

The technical skills needed to deal with dreams meaningfully can be readily taught. One need only identify, refine, and help conceptualize certain intuitive faculties. At a time when expanded self-awareness seems to be the order of the day, one wonders why the natural route of dream interpretation is not more popular. I would suggest that the socially reinforced privacy of the dream is not fortuitous, and that our analysis of the objective and subjective sides of the dream may have some relevance here. As long as nothing of importance is allowed to find its way back to society **from the dream**, the individual is left to their own devices and has no choice but to absorb its mysteries within their own personal consciousness or unconsciousness. No room is left for any challenge to the social order. There is only room for personal demons and the transformation of social demons into personal ones. Dream consciousness may indeed pose a danger to any bureaucratic or technologically supercharged society.

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Shelagh Andrews

TEENAGE GIRLS' DREAM GROUP

Faifley is a post war housing scheme on the outskirts of Glasgow and part of Clydebank. Like many industrialised areas it has suffered the consequences of large scale closures, notably Singer, the sewing machine factory.

Strathclyde Region has designated Faifley as an "Area of Priority Treatment", one of seventy-five in the region. This in effect means that extra resources are channelled into these areas of deprivation.

Faifley is removed geographically, socially and economically from the cultural supply points of Glasgow, its theatres, music, dance, museums and art galleries.

A part of my job is to support a statutory youth club in Faifley. The provision is mainly one of sport. The girls in the club demanded and needed a great deal of attention. Having been introduced to the healing and caring of a dream group, I decided to use this as a vehicle for giving the young women the loving attention they required.

I began by taking up to 15 interested girls out of the main youth club activity in a hall, sitting with them in a newly created small room, complete with aquarium and comfortable seating and carpets. All around the room the building throbs with noisy activity. I began by putting a time limit of half an hour on the dream group, knowing their poor attention span and desire to move from one thing to another. This helped with the expectation level. Every week it has taken me ten minutes to reach the quality of "listening" silence which I have demanded before beginning the work of really listening to another human being. This is hard work but very worthwhile in the long run.

The quality of listening was developed through relaxation techniques, since I noticed their almost hyper activity, amounting to almost irritability. I also felt it important to tell the young women that I hoped that the activity would be a long term one; here was a place where they could share their hopes and fears and dreams as they grew to womanhood.

The group seemed pleased and embarrassed by this thought - and perhaps by my intensity. About the third week the girls were incredulous to learn of the wide existence of dream groups and were obviously excited at the thought of being part of a wider network.

Each week the quality of listening and relaxation improved. During the first week a girl described a rape dream following an incident in the area. Without interpreting the dream I spoke about the common occurrence of rape dreams in women. This seemed to give a sort of comfort and atmosphere of acceptance in the group about what could be admitted or spoken.

From the beginning the group was popular, and girls would line up in the corridor outside "our room" literally screaming for me to come as 9.00 pm approached. The girls seem greedy for the quality of the experience but they are glad and ready to finish after half an hour.

During the fourth week, May presented her dream. In it she was the mother of a mongol baby. She was afraid to show it to the neighbours. However, at the child's first birthday party, neighbours and friends came in and made fun of the child. The guests departed, leaving one, whom the baby killed. Later that evening the child was put to its bed. The "mother" went to hers. Later she heard the child moving about the house and searched for it but found the child in fact in its own bed. The mother returned to her bed. Something entered the bedroom. It was the child. It killed her. She woke up.

I make no attempt to analyse the actual dreams myself, working at the "intuitive" level, asking open questions, enabling the dreamer to find links between her daily reality and dreaming experiences.

I asked May about her life circumstances. It transpired that that evening May had been looking after her 3 year old nephew whose behaviour was odd. She had been discussing the possibility of a known child being a mongol (Downes Syndrome) with her friend. She had had an angry quarrel with a friend on another matter.

I spoke in general of the common fear of bearing damaged children. I gave the information that some people believed that all parts of our dreams represented aspects of ourselves. We talked about our angry selves and how in dreams it can want to kill, that we all have these "bad" feelings and that we carry burdens of guilt, needing sometimes even to punish ourselves. This information was presented in a general way, there was a high degree of concentration from the group. I sensed a flickering of something not there before "a dawning" I wished that another adult was working on the project, able to give me feedback since I am aware of perhaps seeing what I want to see.

Janice, aged fourteen, dreamed that she got up for school. She went to a bus stop. No-one was there. She got on a bus. Only the driver was there and he had no face. The bell went for school, no-one came. "I was walking about feeling lost and alone" said Janice.

We talked about feeling "lost and alone". Janice suddenly recalled that she had felt lost and alone when she had moved to Faifley. Then she recalled with great excitement that she walked to a bus stop in Faifley feeling the same and then with greater excitement she recalled being lost in Inverkeithing aged four, seeing the figure of a man, but not his face. She seemed to feel these incidents linked up exactly with her dream.

Sara was ill and dreamed that "wee men" came out of a suit case and tried to strangle her. This was a repeating dream. Sometimes the "wee men" tried to stab her, others came swinging ropes like lassoes.

I asked Janice if she knew any wee men. She said not. I asked was her father small. She replied "no he's tall". . . . "but me ma's wee". (Wee ma?) She recalled an incident where her sister had been swinging a cord and trying to strangle her, making her afraid.

At this point I had to leave the room. On my return, the girls having discussed the dream volunteered the information that Janice's "wee man" was a sexual reference for a man's "thing" (penis). The girls were excited at the realisation of the "pun" aspect of dream vocabulary.

Martine strongly wanted to give her dream. In it she was chased by dogs running out of the sea. The dogs changed into chimpanzees which attacked and ate people. Martine finally attacked and killed the chimpanzee.

I asked Martine if she knew the expression "sea dog" but she said not. I asked if she was afraid of dogs but indeed she was not - in fact she had a pet dog, but "wait a minute - when I was three I was bitten by a dog and I bit him back". At this we all laughed but after discussion all the girls agreed this was fair enough behaviour - if babies bite, mothers should teach them otherwise by biting them in turn.

Searching for other avenues I asked if Martine had a pet monkey as a child. She said yes - it had been her toy. I asked her if she liked it, remembering how some children with seeming lack of logic take dislikes to certain "toy" images. She answered that she had hated it - and indeed with her mother's collusion had burned it. We speculated about "pet dog/pet monkey" - loved thing become feared thing and the destruction of that feared thing.

This seemed to complete something for Martine.

Janice presented another dream. She was in the centre of a group of boys and girls. She named Anne and Margaret. The boys began to climb up a drain pole and jump off the roof. Anne tried to make Janice do the same. Janice was on the roof. Anne pushed her off. She woke up before she hit the ground.

We discussed like circumstances in her life-meetings with boys and girls. A quarrel she had had with Anne in the past - her present friendly trusting relationship with her.

We discussed her relationships and other "anxiety" situations in her life. Examples of group and sexual pressure are common incidents in these adolescent girls' dreams. She had not turned up for an appointment with her social worker. We talked about her relationship with the social worker who she said, worried her by asking questions about her brother who had recently been "put into care". Janice role played the Social Worker and herself at a follow-up meeting to the broken appointment. Janice reacted in a very sensible and mature way to (her own) interrogation. This seems to cope with the real life situation..

In a ten week period, the young women have responded in a trusting and mature way to the confidences given. I see them as less frantic in their attention. Even in this short time I have obviously gained enormous insights into their hopes and fears and even aside from the healing value of the ventilation of their problems, we are working together as a group in a practical way to help each other through what can be a confused and lonely time, coping with the mysteries of self identity and sexuality and day to day anxieties.

(The names of the young people have been changed in order to respect the confidential nature of the work.)

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SELF-FORMATION with DAVID BOADELLA and HELEN DAVIS

A six-month training course will be presented by The Centre for Biosynthesis. This will run from September 1983 - March 1984 and the course will include seven weekends and 24 evenings. This is a training group for people in the helping professions, preferably for practising therapists. The cost of the course will be approximately £325.00. For further information, please contact: H. Davis, 57 Minster Road, London NW2 3SH.
