The FiveStar Method: Using Co-creative Dream Analysis in Psychotherapy
G. Scott Sparrow, EdD

A few months after I had become licensed as a psychotherapist in 1982, I accepted a referral from a therapist in a nearby state, who had heard of my work with dreams. A week later, Gwen entered my office looking ashen and totally defeated. She had been sexually abused as a child by her father, and then raped by her drunken stepfather when she was a teenager. By her own estimation, she had been depressed all her life and had made two serious attempts in the previous year to commit suicide. Shortly after we commenced our work, she reported a brief dream that was pivotal for both of us.

In the dream, Gwen had arrived late for a family picnic beside a lake. When she went to get something to eat, she discovered that all the food had been eaten. Only the bones of a large fish remained on a platter. For some reason that she could not explain to me, she took the platter down to the edge of the lake and lowered it into the water. As she did, the bones came to life again. The fish shimmered with color and swam away.

I was immediately tempted to focus on the compelling imagery of this dream, because I knew that, if I engaged Gwen around her associations to the fish bones, empty platter, uninterested family members, and resurrected fish, the dreamwork might have produced rich and meaningful associations. But Gwen was so depressed that she would have resisted any involvement in amplifying the dream imagery. Even if she had been willing to participate in collaborative dreamwork, a focus on the imagery could have overlooked what was arguably a significant aspect of the dream from a therapeutic angle – Gwen's response to the otherwise

hopeless dilemma that she faced. Arguably, this dream pivoted around the dreamer's decision to carry the bones to the water, which made possible the subsequent transformation of the fish. As such, Gwen's dream behavior became an "exceptional moment" (de Schazer, Dolan, Korman, Trepper, & Berg, 2007) in her otherwise depressed condition. In our initial analysis of the dream, Gwen and I considered how the dream setting and compelling imagery captured her alienated and impoverished status in the family system. But when I pointed out that she alone had facilitated the transformation of the fish, I could see in her eyes the recognition of something previously inconceivable – her participation in her own healing process. In spite of her sense of hopelessness, Gwen could not deny that she had done something remarkable, even miraculous, in the context of the dream. From that moment onward, I often referred back to the dream, saying, "You alone enabled that fish to come back to life," adding, "If you can do that in your dreams, then you can eventually do that in real life." This reminder continued to be a source of empowerment for Gwen through a lengthy therapeutic process. Indeed, as the dream intimated, she eventually did recover.

I developed the FiveStar Method (FSM) of dream analysis (Sparrow & Thurston, 2010; Sparrow, 2013) in recognition of the importance of the dreamer's active role in the co-creation or co-determination of the dream, and as a way to embed the imagery analysis within a relational framework rather than set it apart from the dreamer's involvement. As such, the FSM is an approach that represents a shift in emphasis when contrasted with imagery-focused dream interpretation. Without overlooking the importance of the imagery, the FSM treats dreams principally as *a relational process* between the dream ego and the emergent content, followed by analysis of how the dreamer's moment-to-moment reactions impact the dream imagery and how the imagery, in turn, adapts to these responses. Instead of seeing the dream as "fixed" from the

outset, it views the dream as a branching process that results in one of many possible contingent outcomes based on the dreamer's responses to the emergent content. The imagery, in turn, is viewed as the "mutable interface" between the dreamer and the unseen content – a moment-to-moment vectoring of the unfolding relationship (Sparrow & Thurston, 2010). By making the dreamer's feelings, awareness, choices, and reactions as important as the visual content in the analysis, the FSM comes into alignment with a variety of contemporary therapeutic approaches, including existential-humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, systemic, and solution-focused therapies, all of which place the individual's subjectivity, choices, and responses squarely in the center of the therapeutic process.

Background

The FSM has its roots in my initial exploration of *lucid dreaming* (Sparrow, 1974, 1976), which has been defined as the experience of becoming aware that one is dreaming during the dream (Van Eeden, 1913). After exploring lucid dreaming personally, I became convinced that significant psychodynamic conflict and trauma could be resolved by becoming lucid and fearlessly confronting threatening characters and scenarios in dreams. After completing a master's thesis on lucid dreaming theory (Sparrow, 1974) and a doctoral dissertation on lucid dream induction methods (Sparrow, 1983), I hoped to introduce lucid dream induction as a therapeutic intervention for clients suffering from nightmares, in particular. However, I soon found that most of my clients were uninterested or unable to make the effort, especially when distracted by the demands of their daily lives. Even when they did, the results were usually disappointing.

This dilemma prompted me to reconsider the lucid/non-lucid categorical distinction that had been established by the early lucid dream investigators. We had placed so much value on the

achievement of lucidity per se that non-lucid dreams were considered unimportant by comparison. However, in my work with clients, I began to observe varying degrees of reflective awareness in virtually *all* non-lucid dreams, such that reflective awareness appeared to manifest on a continuum, rather than as an all-or-nothing feature of dreams. When I discovered Rossi's (1972) seminal work in his book, *Dreams and the Growth of Personality*, I realized that he was espousing this non-traditional view of dreaming. Indeed, his statement, "there is a continuum of all possible balances of control between the autonomous process and the dreamer's self-awareness and consciously directed effort" (p. 163), he confirmed my own observations of the presence of active dreamer participation in non-lucid dreams. I subsequently set about to formulate an approach to dream analysis that would be built on such a foundation.

One might ask why the dreamer's impact on the dream had been traditionally overlooked in favor of focusing on analyzing the dream's visual content. One can argue that dreamers and dreamworkers alike have been deeply influenced by culturally embedded assumptions about the nature of dreams since the time of Plato. Sontag (1966), in her famous essay, "Against Interpretation," laid bare the unexamined biases of the Western approach to art (and dreams) when she said

> The fact is, all Western consciousness of and reflection upon art have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art [and dreams] as mimesis or representation ... it is still assumed that a work of art is its content. (p. 4)

Sontag challenged the unexamined preoccupation with content interpretation as the carrier of meaning. In the case of dreams, the dreamer's own creative agency had been overlooked for 2,000 years in favor of interpreting only the visual content, or symbology, of the dream, as if the meaning of the dream could be revealed by the correct understanding of the visual imagery. Boss (1958) was perhaps the first to shift the focus away from content onto the dreamer's overall life

stance or condition as it was reflected in the dream. Rossi (1972) went on to elaborate the dimensions of dreamer reflectiveness, and how this active engagement of the dream facilitated a process of personality development. While Rossi based his assertions on clinical observations, recent empirical studies have revealed significant levels of reflectiveness and volition in non-lucid dreams (Kahan, 1996; Kahan & LaBerge, 2010; Kozmova & Wolman, 2006). As to why we have not noticed the active subjectivity of the dream ego, Kahan and LaBerge (1994) have noted that dreamers tend to report only the concrete attributes of the dream, such as *where*, *when*, *what*, and *who* (p. 237), and that "this concentration on recounting the story of the dream does not allow researchers to discern how the dreamers recognize their own experiencing and doing" (Kozmova & Wolman, 2006, p. 201). Clearly, dreamers have been reporting what they felt was important for the interpretive process, and omitting their own role in the dream's creation.

Different Orientations Raise Different Questions

The content-oriented approach to dream analysis has traditionally raised interpretive questions, such as, "What does this image mean or refer to?" Indeed, Freud believed that dream symbols were disguised representations of specific waking referents. In contrast, the central question of the co-creative paradigm is, "How did the dreamer *respond* to the dream imagery?" Tracking the dreamer's responses as the dream narrative unfolds, other questions naturally follow, such as, "How did the dreamer's responses impact the dream imagery?" and "How, in turn, did the changes in imagery impact the dreamer?" And, finally, one might ask, "How is the relationship evolving or regressing as a result of these reciprocal exchanges?" Therapists who practice family therapy will recognize such questions as *process questions* (Bowen, 1978), whereby problems and their solutions are highlighted by asking questions that underscore the reciprocal or circular dynamics between parties, and the power they have to make a difference.

One might ask if the co-creative paradigm disregards the importance of the imagery in favor of examining the dreamer's responses. Not at all. Actually, it shifts the emphasis of dreamwork onto the *relationship* – the interactive space between them, if you will – just as a therapist naturally shifts his or her focus away from an exclusively *intra*personal exploration when doing conjoint or family work. However, the emphasis on relational process in dream analysis may or may not result in a clear understanding of what the imagery specifically refers to in the dreamer's life; nonetheless, it illuminates the dreamer's relational style, thus effectively preserving the dream image as dynamic or mutable, making it understandable within the relationship, rather than as a separate entity within the dream.

Another client dream illustrates the power of the co-creative paradigm. A middle-aged woman, who had also been a victim of childhood sexual abuse, shared the following dream toward the end of her treatment:

> *I awake to find myself on a bed. I look up and see holes in the ceiling, and rats dropping down through the holes. Horrified, I jump and run out of the room. The rats seem to chase me, so I fearfully run up a stairway to get away from them. When I reach the top, I turn around to see if the rats are still following me. A huge rat is climbing the stairs and is within a few steps of where I stand. I look at it closely, and I'm surprised to see that its fur looks soft and lustrous. Intrigued by its beauty, I reach down as it comes closer and touch its fur. As soon as I do, the rat changes into a snow leopard.*

Again, the imagery of the dream is compelling; it clearly evoked deep emotions within the client. It was clear to the dreamer upon later reflection that she got in touch with the fear and aversion connected to her sexual abuse. But perhaps the more significant aspect of this dream from the standpoint of emotional healing is the dreamer's remarkable willingness to turn around and touch the rat's fur. This act became the centerpiece in this client's deeper acceptance of her own sexuality, which had been tainted by exploitation. The snow leopard thereafter served as a powerful rallying metaphor of the beauty and power of her instinctual nature. Even in the context

of understanding this potent metaphor, however, her courage in the face of the disgusting threat was the unequivocal agent of change. Having a dreamwork method that explored and celebrated her singular achievement further empowered her recovery process.

It might be helpful for practitioners to review the broad differences between content-focused dreamwork and the FSM before proceeding with the application of the latter, with the understanding that these contrasts are more a matter of emphasis than categorical distinctions. Here is a table, a version of which I have reported elsewhere (Sparrow, 2013), that distinguishes the two models.

Content-Focused Dream Analysis	Co-creative Dream Analysis
Dreamwork focuses primarily on *visual and emotional content.*	Dreamwork focuses as well on the dreamer-dream *interactive process.*
Dreamwork may overlook changes in dreamer response or alterations in imagery.	Dreamwork examines the dreamer responses and the reciprocal alterations in the dream imagery.
Dream images or "symbols" may be analyzed independent from the dreamer's own mindset.	Dream imagery is regarded to be *in a contingent, reciprocal relationship* to the dreamer's mindset.
The dream ego is often seen as a passive recipient of the dream	The dreamer is, to some extent, active and responsive in every dream, whether aware of it or not.
The dream is assumed to reflect content parallels with waking life.	The dream may reflect content parallels, but more importantly, it reveals relational patterns or process dynamics that are evident in the dream and waking life.
The principal goal is to translate visual content into meaningful insights about one's waking life.	In addition to the conventional goal, the goal is to discern both competent and dysfunctional response patterns that may be evident in dreams and waking relationships alike, and to embrace the newfound competency or to take corrective action accordingly.

The Method

What follows is a brief summary of the five steps of the FSM. While all the steps have been carefully considered and refined over the course of almost 40 years of development, the method can be used flexibly without necessarily diluting its impact. In the course of a therapeutic hour, clinicians may concentrate on what they consider to be the most fruitful lines of inquiry as long as the central focus of co-creative dreamwork – the dreamer-dream interactive process – is considered the centerpiece of the work.

Step One: Sharing the Dream and Feelings

The dreamer shares the dream in the first-person present tense, an approach first advocated by Perls (1969, 1973). After sharing the dream, the dreamer and dreamworker alike reflect on the feelings aroused by the dream. This step reawakens the affective intensity of the dream, thus embedding the dreamwork in the dream's original matrix of emotion. This sharing also has a way of making the dreamworker's subsequent contributions more congruent with the dreamer's experience.

Step Two: Formulating the Theme or Process Narrative

In collaboration with the dreamer, the dreamworker distills the action of the dream in the form of a succinct summary. The dreamworker avoids mention of specific images and names by using generic nouns like "someone," "something," or "somewhere" to replace specific names, objects, and places. Examples are: "Someone is trying to get somewhere, and encounters an array of obstacles blocking his way," or "Someone is trying to get someone's attention, and finally gets noticed by someone else." This step, which was originally articulated by Thurston (1978) and myself (Sparrow, 1978) corresponds to a structural or process analysis in family systems therapy, which focuses on *how* people are relating rather than on the oft-distracting *content* of the presenting problem.

Step Three: Dreamer Response and Imagery Change Analysis

In collaboration with the dreamer, the dreamworker highlights and troubleshoots the dreamer's responses to the dream content by simply focusing on where the dreamer responded emotionally or behaviorally to the dream situations and characters. The dreamworker uses "process questions" and "process descriptions" to highlight the circular relationship between the dreamer's responses and the imagery changes. Some examples of process descriptions are: "When you reacted that way, the image changed, and then you reacted to it by ...," or "When you reacted that way, the image changed and you ran from the dog rather than allowing it to inspect you." The dreamworker can follow up with process questions such as: "Is this a new stance, or is it familiar?" or "What was constructive about the actions you took?" or "What was unfortunate about your actions?" Then the dreamworker might ask such questions as, "What do you wish you had done differently?" and "How do you think the dream image would have responded to that?"

The dreamworker may also participate vicariously by saying, "If this were my dream, I can imagine myself feeling/thinking/assuming/acting...." This projective component is optional based on the dreamworker's style and philosophy. Protective measures in a group setting – such as prohibiting eye contact and speaking to the group instead of the dreamer (Ullman & Zimmerman; 1985; Taylor, 1992) may be implemented to make sure the dreamer's autonomy is preserved.

Step Four: Conventional Imagery Analysis

This step involves using non-invasive, conventional methods of imagery analysis, which may include:

Amplification (Beebe, 1993; Delaney, 1993; Jung, 1974, 1984)*:* The dreamer shares his or her associations with the images. The dreamworker/dream group can also provide associations

and ideas as well (i.e., projective dreamwork), but this is optional based on the dreamworker's style and philosophy. Again, protective measures may be implemented to make sure the dreamer's autonomy is preserved, such as advocated by Ullman (1985, 1996) and Taylor (1992).

Dialoguing (Perls, 1969, 1973*):* As an added step, the dreamworker/dream group may have dreamers dialogue (role play) with dream images in order to enhance awareness and deepen the relationship with that presumed part of themselves. It is important for the dreamworker to have experience with using Gestalt-congruent questions before employing this method in the FSM.

Step Five: Formulating a Plan of Action

At this stage, the dreamworker asks the dreamer, "Where is this relational pattern occurring in your life?" and "What would you like to do differently in the waking state context, or in the dream, if this type of encounter should arise again?" The dreamer may brainstorm ways of bringing new responses to a problematic situation, either in the waking state or the dream state, or both. Then, in collaboration with the client, the dreamworker will review, in subsequent sessions, the various efforts made and results achieved.

Dream Reliving. At this juncture, it is often valuable to introduce "Dream Reliving" (Sparrow, 1983; Sparrow, Thurston, & Carlson, 2013) as a way to further the resolution of conflict through re-engagement and reprocessing. This is the basic paradigm of most of the current cognitive treatments for trauma-related nightmares, most notably Imagery Rehearsal Technique (IRT) (Forbes, Phelps, & McHugh, 2001; Germain & Nielsen, 2003; Krakow, Hollifield, Schrader, Koss, Tandberg, & Lauriello, 2000). While Dream Reliving resembles IRT by orchestrating a revision of the original distressing dream, it differs by placing emphasis on altering the dreamer's *responses* to the dream as a way to bring about a new ending, rather than

merely formulating a new ending without regard to the dreamer's willingness to engage the content in a new way. As such, Dream Reliving concentrates principally on building a sense of agency – the central focus of co-creative dream analysis – rather than simply manipulating the dream content.

Dream Reliving can be used during a therapeutic session and at home as well. The instructions are as follows:

1. Write down your dream in the present tense, as though it were happening again right now.

2. Relive the dream you've written down in your fantasy. As you do, affirm that this time you will remain fully aware that the fantasy/dream re-enactment is a dream and that you are entirely free to respond to the events in any way you would like. Without deliberately changing the dream imagery and scenarios, allow the dream to change *in response* to your new-found awareness and actions. Try to be as bold and creative as you can to the otherwise unpleasant characters and situations.

3. Once you have relived the original experience and experienced a new version of it, open your eyes and write down this new version.

4. Place the old and new versions beside your bed tonight. Each night that you wish to use dream reliving, get out the old dream and relive it again. Each time you relive it, feel free to experience a new version, and so on. Be sure to chronicle any changes in the new dream as you go.

5. When you get ready to go to sleep, repeat over and over as you fall asleep, "I wish to be more aware in my dreams tonight and manifest a better response to whatever I experience."

Dream Reliving (DR) was originally formulated as a way to induce lucidity and greater reflectiveness in subsequent dreams (Sparrow, 1983). However, it is also designed to attenuate the residual anxiety associated with the original distressing dream, similar to IRT (Forbes, Phelps, & McHugh, 2001; Germain & Nielsen, 2003; Krakow et al., 2000. Furthermore, it may address the larger issue of unresolved trauma contextualized by the specific dream metaphors (Hartmann, 1998), as IRT appears to do.

While DR is useful as a stand-alone intervention for the treatment for nightmares, the use

of the FSM on an ongoing basis arguably produces the same results, at least from my clinical experience. That is, by treating each dream as a codetermined product of the dreamer-dream interaction that one can revisit and remake, every application of the FSM becomes, essentially, an exercise in reliving and remaking the original dream experience. Indeed, *the FSM can be regarded as a progressive interventional process for the resolution of unresolved conflict and trauma*, the results of which can be measured longitudinally over the course of treatment, rather than by the outcome of a single intervention. While empirical research on DR, or the FSM in general, has heretofore been lacking, both approaches clearly set out to accomplish the same goals as IRT – that is, the reengagement and reprocessing of the original distressing dream. Whether DR and the FSM work more effectively or not – on the basis of focusing on the dreamer's responses rather than on modifying the dream outcome directly – will only be ascertained through future comparative studies.

An Example of Applying the FSM

I have chosen to describe an experience of applying the FSM in a group setting that I have reported elsewhere (Sparrow, 2013), because I wish to convey how the FSM, by focusing principally on the dreamer's stated responses to the dream content, tends to minimizes interpretive responses by keeping the group focused on what is clearly manifest in the dream report itself. In applying the FSM to individual work, the dreamworker would proceed in the exact same manner as described below.

Jerry's dream. A middle-aged student agreed to work on one of his dreams in my graduate group counseling class. He had previously shared a painful experience that had occurred about 15 years earlier. He had returned home from overseas with an Asian wife, who was pregnant at the time. As Jerry introduced his wife to his parents, his father had said angrily,

"What are you doing with that … in my home?" Jerry left his father's home immediately and never spoke to his father again. Jerry admitted that he had felt nothing upon hearing about his father's death several years later.

Step One: Sharing the Dream and Feelings

Before Jerry shared the dream in the present tense, I encouraged the group members to join me in listening carefully to the dream and experiencing it inwardly. Jerry then related the following brief dream.

> I am sitting at my desk with my back to the sliding glass doors on the patio. I am working on the group paper that we have to do for Dr. Sparrow's class, and I am feeling anxious about completing it. I hear a knock on the door, and turn around to see my father dressed in a suit standing outside the sliding glass door, obviously wanting to be let in. I think to myself, "I've got work to do," and turn back around, feeling annoyed. He keeps knocking for a while, and then leaves.

Since the dream was so brief, I waited until he finished to ask him about his feelings. (Ordinarily, if a dreamer describes just the facts, I will interrupt and ask about feelings at various junctures where it makes sense to do so.) Jerry said that he felt anxious about the assignment deadline, but only irritation and annoyance at his father's interruption. I then asked each member of the group to share whatever feelings had arisen in the course of experiencing the dream. They had all, without exception, experienced strong emotions. Some were sad about Jerry's rejection of his father; one was afraid because Jerry's father had returned from the dead; and a couple were happy that his father had come back to visit. Jerry was surprised by the range of affect expressed by his classmates. I have found that it is not unusual for a dreamer to experience a narrow range of emotions around significant unresolved issues, and to express surprise when others express a broader array of feelings.

Step Two: Formulating the Process Narrative

In our effort to formulate the process narrative with Jerry's help, we arrived at, "Someone

is aware of someone who wants his attention, but refuses to give it because he considers

something else more important." Jerry was satisfied with this summary, and so was the rest of

the group. We quickly moved on to the next step, which is the heart of dream analysis. Again,

the value of this exercise is to reveal the underlying relational or structural pattern that may apply

to more than one area of the dreamer's life. Later, we find out that this pattern does extend to

several areas of Jerry's social life.

Step Three: Dreamer Response and Imagery Change Analysis

 In the initial assessment of his own responses, Jerry expressed no problem whatsoever in

his firm commitment to his task and his unyielding refusal to entertain his father's appeal. When

group members identified with the dreamer, however, they expressed a desire to try other

responses. Overall, Jerry was again struck by the contrast between what he did, and what the

dream group members had imagined themselves doing. One member imagined opening the door

and letting his father in. Another member preferred to ask the father what he wanted before

allowing him to enter. Another imagined admitting his dad and exchanging heartfelt apologies.

Unlike Jerry's cool intransigence, the group members' responses were generally intense and

engaging. However, the group was not surprised at Jerry's response to his father, since they had

heard the story about Jerry's return from overseas during group therapy sessions and had come to

respect Jerry's strength of will in many different contexts. Indeed, Jerry's ability to stand up to

his father in real life, and to remain committed to the task at hand in the dream, was clearly an

asset that had served him well in many areas of his life. So the group, by respecting that Jerry's

rejection of his father's racism had protected his loved ones from further abuse, enabled Jerry to

reflect without defensiveness on how, in many instances, he had taken this ability to "walk

away" from unjust situations a bit too far. Indeed, he was able to see how he'd left a church with

the same uncompromising firmness, and he began to consider out loud the possibility of returning to church with a more forgiving attitude.

The group also helped Jerry consider the changes that could have occurred in the dream imagery if he had altered his responses to it. Given that some members experienced the father's heartfelt apologies once they'd imagined granting him access, Jerry had to consider the ways he'd kept his father and others from adapting to his needs by refusing to show any flexibility toward them. While some dreams exhibit a dynamic movement between a dreamer's creative responses and the imagery's transformation, Jerry could only imagine what might have happened if he had shown some willingness to accommodate his visitor.

Step Four: Conventional Imagery Analysis

When imagery is considered a moment-to-moment reflection of the dreamer's style of relating to it, conventional questions such as "What does this symbol mean?" effectively freeze the dream in place in the attempt to extract something conclusive about its meaning. That being so, once the dreamer and dreamworker have explored the various ways in which the imagery has changed (or not changed, in the case of Jerry's dream) in response to the dreamer, and vice versa, it is useful to pursue traditional non-invasive methods of imagery analysis, such as *amplification* (Beebe, 1993; Delaney, 1993; Jung, 1974, 1984). Simply put, amplification elicits the dreamer's unique associations to the dream images by asking the dreamer questions such as, "What are your associations to your father's suit? The sliding door? The class assignment?" It is paramount in modern dream analysis to allow the dreamer to *tell us* what these images mean; otherwise, we may impose our own projections, as well as miss significant associations from the dreamer that can greatly enhance the dreamer's overall understanding of the dream.

Jerry had very little to offer the group when it came to his associations to the dream

images. He had rarely seen his father in a suit, so it was significant in that regard. The sliding glass doors made him feel uncomfortable, because he could be seen from behind. When it came to the assignment, he brightened visibly, saying that he was wholly committed to his education and felt good about getting his graduate degree at a relatively advanced age.

The group members were also encouraged to amplify the images. They were, without exception, impressed with his father's suit, believing that it signified the father's desire to make a good impression and to treat the visit very seriously. One member said that it reminded him of burial clothes. They agreed with Jerry by saying that the sliding glass doors provided an opening through which people could come and go and be seen on either side of it, but they were not as negatively inclined to it as Jerry was.

If Jerry had been less resistant, I would have asked him to dialogue with the image of his father. However, the dreamwork had already stirred so much emotion in him that I thought it was best to skip that step, especially in the context of an educational setting. In individual work, dreamers are usually less resistant to engaging the imagery in imaginary conversation, but my style is not to put pressure on a client in either context.

Step Five: Applying the Dream Work

The dreamer was sobered, if not a bit disturbed, by the group process. However, the group remained respectful throughout. If, as Taylor (1992) has said, a dream does not come to tell us what we already know, it is not surprising that the dreamer was left unsettled by the dreamwork. Indeed, some degree of discomfort may actually confirm the value of the dreamwork.

While Jerry held fast to the conviction that he had treated his father properly, he was nonetheless able to see that he had developed a penchant for "walking away without looking

back" in many areas of his life where a more conciliatory position might have served him better over the long term. He ended by saying that he was interested in revisiting one or two relationships in his life in the hope that he could overturn the effects of "emotional cutoff" (Bowen, 1978).

Summary

I did not develop the FiveStar Method as a replacement for the various time-honored content-oriented systems that have emerged since the time of Freud, which continue to work well in a therapeutic environment. Instead, I wanted to shift the emphasis in dreamwork onto the dreamer and dream imagery as interacting systems that co-create or co-determine the dream's outcome in real time. Indeed, co-creative dream theory is based on the idea that the dream experience is, essentially, a "true relationship" (Tarnas, 2006), in which the dreamer and the dream content are capable of adapting to each other through reciprocal exchanges. This orientation may seem new, because of its emphasis on the impact of the dreamer's response set on the dream imagery and the dream's outcome. However, it produces a wealth of new information about the dreamer's role in the dream's creation. Although the best contemporary approaches respectfully leave the ultimate meaning of the imagery up to the dreamer, one is still left wondering if the interpretation is accurate, or accurate enough. Understandable concerns about the presumed meaning can evoke a problematic interpersonal context in which invasive suggestions, or projections, represent an ever-present threat to the integrity of the dreamer and dream alike. One can even argue that invasive projections are an inevitable consequence of content-oriented dreamwork approaches, and that these projections can be tamed somewhat by shifting the analysis to the interactive process.

While the FiveStar Method highlights the moment-to-moment reciprocal interplay between the dreamer's responses and imagery transformations, it also incorporates contemporary methods of imagery work, such as Gestalt role playing, Jungian amplification, and imagery-as-metaphor, once the interactive process has been thoroughly explored. By analyzing the interactive process before and alongside an analysis of the visual content, the dreamer never loses sight of his or her responses as co-determining influences in the dream's direction and outcome. Competent and dysfunctional responses can both be highlighted, somewhat independently from the analysis of the dream content (Sparrow, 2014). Then, once the interactive process has been explored, the analysis of imagery can produce associations that are appropriately contextualized and informed by the interactive process.

Regardless of the particular theoretical rationale governing one's psychotherapeutic practice, Egan's (2007) description of the goal of the modern counseling process as being to "help clients manage their problems in living more effectively and develop unused or underused opportunities more fully" (p. 7) succinctly captures the goals of most contemporary schools of psychotherapy. This perspective shifts the focus in therapy away from insight alone toward a competency and response-based orientation, in which dreamers are supported and held accountable for their contributions to a dynamic relational process. As a therapist, I believe that client responsibility and empowerment are the principal fruits of the therapeutic endeavor, and I know that, if individuals are sufficiently self-aware, are making good choices, are taking tolerable risks, and are assuming responsibility for the consequences of their own actions, they really do not have to know as much about the nature or intentions of those around them. Indeed, while it may help to understand the deeper motives of others, people do not have to figure out why their partner always arrives late: They only need to decide how they want to respond to the

lateness. The FiveStar Method of dream analysis supports this empowering therapeutic stance by directing a client's attention initially to where the real power resides before embarking on a sensitive analysis of the dream content itself.

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Gregory Scott Sparrow, Ed.D. is an associate professor of counseling at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley where he regularly teaches courses in marriage and family counseling, group counseling, and individual counseling methods. He is a past President and Board Chair for the International Association for the Study of Dreams, and is currently Chair of the IASD Education Committee and site administrator for IASD's Online Course Center (www.iasdreamcourses.org). Scott is also on the faculty of Atlantic University in Virginia Beach, where he has taught courses in the evolution of consciousness, the yoga of dreaming, and spiritual mentoring.

As a Licensed Professional Counselor and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Scott has maintained a solo private practice in professional counseling since 1982, and currently practices at The Center in Mission, Texas. He provides counseling services and dream consultations online, as well. He specializes in existential, Jungian, systemic, and transpersonal approaches to therapy, and has developed an innovative approach to dream work based on his lucid dream research, called the FiveStar Method. He is founder of DreamStar Institute, which offers mentoring and certification in dream analysis for laypersons and clinicians. He wrote the early classic, Lucid Dreaming: Dawning of the Clear Light.

Scott has lectured and taught courses across the U.S. on such topics as meditation, spiritual experiences, and dream work methods. He is a student of Jungian psychology, Eastern religions, and contemplative Christianity. For several years, he made a study of the "Christ encounter," which is the visionary or dream experience of meeting Jesus face to face. A book on this research titled, *I Am With You Always: True Stories of Encounters With Jesus*--a Barnes and Noble bestseller, Book of the Month selection, and Quality Paperback selection--that was published by Bantam in 1995. Similarly, he subsequently wrote a book about dreams and visions of Mary, titled *Blessed Among Women: Encounters with Mary and Her Message* (Crown, 1997). He is also author of *Sacred Encounters with the Christ* (Ave Maria, 2002), *Sacred Encounters with Mary* (Ave Maria, 2003), *Healing the Fisher King: A Fly Fisher's Grail Quest* (BlueMantle, 2009), and *The Blue Ornament* (BlueMantle, 2014).