

Dreamweaving
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“A dream which is not understood is like a letter which is not opened.” The Talmud

During the months of long nights and short days, your body-mind is inviting you to go ‘inside’ more often to hibernate with your unconscious. It is really a “dream time.” The outer world, however, doesn’t change its rhythm to match yours and you may find yourself in the same frenetic activity with little time for pausing or sleeping. As you take inventory this New Year, perhaps you might resolve to accept the call of your body-mind to turn inward and pay attention to your dreamscape.

In many traditions, dreaming is regarded as a time to find answers to one’s problems, take spiritual journeys, communicate with spirits from other worlds or invoke healing energy and solutions for the community in which one lives. What do you believe about dreams? Do you have a way to use them as tools in personal growth and wisdom?

Ignatia Broker wrote about her great-great-grandmother, Night Flying Woman or Oona in Night Flying Woman: An Ojibway Narrative, accepting her invitation to become a Dreamer for the tribe.

“One morning in the summer of Oona’s Seventh year there was a piece of charcoal by her morning meal. She knew the time had come when she must take serious thought of life. She must either pick up the charcoal and go into the forest to learn whether she had a special gift, or she could ignore the charcoal and eat her morning meal. This was the custom of the people, to learn which girls would be Dreamers or Medicine People. Oona sat looking at the charcoal and, being a brave girl, she picked it up and went into the forest.”

If you should decide to accept the invitation to become a Dreamer for yourself and others, here are some ideas that will help you in this process. The dream state is part of the natural rhythm of the brain occurring every 90-120 minutes while you sleep. You may spend as much as 20% of your sleep-time dreaming. By the time you are seventy years old, approximately four years of your life has been spent dreaming. This figure does not include your ‘daydreams’ and constant mental imaging that goes on during your waking time.

What do these nighttime stories and images tell you? There are many ways to look at dreams. Each culture has its own unique way of understanding dreams. Modern psychology looks at dreams as a tool for personal growth. It is the work of the dreamer to interpret each dream in the context of his or her own experience and history.

Dreams can be understood on three levels; literal, symbolic/metaphoric and global/universal. Many people turn immediately to the literal interpretation of the dream. If I dream I am driving my car down the street and my brakes don’t work, it means I better get my brakes checked or I will have an accident. A deeper look at the dream takes you to the level of symbol or metaphor. Let’s assume that the dream symbols represent some aspect of your life. You tell the dream like this: “The part of me that is driving/in charge is trying to stop an out of control/no brakes part of myself. I may be endangering myself and others as I speed out of control.” Could this dream

have a global or universal meaning? Perhaps you are part of a group or system that is out of control; that may need stopping, slowing or re-directing. The collective 'drivers' can change the direction by finding a way to steer the vehicle safely.

Another very simple way to begin understanding your dreams is to make a list of all the parts of the dream, eg, the driver, the vehicle, the brakes, the road, etc. By each word, make a list of associations, definitions or connections that come immediately to mind. Now re-tell the dream using the association words or phrases. Try different combinations. You may be amazed, as you understand the connection to your current situation and problems that may be presenting themselves to you.

The Senoi, a tribe living in the upper Malaysian Peninsula, gather each morning for a dream group. Children are guided to remember and share their dreams. They are given some very powerful guidelines to help them in their dream world. Here are some of the more important ones:

- You can call on whatever help you need.
- You can always take all the time you need.
- You can always protect yourself.
- You can enjoy positive and pleasurable experiences in the dream.
- You can always achieve a positive outcome or solution in the dream.

These are potent directives that engage the dreamer in taking charge of the dream, directing or re-directing, as needed, to finish the dream. This dream approach is a more direct way of experiencing the dream symbols while moving towards solution and self-empowerment.

I hope as you pay attention to your dreams you may be able to have the same feeling expressed by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe:

“There are times in my life when I have fallen asleep in tears; but in my dreams the most charming forms have come to console and to cheer me, and I have risen the next morning fresh and joyful.”

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