentration camp. By assuming responsibility for the life of her child, she could unlock the diaphragm chain, allowing the baby to grow and move. CC also cut free her helpless paper arms and filled them with blue energy waves from the hot tub, so she could protect her belly and comfort the child.

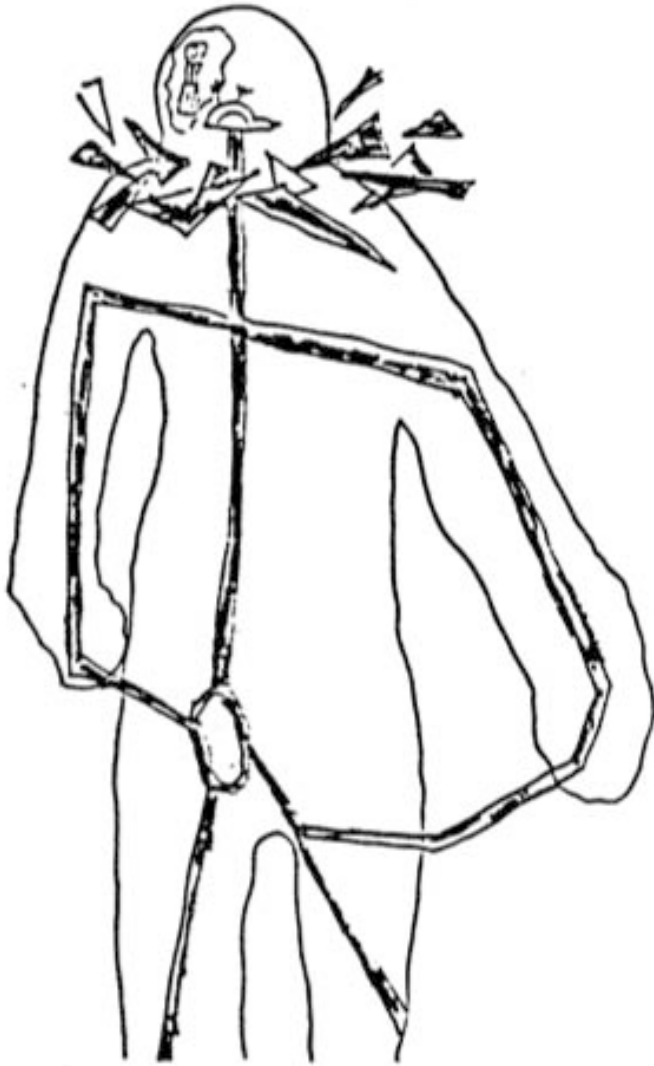
Follow-up: About a month after her baby was born, we spoke by telephone. CC said labor had been very long. The doctor had threatened to take the baby by Cesarean section because she couldn’t relax her cervix enough to dilate. He was afraid the baby would suffocate. Remembering her Body Map relaxation exercise, she managed, with some difficulty, to persuade the nurse and doctor to let her sit in a warm shower, even though such a thing was unheard of in that hospital. CC focused on relaxation as she had in the Japanese hot bath, and was able to dilate and gave birth normally.

The imaginary dialogue with her father had helped to create boundaries that gave her a new sense of Self-hood. Using the dialogue exercise, she established in her mind that the baby was truly hers, and together they would explore the question of boundaries so she could both nourish herself with her studies and make welcome room for the baby in her life.

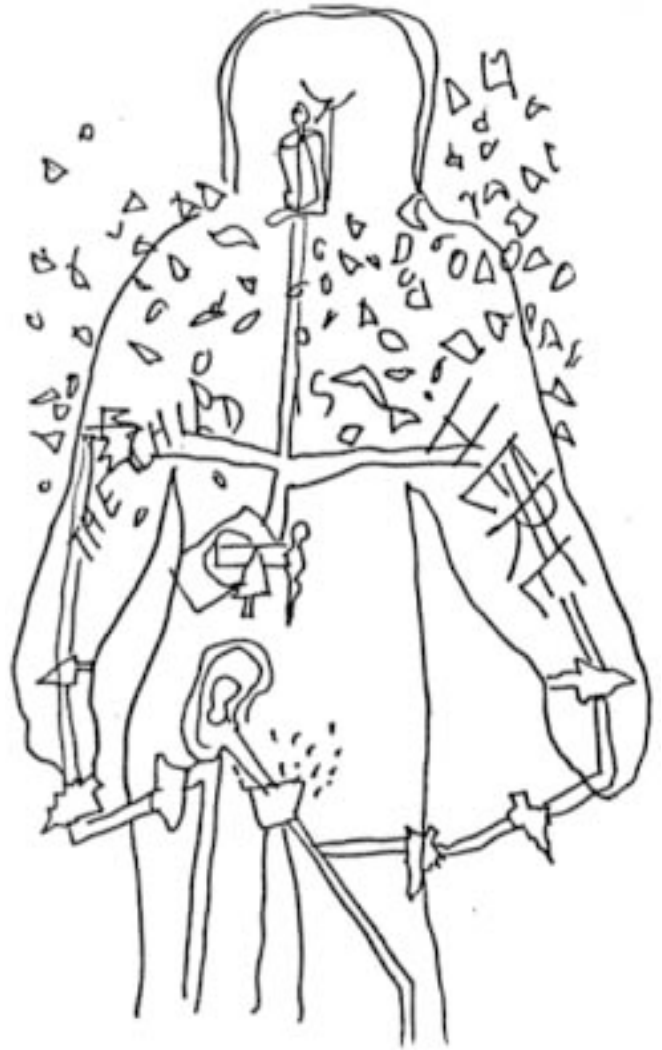


The Cellophane Child

(Ralph, age 33)



This map is the body of a thirty-three-year-old diabetic man. His body map was only a circuitry system, with everything connected to his newly transplanted kidney. The kidney was the only organ that had a voice. His "song-less heart" was represented as a dead bird in his "door-less caged head." At his throat was a collar of knives preventing him from expressing himself. His mother's fear had governed all his behavior to date. He said that since he was two years old he'd been treated like a patient; he'd never been a child. Through dialogue with his body, he found the lost child wrapped in cellophane, still waiting to be recognized, rescued and unwrapped. The "cellophane child" said it had missed out on thirty-three birthday parties and Christmas dinners because Mother said it couldn't eat ice cream or cake.



Repair and healing of "the Cellophane Child" began when Ralph acknowledged his inner child and gave it a voice that he placed in the middle of his heart and belly to celebrate his adoption. He removed the cellophane and transformed it into a portable shield. Across the whole body he wrote in black letters, "THE CHILD IS HERE," so that no one would ever forget it. Next he realized he'd have to take responsibility for reviving the poor dead song-less bird and transformed into creative energy, he tore the collar of knives into birthday confetti to celebrate the birthday of his inner child. These transformations symbolized a new sense of joy and autonomy. For the first time he could control the joyful fluids by placing Christmas trees at proper intervals in his body and permitted his genitals to lubricate, using rainbow colors.

Ralph's new sense of autonomy gave him the courage to find a lady friend in his transplant group, with whom he had his first sexual experience. His doctor asked him what had caused his change in attitude, then invited him to help other patients who were waiting for organs. He was excited to be so useful.

The Little Gray Thing

(WAMAA, age 47)



This is the map of a 47-year-old woman who described herself as a “Wife and Mother Above All” (WAMAA). She had raised four children and helped her husband run his practice for twenty years. Her children had left home, and she and her husband had become estranged. She had undergone surgery for cancer and lost her uterus and one breast to the surgeon’s knife. She concluded that nothing was left of her feminine identity. Her operations had X’ed out her femininity and her rights to womanhood, turning her into “a little gray thing.” As far as she could see, she had no body, just a dotted line of the woman she had been. She wanted to get out from under all her domestic obligations, and thought her only hope was to go back to school in order to get a degree in the Expressive Therapies.

WAMAA was hurt and very angry at being asked to face her body. She said she couldn’t dialogue with this X’ed-out body, because all that was left was a relic. She was asked to fill in the woman that was herself before the operation. Her memories were still fresh and numerous. She was able to dialogue with her memories and they reminded her of all the important womanly things she had done and been for twenty-five years. These memories asked to be represented in the empty black holes on her Body Map. Twenty-five years of parenting and wifehood filled the black holes left by her missing organs.



This validation and usefulness took on some warm colors. Effectiveness and integrity asked her to connect blue lines (representing a new flow of energy) from memory to the blank chambers of her breast and abdomen. Soon she was able to see that she deserved a firm outline. She reorganized her body resources so that they could balance the losses and become a reliable support when she felt depressed or de-feminized.

She dialogued with the missing organs and had an astonishing revelation: *she had lost only the organs that made her a servant to her family.* With those gone, she belonged to herself for the first time since she was eleven. Her inner child reviewed some of its long-forgotten hopes and desires, included finishing college. She said she had no regrets now that she’d found her old Self.

The Little Gray Thing's New Self

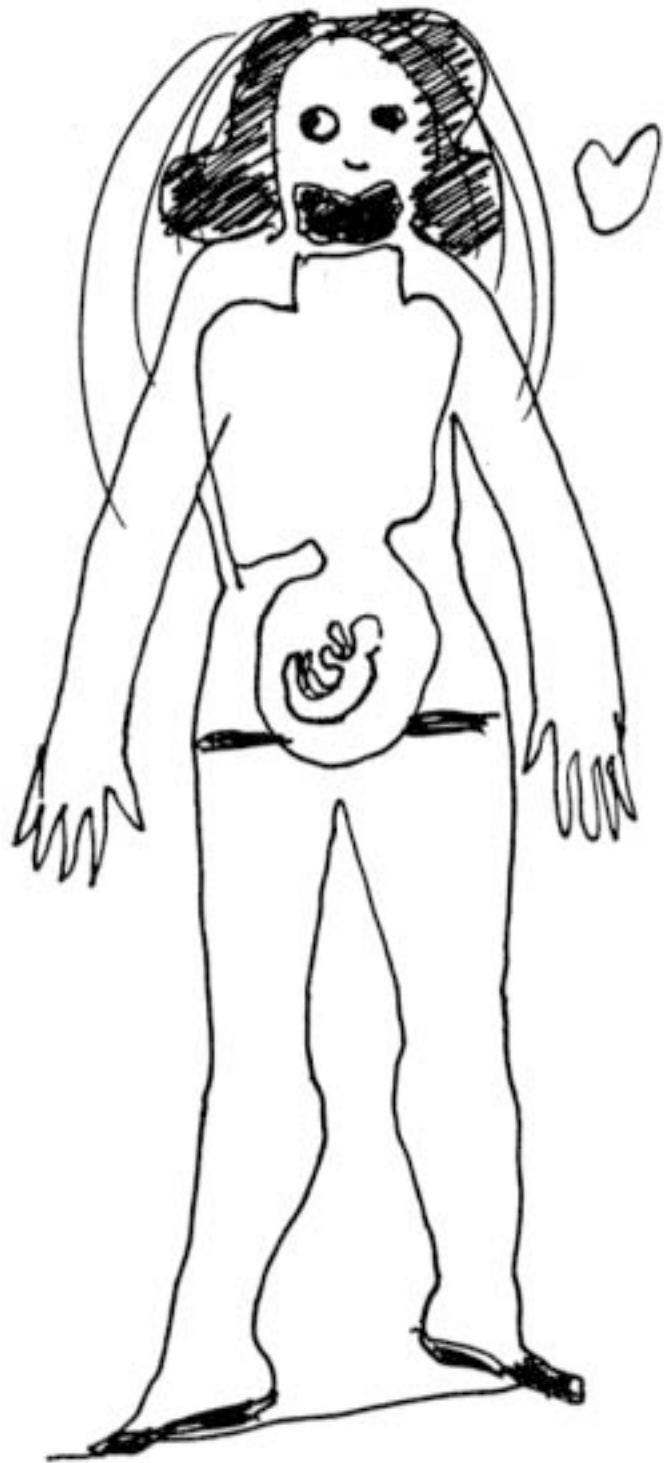
(WAMAA two years later, age 49)

WAMAA found this process so helpful that she returned two years later to take another workshop. She was living apart from her family while studying for her Master's degree at Lesley College. Her children were in college, and she had the beginnings of a profession she loved. She intended to take her profession back home as an extension of her husband's practice.

It was two years since she had transformed the "Little Gray Thing" into a new and hopeful possible self. Since then she said she had not thought much about her body. On her new Body Map she found a powerful woman alive from the waist up, but her legs were empty and had "no kick in them."

During her body meditation she found she was wearing her younger sister's blonde hair and one of her sister's blue eyes. She put this on her map. She had two mouths: one was a real, black, howling mouth and the other a pleasant soft-spoken mouth that was drawn on tissue paper and overlapped the "real mouth." She realized that her stiff rigid backbone belonged to her father. She had worn his backbone for years in deference to his demand for order and discipline. She was distressed to find an unborn embryo in her womb, since she no longer had a uterus.

Her arms and shoulders were too strong, too full of energy, "still waiting for others to lean on them." This unbalanced her body and gave her a pain in the neck. In the first workshop, she had been asked to lend those strong shoulders to herself to lean on, but since then she had realized that was not enough. Her way of knowing herself was by others leaning on her strength; without "leaners," she didn't feel alive. During the past two years she had sold her home, installed her husband in a convenient apartment, and rented a small studio near campus where she pursued her studies. Her children were happy to see her regaining her self-esteem and were all now at college or on their own. No one was leaning, but her "heart was hanging in mid-air somewhere outside her body."



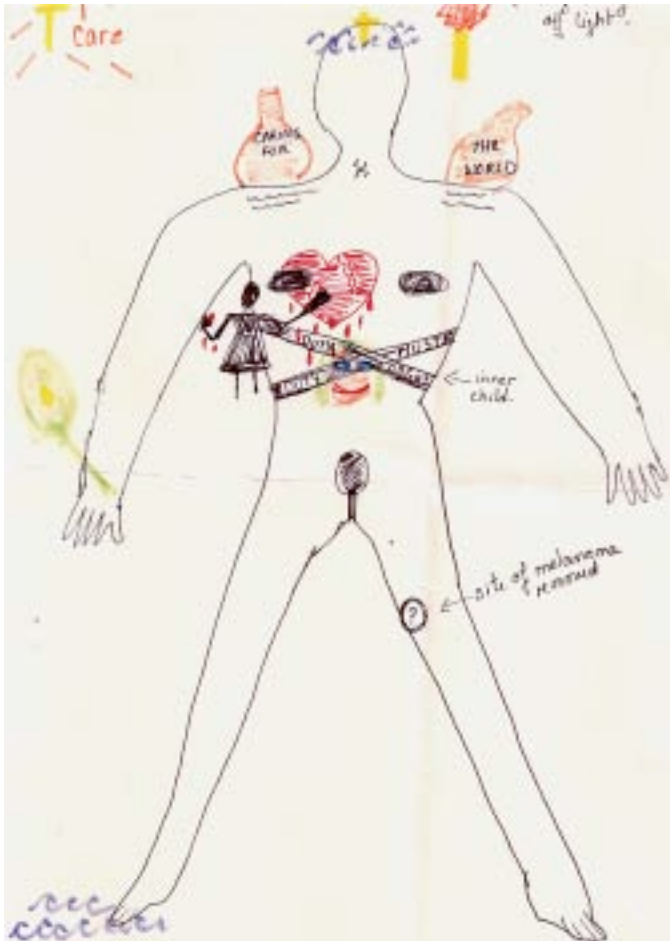
Repairs and adjustment started by putting the hanging heart in a warmer place, in her lower abdomen next to the embryo "in case it could get born in some other form." That satisfied the longing for a full womb, a feeling which she had loved throughout her four pregnancies and resented losing to cancer. As she didn't want the embryo there anymore, it was important for her to give birth to it in some way. She used it as creative material, taking pieces to heal the pain in the neck and to open her throat. "Pieces of it were enough to open chest, nose, and mouth," she said.

She took some of the brown representing "too much energy" from the arms and used it to brown away her sister's blonde wig, as it was "time to stop trying to be like her blonde sister, time to assume her brunette personality." Now, feeling more fully herself, with dark hair and two brown eyes, she took possession of her body, which allowed her to fill her legs with brown energy that gave them more "kick." The brown energy in the soles of her feet gave her bounce and a sense of spring. She said she loved to "push against the earth or any firm surface in order to experience her strength." She cut her hands loose from the paper so she could touch her own body, freeing her to give pleasure to herself. She softened the rigid father backbone so it could "bend with her new bounce."



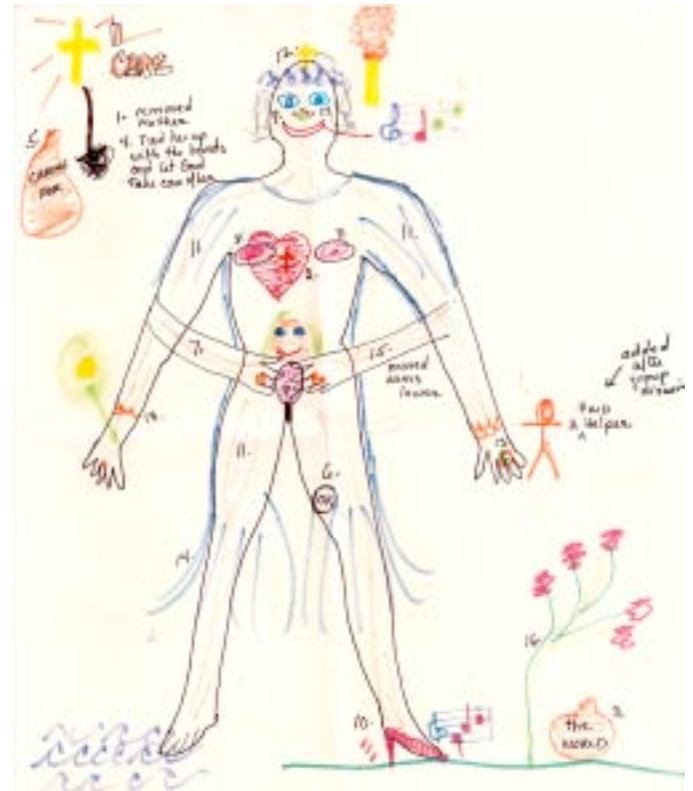
Caring for Max

(Janet, age 45)



Janet's Body Map featured a big red broken heart. She explained that her husband had been operated on for a brain tumor and had come out of it irreparably disabled and impotent. On her right shoulder was a giant bottle of medicine labeled "Caring for Max." On the left shoulder she carried The World. Her vagina was a black hole which belonged to her husband and therefore was obsolete and angry. She indicated a crack in her neck. The gray color all throughout referred to "the resentful, dutiful daughter-mother tie-up." (Janet's mother had attempted suicide and failed. She now wanted her daughter to care for her. Janet's daughter urged her to put her disabled husband in a nursing home and "set herself free.")

During the workshop, Janet hung her map up at home in her bathroom behind the door, where no one noticed it. During the week, she had an urge to tear up her suicidal mother image and throw the pieces away, but she had a dream asking her to fill out a census. Since her mother was still alive, she'd have to be listed on the census sheet. Janet took that to mean she could not throw out her mother; she'd have to find another solution. Janet said she put her mother high above her shoulder and "gave her to God."



Through this exercise, Janet realized that trying to do everything by herself was an angry way of controlling Max, that this was how she kept herself exhausted and full of self-pity and her husband guilty and miserable. Repairs included sharing the burden of her husband's handicaps with a day helper, whom she would pay to be his hands and brain (help him get to the toilet, write his name, speak on the phone, cash his checks, answer his mail.) And since she couldn't heal his tumor on her map, she "gave Max to God." She gave herself private time for being good to herself, since her husband could no longer treat her. She decided it was time to take charge of her life apart from her husband. She gave herself new arms that could comfort her inner child and another longer pair of arms that allowed her to take charge of her own sexual responses, free of dependence on any man. She gave herself a new face and a Ginger Rogers exhibition gown to brighten her spirits, and put a dancing shoe on her unbalanced foot. She couldn't conclude this workshop until she gave herself a promissory note that anchored the permission to spend money for help.

Solving Life Problems: Whatever Works, Works!

The Paper Stage is useful with big groups to keep everyone working at the same time, but another way to see a problem is with your inner eye. In one-on-one sessions, my theory is “do whatever works.” Sometimes we don’t need anything more than talk. Spontaneous messages and images from the less-conscious Self are facilitated by the use of meditation and guided visualization. We may choose not to set the Paper Stage due to limited time, lack of preparation and on-hand materials, or because we are doing a telephone session. Nothing is lost by not using the paper when we are not concerned with keeping a big group busy.

The following dialogues show how a guide can lead a person into their inner reality to find the images and hear the voices that have important information to share. In this kind of work, you go wherever the path is open.

The Lost Cause (Neath, age 65)

Neath came in a deep depression and participated only with great resistance. When I asked for an image to symbolize her feelings, all she could see was a photograph of a badly burned infant screaming in pain and outrage as she sat in the rubble after a bombing during World War II. She said that when she’d seen that photo in a “Life” magazine at the age of twelve, she had been sickened by the stupidity of war. The orphan represented her disowned child-Self that she believed was too destroyed to salvage. She did not believe there could be any satisfaction for such a terrible image.

Neath: When I feel like this abandoned charred infant, I know things are hopeless. I can’t possibly comfort a burnt child near death. The salt in my fingers would burn her flesh. She is a lost cause; no one can heal a creature this far gone.

Guide: Since this child in your memory is still alive, who will help her?

Neath: It’s useless. No one will find her. She is scorched and will soon be dead.

Guide: You found her, the photographer found her, so there is still hope. What does she need?

Neath: She needs a team of doctors, burn specialists, experts in skin grafting. She needs to be flown to the best hospital, handled with kid gloves. I won’t touch her. I can’t do it. We don’t even have time for sick-

ness in my family; people know when to give up on a lost cause. They simply divorce without consulting children, switch fathers, change schools, and pretend nothing has changed. She would need specialists.

Guide: How do you see the specialists helping?

Neath: With kid gloves. They’d wrap her torn flesh with wet sheets and carry her on a feather quilt to the best hospital, where a team of specialists can care for her around the clock.

Guide: How long should the cure take?

Neath: I’m not even sure they can save her; she is too far gone.

Guide: How old do you think she is?

Neath: About two or three.

Guide: How long will it take the specialists to know if they can save her?

Neath: She can’t respond before two weeks [*the length of Neath’s training*].

Guide: With your eyes closed, imagine two weeks of perfect care. See the days go by. How is she responding?

Neath: It’s touch and go. The emergency care seems to let her know it might be worthwhile to live. But the scars will be awful.

Guide: Are the specialists helping?

Neath: They are interested. Emergency interests them. She is a celebrity of outrageous fortune. They are invested in healing her, if only to appease their world conscience, and the guilt of war.

Guide: How long do you think it will take for this child to heal enough to function normally?

Neath: About four years of intensive care.

Guide: Close your eyes and see four years going by. Allow four years of intensive care to salve and penetrate, to heal all those wounds and scars. Allow yourself to see her restored to full health. See how she looks as she is ready to leave the hospital.

Neath: She is four years old.

Guide: What is happening now that she has been seen and heard?

Neath: She is given to new parents who can appreciate how hurt she was, and acknowledge her miraculous survival. They are more aware and sensitive people than her parents were.

Guide: How do the new parents care for her?

Neath: They discuss things with her. They trust her, respect her self-knowledge, respect her feelings, her innate intelligence. They give her the time to make up for the losses. They are gentle; they don't make her compete for love and approval. They honor her vulnerable condition, marvel at her progress, but not too much. They don't focus too much on her, nor expose her or make her perform. They just love her as she is. It is enough just to be her original, natural, adequate self.

Comments: *Awareness is the first step on the path to change. It marks the moment when a person stops giving up or waiting for others to fill the gaps, and takes responsibility for re-parenting the Self. This was the day Neath understood all the unconscious accommodations she'd made as a child. She had felt abandoned when her brother was born and again when her parents divorced, so she had learned to abandon herself. By following this image to satisfaction, she was forced to "own" the habit of self-abandonment. Neath had to create her own self-rescue program that satisfied the image of the "destroyed child" and the "lost cause." Her patient guide would not allow her to give up before she had dealt with the obstacles her injured integrity kept putting in her path. Then she could acknowledge that the image was a part of herself.*

The Lump of Clay Feeling

(Jane, age 27)

Jane: I feel like a heavy lump of clay. My boyfriend tells me that I show no emotion. He hates it, because I can't show enthusiasm. But that's the way I am. I would like to feel more alive, but without being afraid it's death.

Guide: How does being more alive feel like death?

Jane: Well, like last night with my boyfriend, everything was nice; and then, as I relaxed, this dead clay feeling came over me and I froze like lead.

Guide: How would you like to feel?

Jane: I'd like to feel light enough to giggle and play...and experience climax.

Guide: What would that feeling be?

Jane: A sort of light explosion that wasn't too frightening. Like all the air leaving a balloon. Like letting go. Like yawning inside out.

Guide: You speak in a monotone.

Jane: Yes, I know. I'm afraid to feel too good. I think I don't deserve the good feeling, because I should have died.

Guide: When did you learn that you didn't deserve the good feeling? Move back to an earlier age when it was all right to feel joy.

Jane: I see myself about twelve, sitting in front of a fire, a wood stove, in a country full of pine trees, the evergreens blending me with nature. A happy dog comes to my knee, full of love. I feel joyous. I see myself laughing, running, and dancing. Then I heard a relative say, "you could have aborted it," and I was sure they meant me, yet another unwanted daughter.

Guide: Those are hard words to hear at twelve, but are you going to live without joy all your life because of those words? It's your choice. You are alive. You are here. And if you knew joy at twelve, it is still available. Ask your twelve-year-old to reinstate joy. Every child deserves joy. See yourself integrating the gifts of relaxation and climax with wisdom. If you don't honor yourself, no one else can do it for you. It is time to give your Self permission, as you are the person with the key.

Jane: How do I begin?

Guide: Make yourself very comfortable, close your eyes, go back into the moment before you feel like clay and put the scene in slow motion. You can transform my suggestions into anything else that works better for you. Allow yourself to rest awhile, to stay as long as you like in that moment before fear wants to turn you to clay. Envision yourself being the way you were at twelve and describe it so I can follow your feelings.

Jane: *[Very slowly.]* Well, I see myself full of light, floating, sort of glistening...like a dream I had last week of

angels flying. It feels frightening and yet beautiful. I'm afraid of never coming down, of floating away.

Guide: You can combine the clay and the floating feelings. Welcome them; recognize that you need both feelings. Play with them, leaven the clay with some lightness and stabilize the floating with the clay grounding. Keep in touch with your readiness and don't scare yourself with your wonderful skills. Practice this, let go a little more each time until you are floating on warm water. You can give all your trust to the water; it will hold you while you let go of all your muscles. You can leave your body free to ride a wave that lifts you high and delivers you unharmed to the quiet pond. Practice this by yourself. Bring yourself to the crest of this wave and go with it till it is spent. Try it in your mind in bed. Use your own hands to bring you to the climax. Soon this power will be yours to share or not as you choose.

Jane: I can see myself asleep. I'm wondering what may have blocked my ability to experience pleasure.

Guide: You know it was words. An idea you chose to believe.

Jane: OK, I will delete those words. I see a celebration of life: a candle for strength and vision, and an emerald green gown for wisdom. I put them all on; they are giving me all these parts of myself. The gifts are from me to me so *I am whole*.

Guide: How will you allow yourself to retain this knowledge so you can use it at will?

Jane: By beginning to believe I deserve it. But that is so hard. I am so used to not deserving joy

Guide: Write yourself a prescription to follow this month that will help you anchor this new attitude of deserving.

Jane: My prescription will start with finding a moment of laughter each day, running, dancing and swimming, some spontaneous thing. I'll allow myself to feel more excited about something. I'll dare to give myself gifts.

Notes: Writing down that prescription was Jane's commitment to the work. I recommended that assertiveness training and group therapy would also help her get support for long-lasting change. Whatever works, **works!**

Excitable Skin

(Randy, age 37)

Randy was helping me set up the camera to videotape a client. He sat in the client's chair to adjust the distance. There were colored papers and glue on the desk for the client to use to map a dream situation. "Do you have a problem we could look at?" I asked Randy in order to show him the process I would be using. "As a matter of fact, I do," he said. "A very troublesome problem." That is how Randy got his first therapy session while the camera was running. He found such astonishing insights that he scheduled two more video sessions, from which this dialogue is taken.

Randy: The problem is that my three-year-old adopted daughter is very sick. She has had this very alarming skin condition for as long as I can remember. Her skin peels, scabs, welts. It's just awful. We've been to lots and lots of doctors and hospitals.

Guide: Make a map of this situation. Let's see how you would represent the problem on that sheet of paper. How will you represent the characters and identify them so we can see what the problem looks like? Then indicate the disease and how much space it takes in your lives.

Randy: I'm choosing black paper on which to stage the problem, because it's very bad and we are getting desperate. I'll make my wife and me out of this red paper, about equal in size. She is here and I am there and this little pink piece is our daughter Dona in the middle...and this big yellow piece is the disease. *[The yellow disease color nearly covers all three like a blanket.]*



Guide: Looking at your scene, what is this problem doing for the family?

Randy: *For the family? I don't know, but to the family.... It's holding the family together, I guess. It looks that way, though I didn't realize it before I saw this.*

Guide: What would the family unit look like if the disease were gone? Can you envision that and remove it for a moment?

Randy: Well, if it were gone the stage would turn green, or certainly not this dark. *[Randy takes a new sheet of green and re-stages the family without the disease. He has trouble placing the three members so they touch and interconnect. He overlaps one edge of the wife and daughter shapes so they all touch his shape, but it is awkward. He pulls the two maps close together to study the difference.]* Without the disease, it's hard to create closeness. Not as easy to touch as it is in the disease map, where the disease controls everything so easily.



Guide: That's an important insight.

Randy: Without the disease, we have to work at being close.

Guide: Close your eyes and see how that feels. See yourself making a bridge between life with the disease and life without the disease.

Randy: That feels really hard, but I guess I could try a bridge. *[He tears a piece of gray paper to join the two maps and studies them in silence.]* It's possible, but it changes the relationships. She gets the bulk of childcare, that's the monkey wrench.

Guide: What's the monkey wrench? Does that leave you out?

Randy: Hmm...I guess it does, a little. Togetherness means a lot to us; we are equal care. We're very close the way it is now.

Guide: Something to think about: the "monkey wrench" vs. the disease. If you were the disease, what would you say about this?

Randy: I can see a time when the disease won't be an issue, when things will be different for the three of us.

Guide: In the meantime, ask the disease how it might be considered an asset?

Randy: As an asset? I suppose it makes us all more sensitive to pain and suffering.

Guide: What does that do for you?

Randy: I hope it makes her concerned for other people.

Guide: You mean, if the disease goes away Dona might forget about the suffering of others?

Randy: We may need it a little longer. It's a wonderful excuse to leave early, to skip things. We are aware how we use it, especially with our in-laws. But we've gotten enough from it. *[He says this to the disease, with a tinge of anger.]*

Guide: Close your eyes and hear Dona's voice. What do you hear her saying about this?

Randy *(as Dona)*: I know how others feel. I'm ready to have it go away. I've had enough.

Guide: Ask Dona how she would like to help you make disease go away? How would she start the process of separation?

Randy: She says it's her problem. (*As Dona*): You parents stay out of it or it won't go away.

Guide: Start the separation on the map, so we can see it. How does that feel?

Randy: [*Studying the separation and the dynamics of this new position.*] So-so. We are no longer together.

This was the end of the first session. Together we reviewed the videotape. A week later, we had the second session.



Randy: I see with the disease one thing we don't have to work at is being close. Physical closeness would change without it. The problem gives the three of us a very good relationship.

Guide: Close your eyes and see how it feels to be the child in the center of this relationship.

Randy (*as Dona*): It's not so bad; it's all I've ever known. I don't have to fight for attention like my cousins do. It's the condition of my life.

Guide: Repeat that.

Randy (*as Dona*): It's the condition of my life.

Guide: As Dona, knowing what you know now, what would help you heal and grow? What would help you become your well Self?

Randy (*as Dona*): *Moderation!* It's just too much. They do too much, worry too much. They are scared of me.

Guide: Say that so your father hears it.

Randy: But it's hard, when you see her scratching, not to do something.

Guide: Dona, when your father is feeling desperate, and when his *doing* is too much for you, how can you help him?

Randy (*as Dona*): I tell him all the time that the things they do to get me up every morning are worse than the disease. It's awful.

Guide: What do they do?

Randy: Well, she has to go to school. She can't miss school, so we bathe her, salve her eruptions, sometimes bandage them, make her take her medicine. We have doctors' appointments, etc.

Guide: Dona, you not only have to have this disease, but you have to keep the schedule of the well children?

Randy (*as Dona*): That's right!

Guide: What would happen, Dona, if you got some advice from your little sick body about what's going on inside you?

Randy (*as Dona*): It's like the skin gets excited. I can see it happening, flaking, itching, bleeding...it's unbearable.

Guide: Dona, ask your control system what it needs to allow you to be in charge of this excitement.

Randy (*as Dona's body*): If it's a question of stress, I have to rise above it.

Guide: Say that again.

Randy (*as Dona's body*): I have to *rise above* stress. I get tense about what my parents make go through.

Guide: Randy, be sure you heard those words from the body of Dona, they are important. Hear yourself say them again.

Randy (*as Dona's body*): My life is a series of roadblocks. I have to divert and delay this ordeal. I am part of this body, this insufferably sweet and cute orphan. I need just a minute longer before they start those terrible creams, salves, pills, bathing, and doctors' visits.

Guide: As Dona's body, tell us what would help to calm you. Design for Randy a healing program to un-

block the road that would put you in charge of healing yourself.

Randy (*as Dona's body*): I'd cut out everything, including the vitamins. I can eat natural things that are good for me, in moderation, of course.

Guide: You've learned a lot about moderation for a three-year-old. How will you moderate the scratching, that explodes the skin? could you re-channel that expertise into something more creative?

Randy (*as Dona*): I begin to scratch when I have to do something I don't want to do. I can't tell them to stop pushing me because they won't listen. They only listen to the doctors. Lots and lots of doctors tell them this and that and they do it to me...all of it.

Guide: How do we get your parents to listen to you?

Randy (*as Dona*): Well, they're pretty desperate now. I guess he's listening, at least a part of him has heard me.

Guide: Yes your father is listening to you today. Explain to him that while you are learning to control your expertise, you need his trust and patience and faith that your body knows what it needs.

Randy (*as Dona*): He's not quite ready. He won't understand; it's too scary. He needs the doctors.... They're responsible.

Guide: He is afraid of the responsibility Cutting out the doctors' order is too much responsibility for him?

Randy (*as Dona*): Yes...too soon.

Guide: What about his wife?

Randy: She's desperate. Maybe you could talk to her teacher.

Guide: Close your eyes. Listen to Dona at school telling the teacher. What does she say?

Randy (*as Dona*): My Mom and Dad are coming to pick me up. That's when I begin to scratch.

Guide: Are you allergic to them? Is that the way you *rise up*?

Randy (*as Dona*): Well, I don't want their presence to mean only unpleasant things to me, but I'm seeing now that it is cyclical, and if I could break the cycle...

Guide: See yourself breaking the cycle.



Randy (*as Dona*): No bath...but I am a little bloody. They don't like that. If it wasn't oozing, bleeding, scabbing, I could go a week without a bath. My skin is amazing, it can look like I've gone through the war and then I can repair it so fast you don't see a trace of it. I scare them when I break out.

Guide: Do you like to scare them? Do you know that some animals have also mastered this art? They use their skin to change color, shoot quills, even poison to protect and camouflage themselves—an amazing strategy. In your case, it seems to be so extreme that it is controlling your life as well.

Randy (*as Dona*): It's a wonderful warning system, indicating where anxiety lies, when my protest has no power, when I'm faced with things I can't handle.

Guide: How could you learn to use words to protect you, give your skin a rest? Your parents might be willing to listen now you know how to speak. You learned this when you had no words. Please guide them. Instead of letting your skin speak for you, what words would you use?

Randy (*as Dona*): I'd tell him to watch, to read my skin. Sometimes when they come in at night and see me scratching, they get mad. I don't want to make them mad; when they're mad it gets me upset. I'm supposed to be very smart, you know.

Guide: Would it be OK with them if you were just an ordinary child?

Randy (*as Dona*): Well, I don't know. They say I'm special, extraordinary for my age. I can read, you know, and I know lots of words, probably because I've been home a lot. I like to be extraordinary, too. I like to shine. They want me to shine.

Guide: Perhaps you could suggest to them that you will shine in good time, but in the meanwhile you just need to grow and be healthy. They can make themselves shine, and you will learn by their example, instead of being pressed to do the shining for them. You have lots of time. It would be good to equal things out a bit. We won't take "extraordinary" away; we will just channel it into healing and balancing so you can control your excitable skin. How will you begin?

Randy (as Dona): I'd be outside more. I'd lower my learning ability. I might become a normal, ordinary kid. Awful! [Laughs.]

Guide: See if your father is ready to turn his intelligence around in order to see it your way. Do you think they could get used to this apartness, this new freedom? Are they ready?

Randy (as Dona): Yes, unequivocally. They would both like that.

Guide: Kids get drowned in words. How could you begin this program without words?

Randy: I'd have to get my wife's agreement. She's still tied to the doctors. But she's desperate; maybe she is ready to listen.

Guide: When in doubt, what is your check system?

Randy: I'm going to listen to the child. If only a part of this works, it will be a miracle.



Notes: Not all illnesses are psychosomatic, but sometimes we need to balance medical procedures with good common sense and not give up all our own insights, wisdom and authority to the medical profession. The value of the Paper Stage is for seeing a problem from a new angle, and the power of role reversal, and closed eye seeing and hearing. learning to trust one's own instincts, and finding the courage to risk self-trust resulted in a long-term life change.

Four years after these video sessions, Randy wrote "You won't believe it. We took Dona off of everything, found a Naturopathic healer who supported us in this hands-off approach. We met with him now and then for reassurance. He did nothing more than hold my daughter's hand and encourage us. Dona is now seven. Her skin is fine. She runs and loves to eat. She swims; she can even get a sunburn "She is normal, and we are going to adopt another child."

Randy said he'd never discussed this work with his wife nor shown her the videotape from our sessions. He had kept a copy, but hadn't even reviewed it himself. "It was truly amazing how we just turned things around," he wrote. "And I can't, in all honesty, tell you how." He sent me "before" and "after" photographs of his daughter and added that the hospital was furious that they had taken things into their own hands.

A Final Warning

At the Apple Store, I was watching tiny toddlers sitting at the computer table playing Squash The Ants. The five-year-old was teaching the three-year-old, and the two-year-old already knew how to push the buttons. Their parents could not drag the kids away from these amazing *new tools*.

New tools for me in the 70's were the secret found in Psychotherapy, Gestalt, and Psychodrama. These are tools that explain the causes and effects of your life experiences that determine and often control your behavior. They were so amazing that I felt driven to share these secrets with everyone I knew.

It's tempting to tell people things about themselves they don't yet know. But it's not a good idea. Before you know it, you have lost some friends and you wonder why they are not enlightened by your insights. They may turn what you said into an accusation, even a condemnation.

Beware of the new tools in this book. Don't volunteer your insights; wait until the person asks for them. If you are bursting with the need to impart your new tools...*then write your own book!*



Conclusion: Think on it

The body wants to be fully used. Nothing is so sacred as to be unusable.

The Sufi says:

“Everyone has become a gold seeker
but the ordinary do not know it when they see it.
If you cannot recognize gold, join a wise man,
but do not seek by attaching yourself
to the brick of the wall,
seek the eternal original.
(Water needs a vessel
between it and the fire, in order to heat.)
One who is traveling in darkness
is yet traveling;
in winter the tree is collecting nutrients.
Enlightenment must come
quadam ba quadam
(little by little) or it would overwhelm.
Be friendly with all the energies
which are given to you.”

Taking our own counsel means *taking responsibility for what we know*. Permissions and approval must ultimately come from oneself. Whatever bargains you make with yourself, let them be the kind you *keep*.

(Once you have lost trust, it can only be rebuilt a day at a time.)

Welcome to the universe of abundance.

Even unwanted, you have the right

To take your place in the universe.

Your purpose will unfold.

“Worthlessness or self-effacement

is an expression of perverse ego,”

says the Dalai Lama.

Perverse ego is a sort of black-sheep pride. As though one were so specially different as to be worse than anyone else, or less valuable! Think about it!!

If we are willing to consider our traumas and trials as a way to experience the depths of our feelings, we can learn, grow and create from them, rather than be their victim.

If we are able to look upon our faults as old “survival strategies,” which we can up-grade and change, we can use them as “help signals,” reminders rather than self-condemnation. We can transform that energy into creativity. We can re-label an issue and see it in a new light.

Nothing is ever more timely than when it appears.

“It is a tragic waste to spend one’s life trying to be what one is not.

We can make life right, or we can make life wrong, it is a choice,”

says Buckminster Fuller.

We can destroy ourselves and allow ourselves to be destroyed by others, or we can choose to channel negative energy into creativity. We can become the victim or the student of the problem.

The key is never hidden far from the lock.

