

# The Power of Dreams:

*How to Tap the Language of Your Unconscious  
and Unlock Your Mind's Potential*

By Faina Novosolov, M.D.

# OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- History of Dream Therapy
- Problem Solving
- The Dream Interview: A Systematic Approach
- 5 Steps of Dream Interviewing
- Common Pitfalls of Dream Interviewing
- Dream Examples
- Using Dreams in Addiction Recovery
- How to Introduce Dreams to Patients

# INTRODUCTION

# Dream Interpretation:



Let Dream Central interpret your dreams!  
[CLICK HERE TO HAVE YOUR DREAMS  
INTERPRETED!](#)



# Dream DICTIONARY

## Top 10 Dream Symbols

1. [kissing](#)
2. [water](#)
3. [nudity](#)
4. [money](#)
5. [Losing a valuable object or person](#)
6. [flying](#)
7. [colors](#)
8. [running](#)
9. [sex](#)
10. [teeth](#)

# What does your dream mean?



# What does your dream mean?

- Throw out all your dream dictionaries.
- You need to find out what “*water*” means to you.
- Dreams tell us how we really feel/ think in our lives.
- We don't really look at all sides of the problem in waking life because we're vested in the issue.
- Dreams are your best friends.
- It's your opinion about your life.



# **HISTORY OF DREAM THERAPY**



# History of Dream Therapy

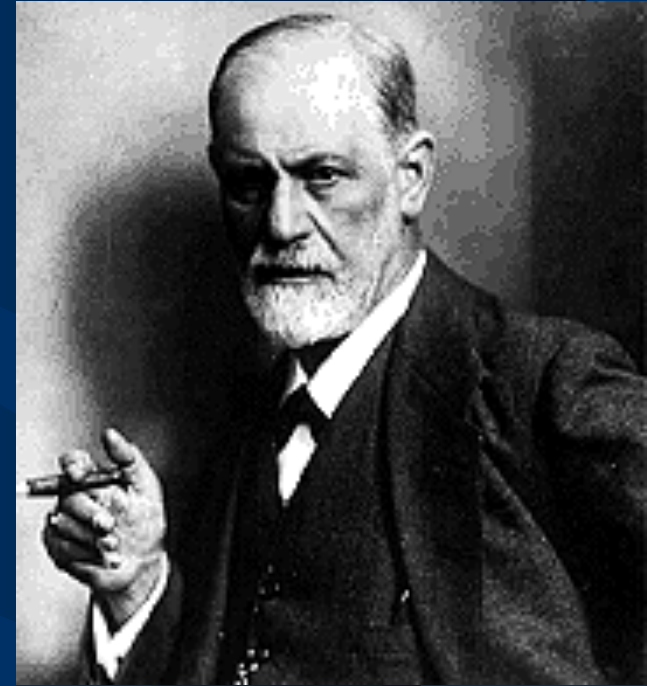
- Ancient dream interpretative traditions date from well before the 1<sup>st</sup> recorded dream in 2700 BC.
- Physical health and illness dreams have been thought to reflect illness in the dreamer by:
  - Hippocrates (c460-c360 BC)
  - Aristotle (384-322 BC)
  - Galen (c130-200 AD)
- Problem solving dreams
- Clairvoyance or religious dreams (Joseph)
- Some skeptics regarded dreams as virtually meaningless:
  - Cicero (106-43 BC)
  - Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

# History of Dream Therapy

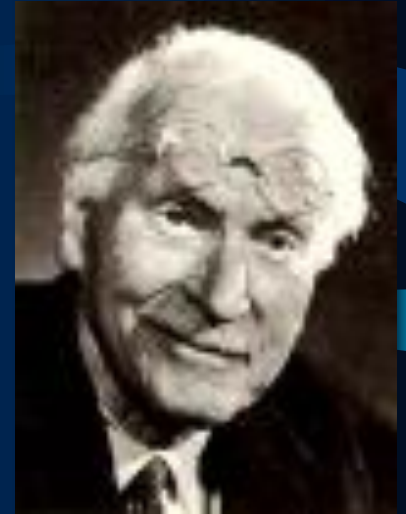
- Psychotheoretical:
  - Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
  - Carl G. Jung (1875-1961)
- Phenomenological:
  - Medard Boss (1903-1990)  
(1<sup>st</sup> Phenomenological)
  - Fritz Perls (1893-1970)  
(Phenomenological, Gestalt type)

# History of Dream Therapy

- **Sigmund Freud (1856-1939):**
  - The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)
  - Still considered the Western cornerstone of modern dream therapy.
  - Uses both the analyst's and dreamer's associations to understand a dream.
  - Claimed that the purpose of dream images was to conceal the hidden repressed infantile wish that instigated the dream.
  - He asked the dreamer to "free-associate" to the image—a practice that usually leads to a long chain of tangential thoughts.



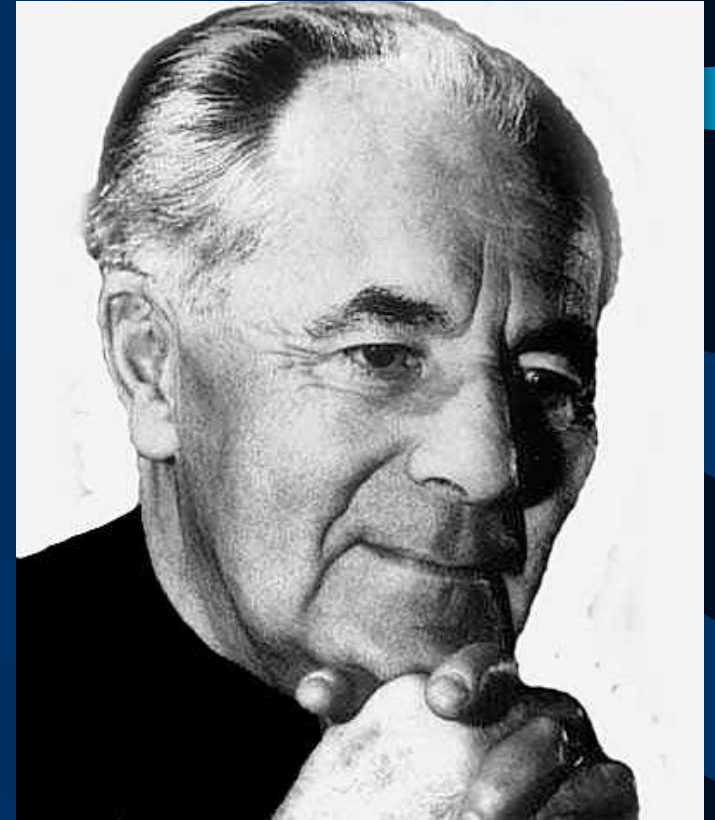
# History of Dream Therapy



- **Carl G. Jung (1875-1961):**
  - Once a student of Freud
  - Jung diverged from Freud's position that the images in dreams result from an effort by the dreamer's unconscious to "censor" and disguise the hidden wish that instigated the dream.
  - Jung saw dreams as revealing, rather than concealing, the unconscious.
  - Unfortunately, in practice Jung often intervened with his own associations and mythological and historical associations to the image. He would often "explain" the meaning of an image to the dreamer, drawing upon his own reading of myths/ symbols.
  - Jungians believe that dreams utilize universal symbols.

# History of Dream Therapy

- **Medard Boss (1903-1990):**
  - Phenomenological approach: Focus on dream elements themselves without reference to elaborate psychotheoretical formulations.
  - Rejected Freudian and Jungian emphasis on hypothetical constructs of the unconscious.



# History of Dream Therapy

- **Fritz Perls (1893-1970):**
  - Gestalt technique
  - Variation of the phenomenological approach
  - Focuses on emotions
  - Central feature: To encourage the dreamer to relive the dream in the present and then, with the therapist, role play characters from the dream.
  - Goal: To maximize the dreamer's associated feelings.



# Historic Breakthroughs

- **Friedrich August Kekulé (1829-96):**
  - Launched the field of organic chemistry
  - Discovered in dreams the process of formation of carbon chains and the circular structure of the benzene ring.
  - *“Let us learn to dream, gentlemen and perhaps then shall we find the truth . . . But let us also beware of publishing our dreams before they have been examined by the waking mind.” (1890)*



# Historic Breakthroughs

- **Dmitry Mendeleev (1834-1907):**
  - In a dream, he saw the periodic tables with which he had been struggling.
  - In the dream, “*all the elements are placed as they should be. I woke up and immediately wrote it all down.*”



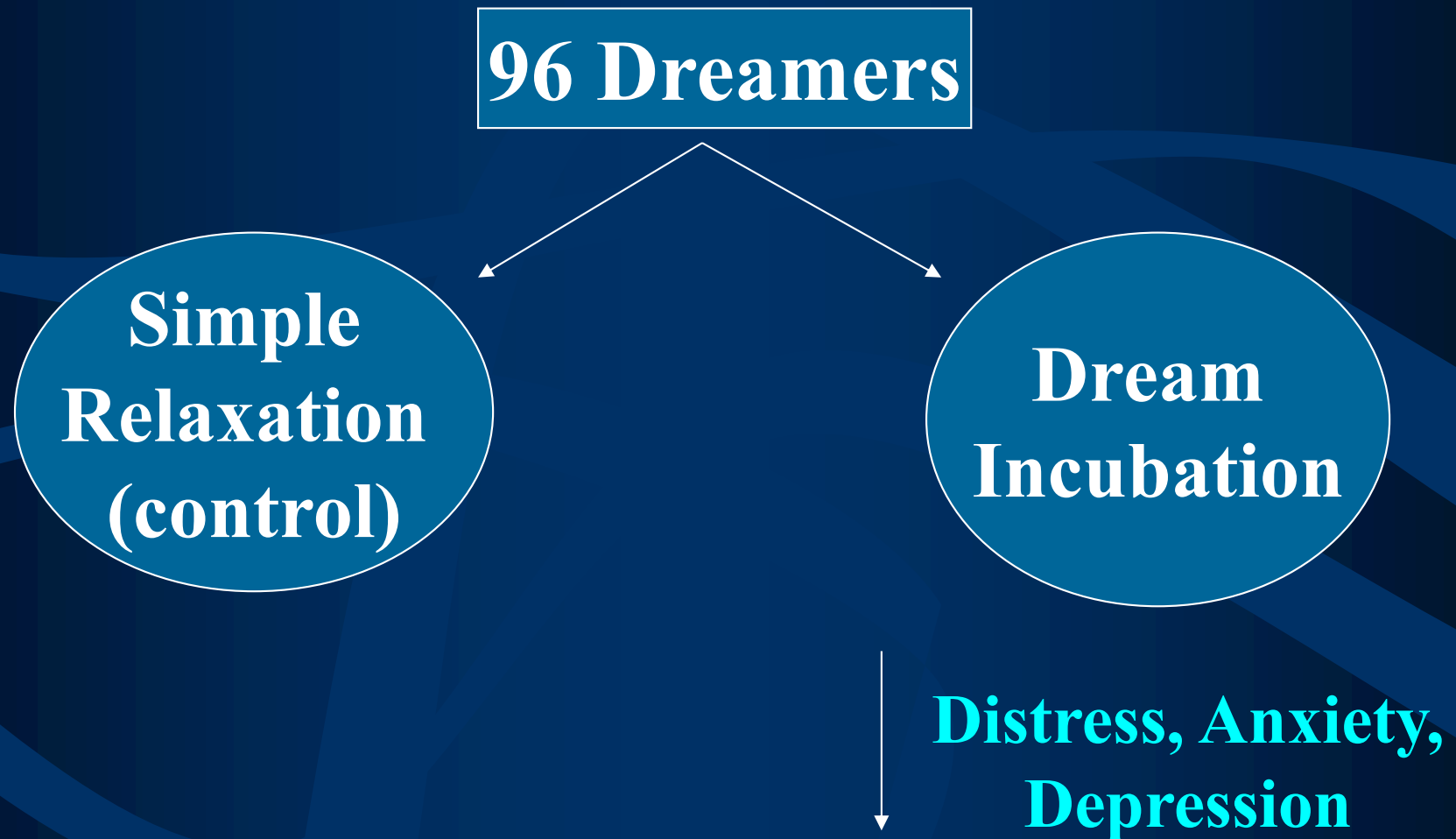


# PROBLEM SOLVING



# Problem Solving

- Research support (RCT)





**THE DREAM INTERVIEW:  
A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH**

# 5 Preparation Steps For Dreamers

1. Dream Recall
2. Dream Incubation (Presleep Instructions)
3. Dream Recording
4. Dream Diagramming
5. Dream Outlining

# Step 1: Dream Recall

- Dream Journal:
  - Keep a notebook, in which you write the following
- Day Notes:
  - Just before going to sleep, write date and title, “Day Note.”
  - Brief paragraph about major events and feelings of the day.
- Recall Preparation:
  - Dream journal, pen and light by bedside.
- Dream Recall and Recording:
  - Upon waking, write down any fragment, thought or feeling and title it.

# Step 2: Dream Incubation

## *(Presleep Instructions)*

- Dream Journal
- Day Notes
- Incubation Question:
  - Subtitle your Day Note, “Incubation Question.”
  - Be as specific as possible.
- Recall Preparation
- Actual Incubation:
  - Repeat your question to yourself as you fall asleep.
  - If you awake without a dream, try it again.
- Dream Recall and Recording

# Step 3: Dream Recording

- Write out the dream ASAP
- Rewrite the dream double spaced, typed with wide margins.
- Separate scenes and number them: I, II, etc.
- Include feelings for every scene.
- Use italics for editorial comments from waking life.
- Make a copy for your dream interviewer.

# Step 4: Dream Diagramming

Setting

Person/  
Animal

Object

Feeling

Action

A woman had made some bread. She  
asked if I wanted some.



# Step 5: Dream Outlining

- Make Two Columns:
  - “Action” and “Feeling”
  - This helps clarify the action and related feelings in the dream.
  - It also helps to bridge the dream to waking life later on.

# THE DREAM INTERVIEW

# Dream Interviewing: 3 Basic Principles

1. Dreams are a metaphor for waking life.
2. The action/plot of a dream is directly parallel to the waking sequence of events to which the dream refers.
3. The quality of feeling in the dream coincides with the affect associated with the waking life event.

-Delaney and Flowers

*AXIOM:* *Dream interviewing is simple,  
but not easy.*

-Flowers



-Internet Photo



# **5 STEPS OF DREAM INTERVIEWING**

# 5 Steps Of Dream Interviewing

1. Description of Major Images
2. Recapitulation/ Restatement
3. Bridge Metaphor to Waking Life
4. Testing The Bridge, using dream details
5. Summary

-Delaney and Flowers

# Step 1: Description

- Physical Description
  - (setting, object, person, animal)
- Function of Image (object)
- Personality (person, animal)
- Unique Features
- Most Striking Feature
- Essence
- Relevant Associations
- Feelings/ Judgments About Image or Action



-Internet Photo



## Step 2: Recapitulation

- Edit and summarize the information obtained about the dream *using the dreamer's own words.*
- Encourage the dreamer to correct you: “Did I get that right?” *Watch for non-verbal cues.*
- Polish the summary into one succinct description, *using the dreamer's own words.*

# Step 3: Bridging

- Mentally divide the plot into short sequences.
- Ask dreamer to repeat the 1<sup>st</sup> sequence with feelings included: *“So tell me again, where were you at the beginning of the dream and what happened?”*
- **The Bridge Question:**
  - *“Is there anywhere in your life that you are in a place which is like.... (repeat dreamer’s description) and where (what is happening in the dream) is (metaphorically) happening in your waking life?”*
  - *“Does X, whom you describe as (recapitulate the description) remind you of anyone, anything, or any part of yourself?”*

## Step 3: Bridging (cont.)

- Allow time for the dreamer to think.
- DO NOT pressure, hint or suggest.
- If necessary, use these strategies to help the dreamer think of a parallel life situation:
  - Repeat or rephrase question
  - Remind dreamer this is a metaphor for something in waking life
  - Ask what *possibly* fits the description and feeling
  - Encourage speculation
  - Check you are using dreamer's own words
- Personalities: Often bridge to parts of the dreamer or someone else
- Move to the next sequence even if you don't bridge the 1<sup>st</sup>

**AXIOM**: Think of the interviewer as the footman with the glass slipper, looking for Cinderella – the best fitting interpretation: She may not be found today, but she's out there somewhere!

-Flowers



-Internet Photo

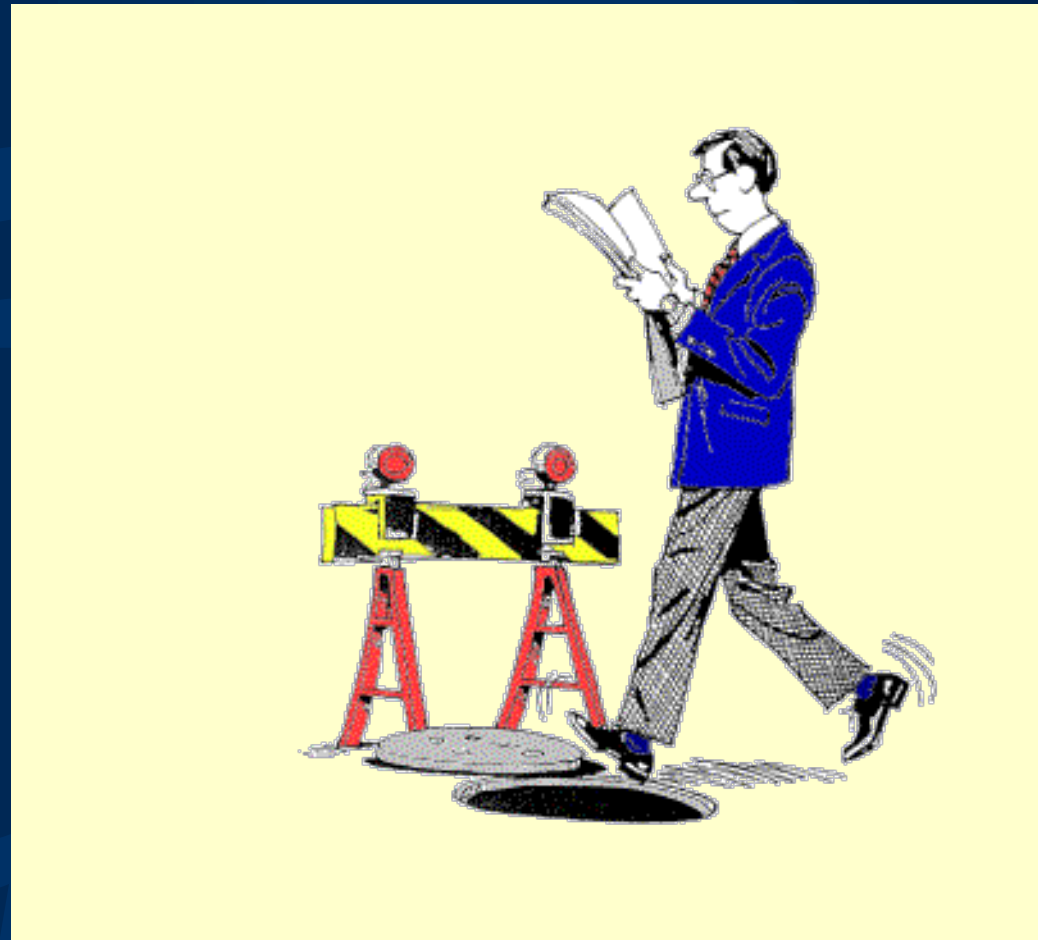
# Step 4: Testing the Bridge

- Clarify how the dreamer sees the parallel between the dream and waking life:
  - *“How does that fit?”*
- Check that the major details of action fit the bridge.
- Check that the major feelings fit the bridge.
- When a bridge fits, all sequences should interpret consistently.
- If a bridge fails a test, ask the dreamer for an alternative.

## Step 5: Summary

- Ask the dreamer to summarize his/her understanding of each scene, reiterating major bridges.
- At the end, have the dreamer recount the whole dream one last time, prior to giving the final interpretive summary.
- Ask the dreamer if he/she has learned anything about themselves.
- Consider options for actions: Ask the dreamer what he/she might do with the new information.

# COMMON PITFALLS OF DREAM INTERVIEWING



-Internet Photo

# Common Pitfalls:

1. Being the expert
2. Upstaging
3. Pride and Prejudice
4. Translating
5. Losing the Scent
6. Jumping to Conclusions
7. Not Prioritizing
8. Chasing Tangents
9. Lagging
10. Drowning in Detail
11. Isolating an Image
12. Poorly Timed Interruptions
13. Losing Momentum
14. Feeling Too Responsible
15. Overworking Dream(er)
16. Leading the Witness
17. Being Seduced
18. Failure to Test Bridge
19. Takeover
20. The Winner's Complex

-Delaney and Flowers



# DREAM EXAMPLES

# Example 1: “My Hidden Constrictor”



## Example 1: “My Hidden Constrictor”

Gina: “I have a boa constrictor wrapped around my body underneath my clothes. No one but me knows it’s there, not even my therapist. The boa’s head, which is like a double fish head, is at my heart, poised to strike me with its venom if I do the wrong thing. It squeezes me if I even think the wrong thing. I am very anxious, for at any moment, if I do something inappropriate or sudden, it could kill me or squeeze the breath out of me. I just live with it like this. No one knows the danger I am in. I realize I must kill the snake. It makes me sad to think I must kill it.”

-excerpt from [Breakthrough Dreaming](#), Delaney.

# “My Hidden Constrictor” cont.

- Describe a boa constrictor:
  - “Boas eat things whole; they are overpowering; they squeeze their victims to soften them up – and perhaps kill them – before swallowing them. This one is poised over my heart, and so can strike with its venom at the most vital center of my being – the center of my feelings.”
- How does it feel to have this thing wrapped around you wherever you go?
  - “Terrifying. I have to monitor everything I do and say or the snake will kill me.”
- At this point, Gina was still unable to bridge.

# “My Hidden Constrictor” cont.

- What about the odd double fish head of the snake?
  - Gina spontaneously bridged to her alcoholic father, who had 2 sides to his personality.
  - Her need to be loved by her father led her to live constricted and even threatened by his venomous disapproval.
  - This explained why she had developed such a friction-free way of dealing with people.
  - She didn't dare be spontaneous.
  - She was living an emotionally constricted life, captive to this snake (need for approval).
  - She had a secret fear of retaliation against independent thinking.
  - This was especially clear in her relationships with men.

## Example 2: “Butter Melter”



## Example 2: “Butter Melter”

- Cynthia incubated the following question:
  - “How do I help my boyfriend with his weight management?”
- Cynthia’s dream:
  - “I am with my boyfriend in his luxurious car. Things are fine, and then I discover that there is a butter melter built into the car on the dashboard. I say, ‘Gee, this is great, but what are we gonna do with it?’ I fiddle with it and try to turn it into a tea server. This isn’t easy; I’m having trouble when I awake.”

# “Butter Melter” cont.

- What is a butter melter and how does it work?
  - “I’ve never seen one before in waking life, but the one in the dream had a button you could push and the stick of butter would pop down into the receptacle that would melt the butter. Then, you could turn a spigot and melted butter would pour out!”
- What do you think about such a device?
  - “It is very luxurious and surprising.”
- Who put it there and why?
  - “It was put in at the factory. It was built in, and the car just came that way.”



# “Butter Melter” cont.

- What is butter?
  - “It is a fat, and it makes you fat. It is unhealthy, the quintessential fat. Me and my boyfriend, Hercule, are very careful about not having too much fat in our diets.
- Is there anything about your boyfriend that is like butter, a fat you are careful not to have too much of, but that is built in at the factory?
  - “Well, he yo-yos with his weight, and his tendency to eat foods like butter and his weight problem is probably built in, at least from childhood. He certainly came that way! You know, I incubated this dream, but I thought it had nothing to do with my question, which was: How can I help Hercule with his weight management? I think the dream is telling me to back off a bit, and allow for the built-in quality of this problem. It wasn’t working too well to turn his butter dispenser into a tea dispenser.”



# USING DREAMS IN ADDICTION RECOVERY

# Dreams in Addiction Recovery

- A good understanding of dynamics can be helpful in formulating behavioral strategies and deepening the quality of recovery.
- Increased dream recall is a commonly experienced symptom in addiction recovery.
- Thus, dreams provide a rich source of treatment.
- Client has ultimate authority over interpretation.
- Collaboration with therapist.
- Good tool to manage feelings.
- Utilizing nightmares models the conversion of distress into a resource.

# Dream Example: “White Water Rafting”



# Example: “White Water Rafting”

- **Roger dreamt:**

“I was white water rafting with a group of friends. The water was relatively calm and then it started to pick up. Things started to get out of control, it got very rocky. The waters were going very fast and I fell out of the raft into the water. I was losing consciousness. The water was very cold, I may have hit my head, and I wasn't sure that I would come back up again.”

# “White Water Rafting” cont.

- Describe the action in your dream.
  - “The most striking part of it was that everything seemed so calm and in control at first. Then the natural course of the river simply started to speed things up. I lost control and was afraid I would go under and die.”
- Do these feelings remind you of any situation in your life?
  - “Yes, this is how I feel when I get near drugs again and, in fact, the people in the boat were friends I used to do drugs with.”

## **“White Water Rafting” cont.**

- Currently he was off drugs and felt very in control. But, in the last week he had started seeing some of these former drug friends again even though he wasn't using.
- Roger understood his dream to be pointing out to him how easy it would be to lose control, to fall back into his old habits and perhaps lose his life to his habit.



# **HOW TO INTRODUCE DREAMS TO PATIENTS**



# How to Introduce Dreams to Patients

- “I am interested in discussing dreams with you. Do you have any interest in including dream work in our therapy?”
- WHY?:
  - I’ve found it to be impressively helpful
  - Expedites therapy
  - A tool you can use outside of/ after therapy
  - Gives a “heads up”/ anticipation of issues before they emerge as problems
  - Nightmares usually occur when we still have time to fix it: Red Flags.

*Thank You and Pleasant Dreams!*



*A special thank you to Drs. Loma Flowers and Gayle Delaney for introducing me to the amazing world of dreams, and for all their help and support.*

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