

Dream Workshop at the Romanian TA Conference – 27th November 2010

Freud / Jung / Gestalt and 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... Perls (Gestalt therapy) continued this emphasis changing the quotation to “the royal road to integration”.

Berne in the first few pages of writing about TA in TA in Psychotherapy in 1961 describes how dreams are used to integrate the days 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.

TAJ's articles on dreams....

- 1) 1974: **A TA Approach to Dreams** - A. Samuels

“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”

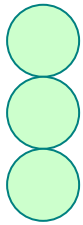
The technique used is described well – A “gestalt approach” is used in which the dreamer tells their dream in the first person, using each aspect of the dream to tell the story – each part of the dream is then ascribed an ego state -

- 2) 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 person's 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 from the appropriate ego state chair.

- 3) 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 redecision therapy. He reminds us that we are not working in actual dreams – rather in the remembered aspects of dreams... Dreams are often remembered as unfinished (or Dave's suggestion _ Fixed) 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 – The



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instructions are: 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.... (note to watch to ensure healthy endings!) – This enables both integration and redecision... note in the article the dreamer is not allowed to change the dream other than the ending – I invite the dreamer to change any aspect they wish.

- 4) 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.

- 5) 2001: **The Fern Monster: A One-session Cure With Dreamwork** - Margaret M. Bowater

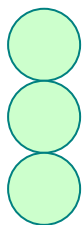
A lovely description of one session of working with a young boy and his dream...

- 6) 2003: **Windows On Your Inner Self: Dreamwork 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.

- 7) 2007: **Social Dreaming In A Transactional Analysis Context** - Servaas van Beekum and Kathy Laverty.

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 dreams 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



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interpretations by the facilitators. A full description of this process is offered and the thinking behind the process is explained at length –

(Dave Spenceley's personal comment) This is a fascinating article – one which at times leaves me with major doubts about the theory, which to me is sounding more like magical and wishful thinking, making large leaps from one concept to another... however these doubts were left aside by my experience in one such dream matrix run by Martin Wells at a TA conference in 2009 = which I found a profound and moving experience. Whatever weakness of the theory it is a very powerful experience to be a part of.

Dreams and new endings:

A technique I learned many years ago – in the church as an approach for “Christian healing” is for the dreamer to create a new ending to the dream – and to live the dream in the here and now – I use this approach when the aim is to put an end to scary repeating dreams and when the person is not really interested in the meaning of the symbols - they simply want to change their experience now!

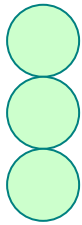
Dreams – A Jungian approach – as described by Uta Hoehl TSTA

Two types of dreams are described:

- 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 dreamers 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

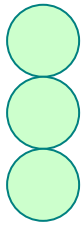
- 1) **The Objective level:** – This is referring to how the dream is a representation of the dreamer's actual external life... the real situations / people / places / objects that are being dreamed about. The aim of dream work is to strengthen the ego.
 - a) What in the dreamers current life experience does this dream reminds them of?
 - b) How does the dream actually start – in TA we would ask - What is the first transaction – and as in TA it is seen that this opening transaction in the dream contains / reveals the significant process which needs addressing in the dream work.



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- 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.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Is the dream a regulating dream – showing the dreamer what needs to change in their life?
 - h) How does the dream end – and does the ending in the dream have an acceptable ending / solution?
 - i) What are the associations of those listening to the dream – the group members and therapists associations to the dream?
 - j) What is the dream telling the dreamer –
- 2) **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.
- a) For this part of the dream work each part of the dream is understood as representing an aspect of the person – all of the dreams elements are the dreamer. (as in TA / Gestalt approaches)
 - b) 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.
 - c) An exploration of the:



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- 1) Symbols in the dream – Jung ascribed many images as archetypal images such as water = unconscious / a house represents the dreamers body / cars are representing autonomy / the sea is life. And many others!
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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!
- d) Elements in the dream which demonstrate that the dreamer is changing or desires change and integration are explored.
- e) 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.
- f) The therapists and groups associations may be also shared at this point.
- g) What is the dream informing the dreamer of?

Dave's comment on this approach - It 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.

Dave Spenceley TSTA

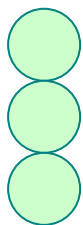
These notes are available at www.ta-psychotherapy.co.uk or email dave@ta-psychotherapy.co.uk

Wikipedia – a great resource has details of dream interpretation from many ancient societies and cultures...

All of what follows is copied from Wikipedia – with thanks!

Freud

It was in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams (Die Traumdeutung*; literally "dream-interpretation"), first published in 1899 (but dated 1900), that Sigmund Freud first argued that the motivation of all dream content is wish-fulfilment, and that the instigation of a dream is often to be found in the events of the day preceding the dream, which he called the "day residue." In the case of very young children, Freud claimed, this can be easily seen, as small children dream quite straightforwardly of the fulfillment of wishes that were aroused in them the previous day (the "dream day"). In adults, however, the situation is more complicated—since in Freud's submission, the dreams of adults have been subjected to distortion, with the dream's so-called "manifest content" being a heavily disguised derivative of the "latent" dream-thoughts present in



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the unconscious. As a result of this distortion and disguise, the dream's real significance is concealed: dreamers are no more capable of recognizing the actual meaning of their dreams than hysterics are able to understand the connection and significance of their neurotic symptoms.

In Freud's original formulation the latent dream-thought was described as having been subject to an intrapsychic force referred to as "the censor"; in the more refined terminology of his later years, however, discussion was in terms of the super-ego and "the work of the ego's forces of defence." In waking life, he asserted, these so-called "resistances" altogether prevented the repressed wishes of the unconscious from entering consciousness; and though these wishes were to some extent able to emerge during the lowered state of sleep, the resistances were still strong enough to produce "a veil of disguise" sufficient to hide their true nature. Freud's view was that dreams are *compromises* which ensure that sleep is not interrupted: as "a *disguised* fulfilment of *repressed* wishes," they succeed in representing wishes as fulfilled which might otherwise disturb and waken the dreamer.

Freud's "classic" early dream analysis is that of "Irma's injection": in that dream, a former patient of Freud's complains of pains. The dream portrays Freud's colleague giving Irma an unsterile injection. Freud provides us with pages of associations to the elements in his dream, using it to demonstrate his technique of decoding the latent dream thought from the manifest content of the dream.

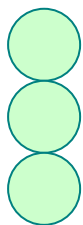
Freud described the actual technique of psychoanalytic dream-analysis in the following terms:

“ You entirely disregard the apparent connections between the elements in the manifest dream and collect the ideas that occur to you in connection with each separate element of the dream by free association according to the psychoanalytic rule of procedure. From this material you arrive at the latent dream-thoughts, just as you arrived at the patient's hidden complexes from his associations to his symptoms and memories... The true meaning of the dream, which has now replaced the manifest content, is always clearly intelligible. [Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1909); Lecture Three] ”

Freud listed the distorting operations that he claimed were applied to repressed wishes in forming the dream as recollected: it is because of these distortions (the so-called "dream-work") that the manifest content of the dream differs so greatly from the latent dream thought reached through analysis—and it is by *reversing* these distortions that the latent content is approached.

The operations included:

- *Condensation* – one dream object stands for several associations and ideas; thus "dreams are brief, meagre and laconic in comparison with the range and wealth of the dream-thoughts."



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- *Displacement* – a dream object's emotional significance is separated from its real object or content and attached to an entirely different one that does not raise the censor's suspicions.
- *Representation* – a thought is translated to visual images.
- *Symbolism* – a symbol replaces an action, person, or idea.

To these might be added "secondary elaboration"—the outcome of the dreamer's natural tendency to make some sort of "sense" or "story" out of the various elements of the manifest content as recollected. (Freud, in fact, was wont to stress that it was not merely futile but actually *misleading* to attempt to "explain" one part of the manifest content with reference to another part as if the manifest dream somehow constituted some unified or coherent conception).

Freud considered that the experience of anxiety dreams and nightmares was the result of failures in the dream-work: rather than contradicting the "wish-fulfilment" theory, such phenomena demonstrated how the ego reacted to the awareness of repressed wishes that were too powerful and insufficiently disguised. Traumatic dreams (where the dream merely repeats the traumatic experience) were eventually admitted as exceptions to the theory.

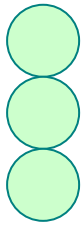
Freud famously described psychoanalytic dream-interpretation as "the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind"; he was, however, capable of expressing regret and dissatisfaction at the way his ideas on the subject were misrepresented or simply not understood:

“ The assertion that all dreams require a sexual interpretation, against which critics rage so incessantly, occurs nowhere in my *Interpretation of Dreams* ... and is in obvious contradiction to other views expressed in it. ”

On another occasion, he suggested that the individual capable of recognizing the distinction between latent and manifest content "will probably have gone further in understanding dreams than most readers of my *Interpretation of Dreams*".

Jung

Although not dismissing Freud's model of dream interpretation wholesale, Carl Jung believed Freud's notion of dreams as representations of unfulfilled wishes to be simplistic and naïve (Freud returned the favour by publicly opining that Jung was fine for those who were looking for a prophet [Freud, "Introductory Lectures"]). Jung argued that Freud's procedure of collecting associations to a dream would bring insights into the dreamer's mental complex—a person's associations to anything will reveal the mental complexes, as Jung had shown experimentally but not necessarily closer to the meaning of the dream. Jung was convinced that the scope of dream interpretation was larger, reflecting the richness and complexity of the entire unconscious,



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both personal and collective. Jung believed the psyche to be a self-regulating organism in which conscious attitudes were likely to be compensated for unconsciously (within the dream) by their opposites.

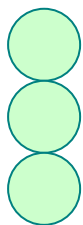
Jung proposed two basic approaches to analyzing dream material: the objective and the subjective. In the objective approach, every person in the dream refers to the person they are: mother is mother, girlfriend is girlfriend, etc. In the subjective approach, every person in the dream represents an aspect of the dreamer. Jung argued that the subjective approach is much more difficult for the dreamer to accept, but that in most good dream-work, the dreamer will come to recognize that the dream characters can represent an unacknowledged aspect of the dreamer. Thus, if the dreamer is being chased by a crazed killer, the dreamer may come eventually to recognize his own homicidal impulses. Gestalt therapists extended the subjective approach, claiming that even the inanimate objects in a dream can represent aspects of the dreamer.

Jung believed that archetypes such as the animus, the anima, the shadow and others manifested themselves in dreams, as dream symbols or figures. Such figures could take the form of an old man, a young maiden or a giant spider as the case may be. Each represents an unconscious attitude that is largely hidden to the conscious mind. Although an integral part of the dreamer's psyche, these manifestations were largely autonomous and were perceived by the dreamer to be external personages. Acquaintance with the archetypes as manifested by these symbols serve to increase one's awareness of unconscious attitudes, integrating seemingly disparate parts of the psyche and contributing to the process of holistic self understanding he considered paramount.

Jung believed that material repressed by the conscious mind, postulated by Freud to comprise the unconscious, was similar to his own concept of the shadow, which in itself is only a small part of the unconscious.

Jung cautioned against blindly ascribing meaning to dream symbols without a clear understanding of the client's personal situation. He described two approaches to dream symbols: the causal approach and the final approach. In the causal approach, the symbol is reduced to certain fundamental tendencies. Thus, a sword may symbolize a penis, as may a snake. In the final approach, the dream interpreter asks, "Why this symbol and not another?" Thus, a sword representing a penis is hard, sharp, inanimate, and destructive. A snake representing a penis is alive, dangerous, perhaps poisonous and slimy. The final approach will tell you additional things about the dreamer's attitudes.

Technically, Jung recommended stripping the dream of its details and presenting the gist of the dream to the dreamer. This was an adaptation of a procedure described by Wilhelm Stekel, who recommended thinking of the dream as a newspaper article and writing a headline for it. Harry Stack Sullivan also described a similar process of "dream distillation."



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Although Jung acknowledged the universality of archetypal symbols, he contrasted this with the concept of a sign—images having a one to one connotation with their meaning. His approach was to recognize the dynamism and fluidity that existed between symbols and their ascribed meaning. Symbols must be explored for their personal significance to the patient, instead of having the dream conform to some predetermined idea. This prevents dream analysis from devolving into a theoretical and dogmatic exercise that is far removed from the patient's own psychological state. In the service of this idea, he stressed the importance of "sticking to the image"—exploring in depth a client's association with a particular image. This may be contrasted with Freud's free associating which he believed was a deviation from the salience of the image. He describes for example the image "deal table." One would expect the dreamer to have some associations with this image, and the professed lack of any perceived significance or familiarity whatsoever should make one suspicious. Jung would ask a patient to imagine the image as vividly as possible and to explain it to him as if he had no idea as to what a "deal table" was. Jung stressed the importance of context in dream analysis.

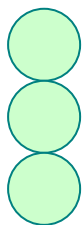
Jung stressed that the dream was not merely a devious puzzle invented by the unconscious to be deciphered, so that the *true* causal factors behind it may be elicited. Dreams were not to serve as lie detectors, with which to reveal the insincerity behind conscious thought processes. Dreams, like the unconscious, had their own language. As representations of the unconscious, dream images have their own primacy and logic.

Jung believed that dreams may contain ineluctable truths, philosophical pronouncements, illusions, wild fantasies, memories, plans, irrational experiences and even telepathic visions. Just as the psyche has a diurnal side which we experience as conscious life, it has an unconscious nocturnal side which we apprehend as dreamlike fantasy. Jung would argue that just as we do not doubt the importance of our conscious experience, then we ought not to second guess the value of our unconscious lives.

Other dream Interpretation:

Perhaps best known are the interpretations in the Bible – God speaking and making his will known through dreams and there interpretation – my favourite is from the book of Daniel - The king forgets what the dream is – God reveals both the dream and its meaning to Daniel... This was good for Daniel as it means he did not get fed to the lions like the other failed wise men did!

So Just what is dreaming – no one really knows! - A **dream** is a succession of images, sounds or emotions that the mind experiences during sleep. The content and purpose of dreams are not fully understood, though they have been a topic of speculation and interest throughout recorded history. The scientific study of dreams is known as oneirology. Throughout history, people have sought meaning in dreams or divination through dreams. Dreams have been described physiologically as a response to neural processes during sleep, psychologically as reflections of the subconscious, and spiritually as messages from gods, the deceased,



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predictions of the future or from the Soul. Many cultures practice dream incubation, with the intention of cultivating dreams that were prophetic or contained messages from the divine.

There is no universally agreed biological definition of dreaming. In 1952, Eugene Aserinsky identified and defined rapid eye movement (REM) sleep while working in the surgery of his PhD advisor. Aserinsky noticed that the sleepers' eyes fluttered beneath their closed eyelids, later using a polygraph machine to record their brainwaves during these periods. In one session, he awakened a subject who was wailing and crying out during REM and confirmed his suspicion that dreaming was occurring. In 1953, Aserinsky and his advisor published the ground-breaking study in Science.

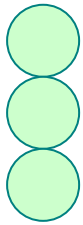
Accumulated observation shows that dreams are strongly associated with Rapid Eye Movement during which an electroencephalogram (EEG) shows brain activity to be most like wakefulness. Participant non remembered dreams during NREM sleep are normally more mundane in comparison. During a typical lifespan, a human spends a total of about six years dreaming (which is about two hours each night). Most dreams last only 5 to 20 minutes. It is unknown where in the brain dreams originate, if there is a single origin for dreams or if multiple portions of the brain are involved, or what the purpose of dreaming is for the body or mind.

During REM sleep, the release of the neurotransmitters nor epinephrine, serotonin and histamine is completely suppressed. As a result, motor neurons are not stimulated, a condition known as REM atonia. This prevents dreams from resulting in dangerous movements of the body.

According to a report in the journal Neuron, rat brains show evidence of complex activity during sleep, including the activation in memory of long sequences of activity. Studies show that various species of mammals and birds experience REM during sleep and follow the same series of sleeping states as humans.

Despite their power to bewilder, arouse, frighten or amuse, dreams are often ignored in mainstream models of cognitive psychology. As methods of introspection were replaced with more self-consciously objective methods in the social sciences in 1930s and 1940s, dream studies dropped out of the scientific literature. Dreams were neither directly observable by an experimenter nor were subjects' dream reports reliable, being prey to the familiar problems of distortion due to delayed recall, if they were recalled at all. According to Sigmund Freud, dreams are more often forgotten entirely, perhaps due to their prohibited character. Altogether, these problems seemed to put them beyond the realm of science.

The discovery that dreams take place primarily during a distinctive electrophysiological state of sleep, rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, which can be identified by objective criteria, led to rebirth of interest in this phenomenon. When REM sleep episodes were timed for their duration and subjects woken to make reports before major editing or forgetting could take place, it was determined that subjects accurately matched the length of time they judged the dream narrative to be ongoing to the length of REM sleep that preceded the



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awakening. There is no "time dilation" effect; a five-minute dream takes roughly five minutes of real time to play out. This close correlation of REM sleep and dream experience was the basis of the first series of reports describing the nature of dreaming: that it is a regular nightly, rather than occasional, phenomenon, and a high-frequency activity within each sleep period occurring at predictable intervals of approximately every 60–90 minutes in all humans throughout the life span. REM sleep episodes and the dreams that accompany them lengthen progressively across the night, with the first episode being shortest, of approximately 10–12 minutes duration, and the second and third episodes increasing to 15–20 minutes. Dreams at the end of the night may last as long as 15 minutes, although these may be experienced as several distinct stories due to momentary arousals interrupting sleep as the night ends. Dream reports can be reported from normal subjects on 50% of the occasion when an awakening is made prior to the end of the first REM period. This rate of retrieval is increased to about 99% when awakenings are made from the last REM period of the night. This increase in the ability to recall appears to be related to intensification across the night in the vividness of dream imagery, colors and emotions.

There have been various proposals regarding dreams and their functions – Hobson and McCarlyin 1976 proposed that the dreams were not meaningful – but were interpretations by the brain of chaos – this led to further research – Jie Zhang proposed that dreams were methods of dealing with and processing memories. Others have proposed that in fact dreams are used for getting rid of unwanted / needed stimuli from the day. There are other suggestions such as the need for evolutionary development.

Dream content: Personal experiences from the last day or week are frequently incorporated into dreams. From the 1940s to 1985, Calvin S. Hall collected more than 50,000 dream reports at Western Reserve University. In 1966 Hall and Van De Castle published *The Content Analysis of Dreams* in which they outlined a coding system to study 1,000 dream reports from college students. It was found that people all over the world dream of mostly the same things. Hall's complete dream reports became publicly available in the mid-1990s by Hall's protégé William Domhoff, allowing further different analysis.

Emotions: The most common emotion experienced in dreams is anxiety. Other emotions include pain, abandonment, fear, joy, happiness, etc. Negative emotions are much more common than positive ones.

Sexual themes The Hall data analysis shows that sexual dreams occur no more than 10% of the time and are more prevalent in young to mid-teens. Another study showed that 8% of men's and women's dreams have sexual content. In some cases, sexual dreams may result in orgasms or nocturnal emissions.

Recurring dreams While the content of most dreams is dreamt only once, many people experience recurring dreams—that is, the same dream narrative is experienced over different occasions of sleep. Up to 70% of females and 65% of males report recurrent dreams.



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Color vs. black and white: A small minority of people say that they dream only in black and white.