

Scoring Your Dreams On Process Dimensions

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What is a "Good" Dream?

Most of us do not have enough time to analyze all of our dreams thoroughly. Fortunately, there is a simple dream scoring approach you can use when you just want to assess how well the dreamer is doing in his or her dreams. You can use this quick method as a prelude to a more thorough application of the FiveStar Method. This numerical scoring system is especially valuable in revealing trends and styles in a dreamer's performance.

From the standpoint of the Initiation/Process model, a good dream (or a good dreamer!) exhibits high levels of four qualities: Reflectiveness, Interaction, Role/Status Transformations, and Constructive (or "actualizing") Behavior. When these four qualities are high in a dream, we can conclude that the dreamer is doing what he/she can do to invite a new synthesis of conscious and unconscious perspectives. This notion was first introduced by Dr. Ernest Rossi in his book *Dreams and the Growth of Personality* (Pergamon, 1972), but is a natural outgrowth of lucid dream studies, as well. Rossi noticed that when these qualities were being expressed in the dream, then the waking person, too, had especially good chances to achieve personality growth and positive life changes. Let me define these qualities for you.

The Dimensions of Constructive Dream Process

REFLECTIVENESS -- the extent to which the dreamer asks questions, ponders, goes against "the flow" of the dream, or thinks critically about what is happening. Statements such as "I was aware..." "I wondered..." "I thought..." "I asked..." all denote reflectiveness on the part of the dreamer.

The relationship between this quality and lucidity (i.e. the awareness that one is actually having a dream) is obvious. Lucidity emerges when this reflective capacity is used to question the reality of the experience itself, eventually leading the dreamer to conclude that the experiencing is, in fact, a dream. However, non-lucid reflectiveness by itself is often sufficient to promote good dream outcome; and lucidity is just the icing on the cake. In any case, if you typically exhibit high reflectiveness in your dreams, then lucidity is probably quite accessible.

INTERACTION -- the extent to which the dreamer interacts with the other dream characters (including animals), through speech or activity. No value judgment is attached to this scale. It only measures the intensity of interaction. So a fight and a kiss would both deserve a high rating on this scale. Also, if the dreamer is trying to escape from another dream character -- even this escape attempt involves a great deal of emotion and activity -- the dreamer is not considered to

be interacting with the character, but rather trying to avoid interaction. So escaping from another dream character would receive a low score.

ROLE OR STATUS CHANGES -- the extent to which a dreamer undergoes shifts in status or role in the course of the dream. For example, if the dreamer started the dream as a student in a class, but then was asked to give a lecture or take over the class, this would earn a high score on this scale. Most dreams receive a low score on this scale, because such observable shifts in role or status are usually rare.

CONSTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR -- the extent to which a dreamer engages in some behavior characterized by creativity, boldness, or new-found confidence or competence. This is usually easy to recognize, such as singing a song or trying to help a friend through a crisis. But sometimes, it's hard to know how to score a dream on this scale. For instance, is getting angry at your boss constructive behavior? It could be argued that such an outburst is good in the confines of the dream -- that it achieves a release that could be necessary for one's own mental well being. Or one could argue that it falls way short of an ideal response. When such circumstances arise, which might be ambiguous to an outsider, you have to decide whether such behavior represents a constructive expression on your part.

While you are learning to apply the Five Star model to your dream work, it might be useful for you to learn to quantify the levels of these four qualities in your own dreams. You can do this by simply giving your dreams four numerical scores -- from "1" to "5" -- for each of these "scales". A rating of "1" would indicate that you can see very little evidence of that particular quality in your dream. A score of "2" indicates that you see a small amount of that quality, and so on until a score of "5" would indicate that the dream/dreamer exhibits very high levels of this quality. Of course, such scores are valuable to the extent that they help you see changes/improvements in your dreaming over time.

Sample Dreams and Their Ratings

To help you learn to rate your own dreams, I've provided two sample dreams, suggested ratings for each dream on each of the four scales, and a discussion of my rationale in assigning the ratings.

Dream One: I am in a church with a couple whose young daughter has cancer. The girl knows about her illness. She asks me with great feeling and tears, "Why do I have to die?" I am moved -- I embrace her and begin to cry, too. I really want her to live. I try to comfort her by saying, "All of us are going to die, only you know when." I realize that her parents will not be able to handle her death, and that they've had problems staying together. I realize that the girl's death will probably break up their marriage.

Suggested Rating: 4-5-1-5

Discussion: This is a pretty intense dream. The dreamer is quite reflective. Notice that the dreamer responds to a question, realizes several things about the girl and her parents, and comes

to conclusions based on this internal analysis of this situation. This clearly deserves a "4" and perhaps a "5" on reflectiveness. The dreamer is also interacting very intensely with the little girl, as evidenced by the conversation, the embrace, and the tears. I'd give it a "5." As for role change, however, the dreamer maintains the same role in the dream, albeit a very good one. So I give the dream a "1" on this scale. But again, the dreamer is exhibiting excellent responses to the child; so the dream deserves another "5" on constructive behavior.

Dream Two: I'm in a hospital bed in a building that is still under construction. Elvis Presley is one of the construction workers. I realize that he has already become famous, but has taken time off from his career to do this work. He says, "I have plenty of momentos from my singing career." I say to him that I have many, too, realizing that I actually have more than he does.

Suggested rating: 3-3-2-2

Discussion: This dreamer exhibits substantial reflectiveness, as evidenced by the phrases, "I realize that..." and "I say to him...realizing..." So I would give this dream a "3", but not more. She could have become much more analytical of this strange situation. For instance, she could have wondered about how Elvis could appear when in real life he's dead. Or she could have wondered about why Elvis had stooped to take on such a comparatively unimportant job, etc. As for interaction, she does speak with Elvis, which rates more than a 1 or a 2, but falls short of an intense encounter. So I'd give it another "3" on this dimension. As for role/status change, there isn't much of an obvious shift: She remains a patient in a hospital bed. There is, however, a hint of status change as she realizes that she has more momentos that even Elvis does. This essentially elevates her to the position of expert on his career, even though she is still merely a fan. So I'd give it a "2" or even a "3" on this scale. As for constructive behavior, there is little behavior at all, except for the verbal encounter. Even so, she speaks to a famous person, presuming to know something about him. This can be seen as mildly bold behavior, so I'd give it a "2" on this scale.

As can be seen from the above discussions, I believe that my own ratings are by no means the only appropriate scores. In almost every case, I feel that a rating can be reduced or increased somewhat without being considered "wrong." You might find your scoring approach changing as you become more adept at recognizing the presence of these qualities. If this begins to happen, you might want to go back and look over your earlier scores and see if you need to adjust them to reflect your changing scoring approach.

Summary

Scoring your dreams might seem a bit artificial at first; but it can help you learn to recognize and assess the qualities in your dreams which are considered desirable from the standpoint of the Five Star model. It can help you to fully internalize the principles of process dream analysis, thus improving your skills in employing the more comprehensive Process Method with your dreams, as well as with the dreams of others.

