

# *Dreams as a Window to Your Inner Selves*

## *from* PARTNERING: A NEW KIND OF RELATIONSHIP

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For us it is clear that there is in the universe, and within each of us, a deeper intelligence that can be ignited as we begin our journey of personal discovery. Once this intelligence is activated it has the possibility of becoming an always-available friend and teacher to us. And what a remarkable friend and teacher it can be! With its help, we begin to make sense out of things that were previously a mass of confusion. We experience meaning, purpose, and direction in our personal lives that simply were not there before. Our dreams begin to make sense to us and they become an important part of our lives. New thoughts, new ways of looking at things emerge.

As we plug into this newly developing intelligence, we begin to experience the meaning and purpose that lie behind it. It wants something from us. It drives us with inexorable power and certainty toward a deeper understanding of our relationships and ourselves. It replaces in importance many of the other concerns in our lives. Our belief systems and the rules we have lived by in the past are now open to examination and a deeper consideration. We feel the purposive nature of this intelligence, we know that it wants something from us, and that it is moving us in an entirely new direction.

Our personal view is that this intelligence wishes us to become all that we can be, to make use of everything that we brought with us into this world. It wants us to embrace all of our selves so that we can more fully enter into life and relationship and learn to balance the re-

markable array of energies that are within us. It wants us to claim our full humanity.

It is a source of immense strength (and a relief, too, we might add) to experience divinity as an integral part of one's partnering relationship. Life in general, and relationship in particular, can be pretty rough going at times. In their groundbreaking book, *Flesh and Spirit*, Jack Zimmerman, Ph.D., and Jacquelyn McCandless, M.D., write about "the third" in relationship. They point out the need to always call in "the third" so that divinity is present and available to us, not just for our individual lives but also for our relationships. This third is an important part of what makes relationship sacred.

What must we do to begin to connect to this divine intelligence? Sometimes we do not have to do anything. Just beginning the process of personal growth can activate this intelligence. Once it is activated, it is there for us. We just have to know where to look for it. Since there are specific ways in which this intelligence manifests, there are also particular things that we can do to support the connection to this divine intelligence and to enhance the spiritual basis of the partnering process. Let's now look at some of the things that you can do to deepen your connection to yourself and to your partnering.

Perhaps the simplest, the most fascinating, and the most rewarding place to begin is with dreams. Our dreams give us the most direct experience of this deeper intelligence. They also bring us into connection with our own spiritual reality, a reality that, in our dreams, is untouched

by the rules, feelings, and expectations of others.

Your dreams can help you understand the amazing family of selves that lives within you. Your dreams are remarkable friends; they give you an objective, or unbiased, picture of how your selves dance with each other and, we might add, dance with the selves of your partner. Let's look at the dream process and see what it can teach you about these selves.

We know that there are many useful ways of looking at dreams. You may have studied dreams already and have your own interpretations. The following is our own particular approach to dream work, one that we have found extremely helpful over the years. As you read this, remember that each of us has our own dream vocabulary, so please be aware that yours may be a bit different from this in some places.

### *Common Themes in Dreams*

There are some dream themes that are very common. We will begin by looking at these and showing you how you might (1) decode them and (2) how you can use the information that they are bringing you.

#### **HIGH PLACES**

Dreaming of being in a high place takes many forms. Sometimes the dreamer is on top of a tall building or on a high mountaintop. There is often a danger of falling, or at least there is some sense that a person in this situation could fall. In some of these dreams, the dreamer is in fact falling from a high place.

When you are up high you are away from the earth. You might be too identified with your mind or with spirituality which indicates that either your rational mind or your spiritual self is likely functioning as your primary self. You are probably disconnected from earth and all that it represents. This would mean that you disown

your body, your feelings, or your instinctual energies. Another way of looking at this kind of dream is that people who are special, and who disown the ordinary, are always high up. Their position is precarious because whenever they stop being special, they can fall down and they fear that when they fall down they will become nothing.

We keep falling in our dreams because we continue to remain too identified with our minds, our being special, or our spiritual nature. So the unconscious shows us falling from high places over and over again. It is basically showing us where we are (up) and what we are missing (down). It is as simple and clear as that. Carl Jung, founder of analytical psychology, called this the compensatory principle of the dream process because the dream is always balancing out whatever we are identified with or whatever we disown.

#### **FAST CARS AND FREEWAYS**

In these dreams we are driving too fast or our car is out of control. There is often an accident or a crash of some kind.

Driving too fast is the classic dream of a pusher primary self, one that is out of control. The crash stops us. For example, Sonny, a very successful financier, dreams repetitively for many years that he is driving on a freeway at high speeds and his car crashes. This is an accurate picture of the way he actually leads his life. He is always busy and never slows down. After a number of years Sonny has a heart attack. Pusher energy can be very dangerous and this amazing intelligence within was sending him repeated warnings of this danger. (His wife was also telling him he should slow down, but that is another story.) If he had listened to his dream, Sonny would have understood its warning and he would have had the opportunity to separate from his

pusher self before he actually got sick.

The car image often gives us a general picture of how we move through the world. If in a dream you are driving the car you drove in college, then your general psychology now is like it was then. If you are in a car and your father is driving it, then your life is being run by your father (either your real father, or the primary self in you that resembles your father).

In these dreams, you are usually racing on a freeway. Again, this is a pusher motif. You might find that, as you pay attention to your dreams and you separate from your pusher, you are now driving down country roads, or you have pulled off the freeway to stop.

#### **QUICKSAND OR STICKY ASPHALT**

Dreaming that you are trying to walk but it feels like your feet are in quicksand or sticky asphalt is another kind of pusher dream. Here the dream is balancing, or compensating, your primary self, the self that tries to push so hard all the time. Dreams often try to balance our primary self in this way. Here you are trying to hurry and you cannot. Your feet are stuck. The harder you try to reach your destination, the worse things get. Your dream is intent on getting the message through to you. A variation of this dream is one in which you are trying to catch a train or bus or ship and, no matter how hard you try to make it on time, you are too late.

#### **SCHOOL OR MILITARY SERVICE**

Dreaming you are back in school or military service is a very common dream. Generally it describes the fact that we are living our life today the way we did when we were in school or in the army. In these settings our lives were not our own and we had to dance to a drumbeat that was not our own. In these settings we had to do what was assigned to us. It is very easy to fall into

life patterns that are psychologically very much like being in school or in the army. This dream usually means that we are following a set of rules and requirements that deny us our freedom. We have no choice but are at the mercy of the rules that in this case are usually the rules of a particularly demanding set of primary selves.

A variation of this dream is being in prison or being locked up in a concentration camp. These dreams reflect a loss of personal freedom in our lives and often indicate a lack of connection to our feelings. They usually come when we are working too hard and life is becoming a prison.

#### **POLICE OFFICERS**

The police represent control. Very often when the pusher energy is out of control in our lives, we have dreams of a police officer stopping us for a traffic violation. This dream is also a compensatory dream. There is something in your life that is out of control and your control side is trying to help you regain control and, most likely, trying to get you to slow down. These are warning dreams and you need to learn to listen to them.

#### **HOUSES**

There are very many variations on the house dream. The image of the home represents your personality and how it is operating in the world. The house gives you a picture of how you are living. Is there enough space? Is there enough light? Is it cold? Is it magical? Do you have your own special space? Dreaming of moving into a new home is connected to a major change in personality. Many times when people are bringing more choice into their lives, they dream of new and more spacious houses.

Sometimes people dream that they are going down into the basement where they feel fearful. In this case they are moving more deeply into the unconscious as they explore new aspects of

themselves. Discovering new rooms or new treasures in a house is learning about new parts of yourself. Dreaming of living in a Victorian-type home might be related to having a set of primary selves that is based on Victorian values.

#### **DANGEROUS PEOPLE OR THINGS**

Being chased by dangerous people or things is one of the most common types of dreams. Whatever is chasing you in your dreams is essentially based on what you are disowning. Many people disown their instinctual energies. They are afraid of their anger, their sexuality, and their emotions. So in their dreams they are chased by wild animals or by dangerous men who want to kill them or have sexual relations with them. By examining what is after you in your dreams, you have immediate access to discovering your disowned selves!

Sometimes these disowned selves can represent parts of ourselves other than our instinctual energies. If you are a pusher type bent on success then you may find yourself afraid of people who are not busy, like unemployed street people, people in hammocks, or “ladies who lunch.” We saw a woman once who dreamed a dragon was chasing her. She crossed a small body of water and there the dragon stopped and became a book. She was a woman who had disowned the serious use of her mind and that became the dragon that was after her. A few months after this dream she enrolled in school and ultimately pursued a professional career.

#### **BIRTH AND DEATH**

The unconscious needs a way to describe change in our personality development. The image of people giving birth to babies is a wonderful way to describe the development of new ideas, new feelings, and new ways of being in the world.

Conversely, the image of someone dying is a way of describing the end of a certain cycle, the end of a certain way of thinking or feeling or being in the world. There is a Buddhist saying that life is a thousand births and a thousand deaths and when we look at the frequency of the birth and death motif in dreams, we can certainly see how this is true.

If you dream that you die it is generally a time of great change in your life. In these situations you are usually shifting away from your primary self system. It is like a death. The old you is dying and a new you will be born.

#### **CATAclysms**

There are a wide variety of cataclysmic dreams. These suggest that there is a big change coming. Here are some of them. There is a huge earthquake and you know that it is the end of the world. It is World War III and you know that the world is coming to an end. There is a gigantic tidal wave that is going to destroy everything.

In most of these dreams the dreamer is going to die. Keep in mind that the dreamer in the dream is generally one of your primary selves. Dreaming of a tidal wave may suggest that your disowned emotional selves are getting ready to overwhelm your rational, controlled primary self. An earthquake means that your primary self that had everything in order is about to be overturned.

#### **FLYING (NOT IN A PLANE)**

This is also a very common kind of dream. To make sense out of it we have to determine the primary self of the dreamer. If someone is a very concrete thinker and a practical person with a strong attention to detail, then the dream reflects a readiness to move into his or her intuition, into the world of the imagination, and, very possibly, into the spiritual sphere.

If, on the other hand, the dreamer is very much identified with intuition and spirituality, then the dream can reflect an overidentification with intuition and the spiritual world. It means that the dreamer is always up in the air and does not have his or her feet on the ground.

Sometimes you are being chased in a dream or a situation is extremely emotional and then you jump up and start to fly. This would be a reflection of escaping into fantasy to escape a situation that is too difficult to handle on a psychological level.

### *Dreams and Relationship*

So far we have been discussing certain categories of dreams that give us pictures of ourselves and the way in which we are living our lives. You can see, as we study these dreams, that we have a friend inside of us, a kind of dream master. This dream master, who is really the intelligence of the unconscious manifesting itself in the dream process, is an amazing advisor. It brings us all kinds of information, ideas, insights, and new ways of looking at things. It seems to want us to look at and embrace more and more of what we are. Its insights about relationship are staggering.

### *The Psychological Divorce*

Listen to the following dream of a woman who had come to one our workshops with her husband. They had both begun to separate from rigidly controlling primary selves and were beginning to meet each other in an entirely new, far more flexible way. This was her dream the last night of the training:

*People are waiting for me to come down to the wedding ceremony except that it was actually a divorce ceremony. I'm wearing the same dress as the wedding dress I wore to my actual wedding. The bodice of this dress is different however. It is beautiful with col-*

*ored beads across it. Neither of us have the script quite ready and so we are not quite ready for the ceremony to begin.*

This is a remarkable dream. What is this divorce ceremony the couple is about to go through? It is the divorce from their primary selves. We think of it as a psycho-spiritual divorce, something that every couple truly needs. It marks the end of the relationship between two primary selves and the beginning of a relationship between two complex, sentient, soulful partners.

Many years ago Hal dreamed that he was in a court of law standing before a judge. The judge asked him what he was there for and Hal told him that he wanted a divorce from his wife (Sidra). He then asked Hal why he wanted this divorce and Hal told him that he wanted it because he loved her so much!

At that particular time Hal was learning to separate from the good father and the responsible father, the primary selves that had been so dominant in his life. Both of these selves had bonded him to Sidra in a way that worked against a deepening of the relationship. So long as Hal was identified with his good father, he could not react properly to Sidra, nor could he establish appropriate boundaries for himself. With the divorce from his primary selves — and from the bonding patterns — he was released and the relationship could move to the next level. This psychological divorce is the divorce that all partners must ultimately get from each other. It is the one that really counts.

### *Bringing Vulnerability into the Relationship*

Let's look at another example of how the dream process can point the way in relationship. A physicist to see us. He married to an artist, his total opposite in every way. Try as they might,

they could not get close to one another. He had no connection to his feelings and his vulnerability. Needless to say, these were her strong suit. During one of our workshops he had the following dream:

*I'm walking down a road and I hear someone crying. I look to see where it is coming from. I walk to the side of the road and there I see a hand sticking up from the earth. I rush over and start to dig. When I finally dig deeply enough, I discover a very young child and I pull him out of the earth.*

Who is this young child that he discovers, that he is ready to discover? It is himself as a four year old when he had to “bury” his vulnerability. The dream master is giving him a picture of his own feeling nature that was buried at that time because his family was too disturbed and he needed to protect himself. He developed a strong logical mind that figured things out. With this, he felt safe no matter how much emotional disturbance surrounded him.

No wonder the physicist and his wife had such difficulty relating. To live in relationship without vulnerability is to live in torment because there is no place to touch at that deeper level that can provide the real food for the soul.

### ***The Dream Master's Picture of the Relationship***

Sometimes the dream master of the unconscious uses humor to describe what is happening in a relationship. Many years ago, we got into quite a negative place with each other. It was pretty grim. Hal went into negative father mode and began taking potshots at Sidra for much of the day and into the evening. These took the form of constant criticisms that she blithely sidestepped. That night Sidra had the following dream:

*Hal is throwing lit matches at me. I keep*

*dodging them so he cannot hit me. Finally Hal explodes and yells at me: “Stop jumping around so much. Stand still so that I can hit you.”*

When we woke up the next morning and Sidra shared her dream, we both started laughing. The unconscious had made its statement and it was very difficult for Hal to stay locked into the negative energy any longer. We cannot tell you how many times in our life together a dream, or a combination of our dreams, has broken a negative bonding pattern between us. What a gift!

Sometimes the directness of the unconscious is quite extreme when it wants us to get the picture of what is happening in the relationship. In one instance, a woman dreamed that her husband was having an affair with another woman. She felt it was a dream so she did not say anything and the next night she had the same dream. Then, amazingly enough, the dream repeated itself a third time.

On the morning after the third dream the woman asked her husband at breakfast if he was having an affair. Once he got over the shock, he admitted to her that such was the case and they began to deal with their relationship and its problems. Imagine the intelligence of the dream master who insisted, who demanded, that this woman become conscious of this affair so that she could meet the challenge and move on with her life and deepen her process. It is as though the dream master forces us to shed our skin over and over again so that change can occur. For anyone who works with dreams, the hand of God is patently obvious and truly inspiring.

Another woman was married to a man who saw himself as very spiritual. He meditated a good deal and often criticized his wife because she did not meditate or have a spiritual practice

of any kind. You might almost say that he was spiritually arrogant. During the course of one of our trainings, the wife had the following dream:

I am standing in a line of people next to an altar. Each person has a gift to bring to God that they place on the altar one by one. Many of the gifts are beautifully wrapped. All I have is a pile of loose gunk in my hand. The gunk is all of the confusion and problems of my life. It is loose and I can hardly hold it in my hand. I feel so very ashamed that this is all I have. Finally it is my turn and I place the gunk on the altar where it quickly spreads all over. Then from above a large fist comes down into the middle of the gunk and suddenly the gunk begins to solidify and out of it emerges a large fish. It is given to me as a gift and I am meant to eat it.

What a remarkable gift the dream master brought to this woman. She never thought of herself as being spiritual. It was her husband who knew how to do that. Suddenly everything was framed in a different way. There was a meaning in her life. Her problems were not just problems. They were the substance of her own transformation. Her dream was a dream for all of us. It showed her that God lives here, now, with all of our problems and all of our imperfections. All we need to do is to step to the altar and give to divinity our greatest gift — ourselves with all of our imperfections. You may be sure that a decisive shift occurred in their relationship as a result of this dream and its message.

With another couple the dream master provided another picture. The husband was always complaining about the fact that he felt his wife was overly protected. He wanted to reach her but never could. During one of our trainings she had the following dream:

I dreamed that I was in a large fortress made of concrete. It had thick walls and great battlements. I was snuggled down safe inside of the

fortress feeling comfortable and glad that I had its protection all around me. I felt safe and well taken care of. Then I could see outside of my fortress and I saw what it was protecting me from. I saw that it was protecting me from a very soft gentle rain that was falling all around, a rain that would have felt good and would have nurtured me and helped me to grow. I was still glad that I was in my fortress, however.

What a remarkable picture of herself the dream master brings to her. Here she is, encased in her fortress. What is outside? A beautiful soft gentle rain that can nourish her if only she would allow it. Eventually she will leave her fortress but for now she needs this protection. What is the fortress? It is her primary self system. It is her mind, her control, her iron discipline, and her absolute requirement that she show no vulnerability.

So we see how dreams so beautifully reflect the dance of the selves as they operate within us and in our relationships. The dream world is like the handwriting of God. What a creative collaboration it is when partners learn how to decipher this writing with each other. Just telling your dreams to one another is a great way to start. There are many different ways to look at and work with dreams. It does not matter where you begin. Just know that the dream master and the unconscious love attention and they both flower when you spend time with them.

### *Partnering: A New Kind of Relationship*

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