

The FiveStar Method of Dream Analysis

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I. Sharing the dream and feelings

Dreamer shares the dream in the first-person, present tense. If the dreamer is sharing the dream without including feelings, the dream worker may interrupt the dreamer and solicit feelings and subjective experiences. After sharing the dream, the dreamer shares feelings aroused by the dream. The dream worker identifies with the dreamer's experience, and shares feelings that may arise.

II. Formulating the theme or process narrative

In collaboration with the dreamer, the dream worker distills the action in the form of a succinct summary. Avoid mention of specific images and names. Use generic nouns like "someone," "something," or "somewhere" to replace specific names, objects and places. Example: "You're trying to get somewhere, and you encounter an array of obstacles blocking your way, but you don't give up" or "Someone is trying to get away from a threat, but cannot find a place that feels safe."

III. Dreamer Response and Imagery Change Analysis

In collaboration with the dreamer, the dream worker highlights and troubleshoots the dreamer's responses to the dream content by simply focusing on where the dreamer responded or reacted to the dream situations and characters. The dream worker uses "process questions" and "process descriptions" to highlight the circular relationship between the dreamer's responses and the imagery changes. An example might be: "When you (felt/thought/assumed/responded), the image changed, and then you ..." Follow up with questions such as these: "Is this a new response, or is it familiar?" or "What was constructive about your response?" or "What was unfortunate about your response?" Then ask, "What could you have done differently? How do you think the dream image would have responded to that?"

The dream worker/dream group may participate vicariously by saying, "If this were my dream, I can imagine myself feeling/thinking/assuming/acting..." This projective dream work is optional based on the dream worker's style and philosophy, and protective measures in a group setting (such as prohibiting eye contact, and speaking to the group instead of the dreamer) may be implemented to make sure the dreamer's autonomy is preserved.

IV. Conventional Imagery Analysis

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

Amplification: The dreamer shares his or her associations with the images (amplification). The dream worker/dream group can also provide associations and ideas, as well (i.e. projective dream work), but this is optional based on the dream worker's style and philosophy, and protective measures may be implemented to make sure the dreamer's autonomy is preserved.

Metaphor Analysis: What are the principal metaphors in the dream? What broad domain of experience does the image relate to? How does the image anchor and makes understandable the broad domain in the dreamer's life?

Dialoguing: As an added step, the dream worker/dream group may have the dreamer dialogue (role play) with dream images in order to enhance awareness and deepen the relationship with that part of him/herself. Experience with using Gestalt-congruent questions and prompts is important.

V. Formulating a Plan of Action

At this stage, the dream worker asks the dreamer, "What would you like to do differently if this dream should arise again?" You may engage the dreamer in Dream Reliving to explore the impact of new responses. Also ask the dreamer, "Where else in your life can this new response be helpful? Where are you willing to enact this new response?" Any efforts to apply the dream in the dream state and/or waking life situations can be analyzed subsequently and new efforts formulated on the basis of the progress made or difficulties encountered.