

If you don't analyse the dream, it is like receiving a letter and not reading it.

(old Jewish proverb)



Freud / Jung / Gestalt / TA and Dreams:

Freud famously described dreams as “the royal road to knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind” and both Jung and Freud described dreams as communication from the unconscious. Fritz

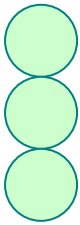
Perls changed the quotation to “the royal road to integration of the unconscious”. However it is important to know that in regard to both dream work and working in the here and now. Perls used the original ideas of Otto Rank, a psychoanalyst who was a close colleague of Freud.

Berne: In the first few pages of TA in TA in Psychotherapy in 1961, his first book on TA, describes how dreams are used to integrate the day's experience - each day therefore creating an ego state unit. This is a direct use of Freud's teaching about dreams. In “What do you say after you say hello” Berne described how dreams were the best method of understanding the client's script protocol and early script scenes.

TA Approach to Dreams - TAJ article in 1974 in which Samuels describes how:

- “A dream is a symbolic representation of a person's existential life position within their life script.”
- “An exquisitely painted picture of where a person is at this stage of their life”

The technique used is described well, in which the dreamer tells their dream in the first person, using each aspect of the dream to tell the story – each part of the dream is then ascribed an ego state.

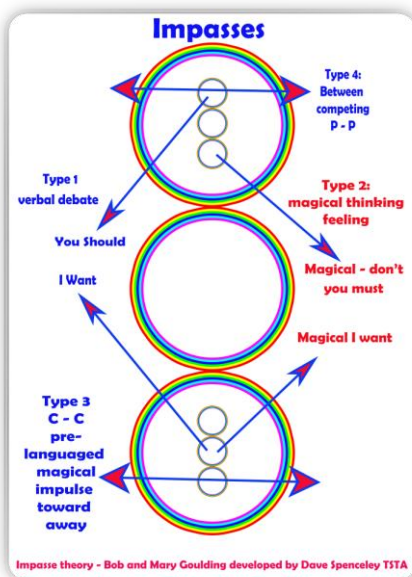


Dreams and new endings: Many years ago, when I was still a member of the church, I was taught this approach as a method of “Christian healing”. I was 17, on a counselling course run by the church, and had no awareness of psychotherapy. The dreamer is facilitated using guided visualisations to create a new ending to the dream – and to live the dream in the here and now – I continue to use variations of this approach when the aim is to put an end to overwhelming and repeating dreams that are experienced as nightmares, and the person is not interested in the meaning of their dreams or is overwhelmed and disturbed by their dreams.



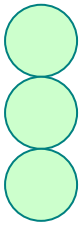
Dreams as Expressions of unresolved impasses.

Impasse theory is possibly my favourite TA theory, which I have written about in various articles. Therefore, it seems obvious to me that one way to understand dreams is that they are expressions of unresolved impasses. I also understand that transference transactions, games and other script enactments are also externalisations of impasses it is clear that dreams therefore also represent unresolved relational transference dramas.



Impasses are expressions of unresolved intrapsychic and relational conflicts which have been internalised. In the following diagram I illustrate impasses, using my developments of Bob and Mary Goulding’s original model.

I have added a fourth impasse between Parent figures, and also understand 3rd degree impasses as pre-verbal conflicts between Child desires.



Dreams – A Jungian approach – as described by Uta Hoehl TSTA, I have been using this approach since Uta first described it to me following her qualification as a Jungian dream analyst.

Dreams are letters from the unconscious:

a dream that is not analysed is just like receiving a letter and leaving it unopened



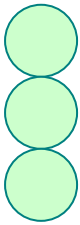
Two types of dreams:

- 1) Developmental Dreams – these are dreams that demonstrate the inner process of change and development and highlight which areas are changing in the dreamer's life. They also demonstrate the shadow aspects of the dreamer's experience which needs integrating.
- 2) Warning dreams – there is a threat in the dream which is a warning to the dreamer that they must pay attention to an aspect of their inner or external life.

All dreams have two levels: Both aspects are worked with in dream analysis. The dream work starts by the dreamer retelling the dream as vividly as they can in the first person in the here and now - the final goal of which is to find integration of all aspects of the dreamer's life – their inner and external experiences

The Objective level: – This is referring to how the dream is a representation of the dreamer's actual external life... the real situations / people / places / objects that are being dreamed about. The aim of dream work is to strengthen the ego.

- a) What in the dreamer's current life experience does this dream remind them of?
- b) How does the dream actually start? This opening transaction in the dream contains / reveals the significant process which needs addressing in the dream work. (Both Jung and Berne emphasised the importance of the opening transactions)

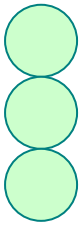


- c) This could be places / events / people / objects / issues / themes – anything currently in the dreamer's life. These are then briefly explored along with the associations to them in the dream.
- d) What relationship has the dreamer to those elements in the dream and what meaning does the dreamer ascribe to those people / places etc that occur in the dream?
- e) How does the dreamer act in the dream?
- f) Is the dream looking to the past / present / future and is this significant in the dreamer's life situation?
- g) All dreams are compensating – (A process in which the dreamer experiences events in their dream which they desire in their lives, but which are not being experienced... such as dreaming of sex when the dreamer is in an unsatisfactory sexual relationship.) – This reveals what is an unconscious process for the dreamer.
- h) Is the dream correcting the dreamer - polarities are explored in the dream – for example if the dreamer is scared of sex, they may dream of sex being fun and safe, or if the dreamer is not taking a situation seriously the dream may be very serious.
- i) Is the dream a regulating dream – showing the dreamer what needs to change in their life?
- j) How does the dream end – and does the ending in the dream have an acceptable ending / solution?
- k) What are the associations of those listening to the dream – the group members and therapist's associations to the dream?
- l) What is the dream telling the dreamer –

The Subjective level:

This is referring to the dreamer's inner life – their unconscious selves reflected in various symbols within the dream. The goal is to set the dreamer's energy free and to integrate all aspects of the dreamer's inner life – rather than fighting them. For this part of the dream work each part of the dream is understood as representing an aspect of the person – all of the dream's elements are the dreamer.

The aspects of the dream which reflect the "anima and animus" (Jungian terminology for the female and male aspects of person) are explored, with the goal of awareness and integrating / assimilating all aspects of the dreamer's experience – their male and female sides.



- An exploration of the: Symbols in the dream – Jung ascribed many images as archetypal images such as water = unconscious / a house represents the dreamer's body / cars are representing autonomy / the sea is life. And many others!
- Mythology – what myths may be being presented in the dream which have archetypal meaning – for example hair loss would remind the therapist of the story of Samson losing his power and strength in the Biblical story.
- Shadow aspects revealed in the dream – the denied self is represented in the dream – such as wolves / dragons etc ... although often more subtle than that!
- Elements in the dream which demonstrate that the dreamer is changing, or desires change and integration are explored.
- All elements described in g above may be related to the inner life as well as the external life and therefore may be explored again at this point.
- The therapists and groups associations may be also shared at this point.
- What is the dream informing the dreamer of?

This is extremely close to the gestalt approach described in the TA literature – however it can provide a much deeper understanding and analysis of the whole process when combined with TA's understanding of script / protocol and ego state process.

TAJ Articles:

1) 1975: **How to Reach Early Scenes and Decisions By Dream Work** - S.D. Gellert

Describes a simple yet effective technique in which the client recalls the dream, and the therapist asks the client how old he / she is in the dream – then invites the client to recall what was going on at that age in the persons life... and uses the associations to lead into further work. A five-chair

technique is then used where each aspect of the dream sits in the appropriate ego states chair and the therapist and client, or group analyse the experience and symbolism. An alternative is to have members of the group act out the different roles in the dreams.



2) 1987: **Dreamwork in Redecision Therapy** - G. Thomson

This is the “classical” TA and dream work article – it is what informed me in my training in the 80’s and I have been referring to it ever since! The article starts with an in depth look at different types of dreams and the purpose of dreams. Quoting the work of Perls he develops the Gestalt approach to lead to rededecision therapy. He reminds us that we are not working in actual dreams – rather “the remembered aspects” of dreams. Dreams are often remembered as unfinished Gestalts.

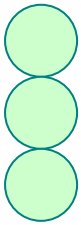
There is a long discussion about how to do dream work – however the technique itself is similar to that described by Gellert - without the ego states and chair approach. The client is invited to tell the dream in the here and now – in the first person.

The dreamer is invited to be the places / objects / forces / people in the dream; Experience yourself as the place / object, describe yourself, and tell the dream as this place / object etc. Once done the dreamer is then invited to retell the whole dream – and to create a new ending – any ending which he / she wants. This enables both integration and rededecision. Note in the article the dreamer is not allowed to change the dream other than the ending however I invite the dreamer to change any aspect they wish.

Otto Rank: It is worth noting at this point that with regard to dream work and working in the here and now, Gestalt (F. Perls) took the ideas of Otto Rank, a psychoanalyst who was a close colleague of Freud.

3) 1999: **Dreamwork Treatment of Nightmares Using Transactional Analysis** - M. Bowater, E. Sherrard

“Nightmares are the equivalent to physical pain in the body” and tell a great deal about the clients psych. The nightmare is often rooted in historical abuse / neglect etc. The article starts with a review of dreams and their importance – including the quote that dreams are natural psychotherapy and are attempts at emotional healing. The article then critiques both the earlier TAJ articles and I think is rather unfairly critical of Samuels who was written at a time when the functional model of ego



states was used freely in a way which we not now consider appropriate. However, quoting Thomson they describe how unfinished dreams are often used effectively in redecision therapy.

They also describe how therapy can be done following trauma – using dream work to heal the hurts and horrors of the trauma. They then finish with further descriptions and discussion about why and how dream work and dreams themselves are healing.

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4) 2001: **The Fern Monster: A One-session Cure With Dreamwork** - Margaret M. Bowater

A lovely description of one session of working with a young boy and his dream.

5) 2003: **Windows On Your Inner Self: Dream work With Transactional Analysis** - Margaret M. Bowater –

Dreams are metaphors to show how you experience the inner and outer worlds, she uses the term a dream ego which acts as a mirror for the person to see an aspect of their lives. A symbolic statement of how you are experiencing your life. There is a full description of how the author understands different aspects of dream work – an excellent article.



6) 2007: **Social Dreaming In A Transactional Analysis Context** - Servaas van Beekum and Kathy Lavery.

This article takes a different and exciting direction – The article starts with an overview of the historical use of dream work in analysis. A section which ends quoting Jung’s idea that dreams are not only an individual experience but are also a collective experience the article makes what to me is some rather majestic steps to describing how some tribes use dreams as a collectively shared experience. The article goes on to describe how the idea can be used in groups to create a powerful group ownership of dreams. One person shares their dream and others follow with their freely associated dreams – This is called a dream matrix – which forms “a womb” - a place for growth and development.

The associations are then analysed – given meanings and interpretations by the facilitators. A full description of this process is offered and the thinking behind the process is explained at length.

This is a fascinating article although one which at times leaves me with doubts because at times it reads more like magical and wishful thinking, making large leaps from one concept to another. However, even with those doubts I have been a member of two wonderful workshops using this concept, run by Martin Wells which I found profound and moving experiences.

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