

Robinsons on Parallel Dreams and Dream Analysis

All of us dream every night. We experience different sleep patterns. We sleep in phases. We all sleep lightly where we can easily be awakened. Disturbance from outside is integrated into the dream so we don't have to wake up. Then we have the REM (rapid eye movement) phases. It is not true that we only dream when we are waking up. **We dream through all the phases of our sleep patterns.**

These were the beginning remarks from Gerhard Baumer, skilled group therapist and instructor from Berlin, Germany, at the International Adlerian Summer Institute (ICASSI) in Switzerland. He addressed the topic of **Dreams and Dream Analysis**. Gerhard has taught at ICASSI for 20 years. The class that was extremely valuable to me personally and professionally was "Using dreams and Early Memories in groups," in Maryville, TN.

Why do we dream like this? What would Adler himself say about this dream? Interestingly enough, Alfred Adler connected with Sigmund Freud, when Freud wrote down his own dreams and interpreted them. Adler wrote an article about dreams and Freud invited him to the famous Wednesday meetings where the finest thinkers in psychology discussed their study, observations and thinking about human behavior together. (How I would have loved to have been there just to listen and ask questions!)

Dreams bring us together as human beings (perhaps even our domestic animals—haven't we seen our pets move legs and ears in sleep?) We all sleep; we all dream; we all have this in common. In our dreams, as humans, anyway, we work on what happened the day before. Our brain is at work through the night problem solving away.

Everything is possible in our dreams: we can fly, dive, or float. We are extremely creative, condensing much into one picture, which adds to the challenge of understanding the dream. We need to use our own fantasy to understand the dream. It contains elements of past, present, and future. The dream always contains the whole life style. In addition to that, the dream may describe a possible solution to the problem we are wrestling with.

Sometimes between client and therapist there is resistance to share a dream. Dreams are very personal and sometimes embarrassing for the client to share with the therapist. The value of dreams is that they tell the therapist where the client is in the therapeutic process. Gerhard pointed out that 50% of all humans have sexual problems sometime during their lives.

Freud focused in on this in his work. His book about dreams was a very significant contribution for the psychoanalytic movement. Freud saw a number of middle class women who were frustrated with their station in life, not allowed to attend the university, with no other choice than to be mother and partner. The conflict between wanting to be fulfilled and being confined to the roles of their time resulted in Freud's label of hysteria. His women clients' hysteric symptoms were a symbol for their station in life. Can you imagine what some of their dreams would have revealed to Freud if he had explored them with his clients?

Dreams were described even before the Common Era (BCE) in the Old Testament. Recall the stories of Joseph and his brothers: Joseph had dreams that sometimes came true, which resulted in a special relationship with his parents. His brothers didn't think much of this and nearly killed him!

Like Joseph, even as little ones we learn at a very early age to plan—dreams are a way of looking ahead. Dreams often are trying

to find a solution. Therapists can ask their clients to dream actively and encourage them to share in following sessions.

Sometimes there is a challenge in the sharing: clients may be ashamed of their dreams and unwilling to share them, particularly if they have sexual dreams about their therapeutic person. Gerhard assured the counselors in the audience that this is useful material for working on. It is not unusual for clients to fall in love with their therapists. Gerhard answers such dreams with a dream of his own. This is how dreams are used to work on current issues.

In dreams, we may find the unexpected in our dreams. It is the therapist's and the client's job to look for the unexpected in the dreams. Dreams and Early Memories lead us to the center of the lifestyle, that is what ideas and beliefs direct our lives. Lifestyle beliefs can be useful to us or they can be stumbling blocks for us.

Gerhard Baumer in his demonstration with volunteers on the stage also collected an Early Memory from each volunteer. He pointed out that the Early Memories/Recollections are often clearer than the dreams. With dreams the therapist needs to do a lot more speculative work, always confirming with the client along the way.

As human beings what we cannot accept about ourselves, we can get encouragement in therapy. Then we are more able to accept the insight about ourselves that is often revealed in our dreams and early memories. Gerhard Baumer was talented in his work at identifying strengths in his clients and helping them see ways they could use their strengths to move toward a healthy goal in a way of use to themselves and others.

Gerhard Baumer has a quiet, gentle way of expressing ideas and relating to his students and clients. His classes at ICASSI are always full. His gift to the therapists, parents, and students in the audience was the demonstration of his skillful analysis of the

dreams brought to him and the helpful way he encouraged and kindly prompted his clients/volunteers into new ways of looking at their lives.