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Winter 2014

DREAMTIME

M A G A Z I N E



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Online Dream Work Leadership Training

Rev. Jeremy Taylor



Since the beginning of time, dreaming has been viewed in cultures all over the world as the primary occasion for entering and encountering the parallel reality of the unseen world(s). Dreaming of the recently dead, dreaming of future events before they take place in waking life, dreaming in accurate detail about the lives and activities of others—no matter how great the physical and emotional distances that separate us, dreaming of other magical realms that seem like heaven and hell, dreaming of what appear to be past lives . . . all these and other common, archetypal dream experiences have served as experiential proof of the existence and reality of these other worlds. Throughout human history, dreams of this sort have always provided the existential basis for the belief that human life is lived on many different planes at once—not just on the shared level of waking, physical reality.

Early in the 20th century, the Hungarian psychiatric pioneer Sandor Ferenczi came to the conclusion that “*dreams are the workshop of evolution.*” Looking at the same evidence, Dr. Carl Jung concluded that not only are dreams the workshop of evolution, the evolution of collective human consciousness appears to take place always and only *in the evolving psyches of particular*

individuals. (This is the primary reason for Jung’s choice of the word “individuation” to describe psycho-spiritual development of both individual people and the human species as a whole.)

My own experience as a professional dream worker for almost fifty years has convinced me that Jung and Ferenczi are both correct, and that our contemporary dreams are fundamentally similar to the dreams of even our most distant ancestors in this all-important regard.

In 2012, realizing that geometrically increasing numbers of people were discussing and interpreting dreams with each other on the Internet, the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) recognized an opportunity to help raise these electronic conversations about dreams to another level. With this goal in mind, the CLF took up the challenging task of training individual people to facilitate online exploration of the deeper meanings and implications of dreams and dreaming by offering web-based leadership training for electronic dream group leaders and facilitators.

The CLF has been reaching out since 1944, identifying and

attempting to serve the diverse and changing needs of isolated religious and spiritual seekers who find themselves without a sangha—that is, people who are geographically and/or socially isolated and unable to find an available gathering of like-minded and like-hearted folks with whom to join in building and sustaining community. In the early days, CLF created a liberal, non-creedal religious community through the mail, and in the last decade of the 20th century they became a primary voice of liberal, non-creedal religious and spiritual inquiry on the Internet.

The current senior minister of the CLF, Rev. Meg Riley, already knew that my community ministry was focused on the individual and group projective dream work that I have been doing since the 1960s. At one level this lifelong work has been aimed at helping individual people generate deeper understandings of the multiple meanings and implications of their own and others’ dreams. At another level, it has also been an effort to help build voluntary communities, both temporary and long-term, devoted to egalitarian, consciously projective dream work, exploring the same deep religious and spiritual questions and intuitions that human beings have been seeking and discovering in their dreams since always.

She asked me if I was willing to design and carry out a training program for cyber-dream-group leader/facilitators that could itself be delivered online. The aim of this effort would be to prepare the graduates to convene, coordinate, and take responsibility for leading online dream groups composed of very diverse participants from all over the world.

I have been facilitating dream work on the Internet since the 1990s (see Mark Stefik's book, *Internet Dreams*, MIT Press, 1997, for an account of this early cyber dream group work), so when Meg offered me this opportunity to carry

my work a giant step further, I accepted it eagerly.

I decided that the best way to start was to put together a training manual focused on the roles, responsibilities, and best practices of the designated leader/facilitator of a group gathered for the express purpose of sharing dreams and facilitating conversations about the many simultaneous levels of meaning and implication that exist in all dreams. The manual would also add a particular emphasis on how these skills can best be translated into the environment of cyberspace.

I also decided to compose this training manual in the graphic style of a comic book. What I had in mind was along the lines of the WWII training manuals that were composed in comic book form by the various branches of armed services to reach and help train the widest possible range of recruits and draftees to do a wide variety of complex tasks, such as aircraft maintenance and improving marksmanship.

I used this form because I believe that the wonders of dreams and the process of projective dream work should be cheerfully extended to as many people as possible, whether or not they are in the minority of folks around the world who regularly read books and magazines without pictures in them.

The result is the *CLF On-Line Dream Work Leadership Training Manual*, which may be viewed in its entirety, for free, in preview mode at blurb.com, where it can also be purchased in various hard-copy and e-book formats. The URL for this preview is:

blurb.com/books/4182755-on-line-dream-work-training-manual-ii.

The CLF cyber-group leadership trainees are required to first register with the CLF, and then to familiarize themselves with the material in the manual prior to our first online meeting. There have been two cycles of training thus far, with plans in the works to schedule more, as need and interest demands.

At the first session, we always clarify and restate our agreements about confidentiality, anonymity, and the use of mutually respectful language, as well as address any technical questions relating to the software program we have adopted



CLF On-Line Dream Work Leadership Training Manual, 2013, p.5

for the meetings. (This is currently zoom.us). Then we move on to selecting the particular dream we will focus on as our training example for this meeting. Since everyone has registered prior to the first gathering, it is possible for the CLF Tech Support Person to pull names out of a hat, just as though we were all physically in the same room together.

The work exploring the dream then proceeds, using the projective “In my imagined version of this dream . . .” open discussion format, with particular emphasis on the techniques and dynamics of group facilitation, and with frequent

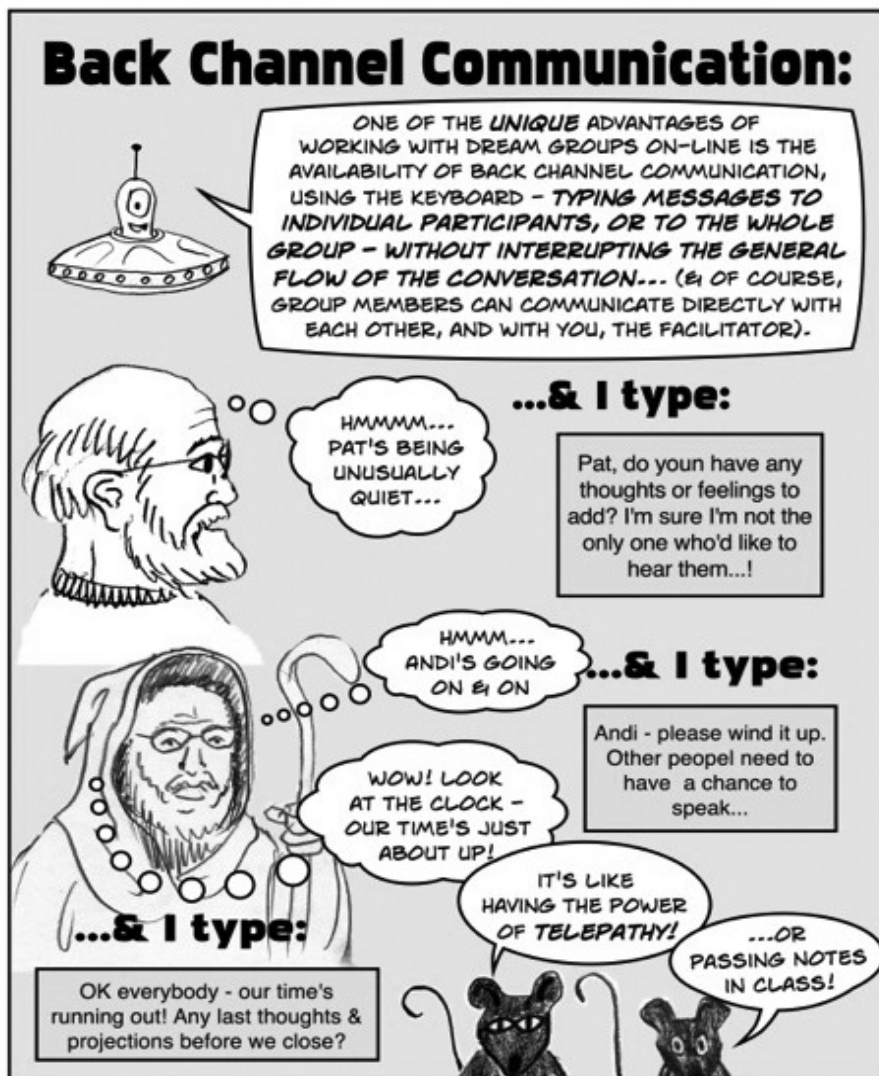
“My own experience as a professional dream worker for almost fifty years has convinced me that Jung and Ferenczi are both correct...”

reference to the all-important question of setting and maintaining an open, accepting, intelligent tone. I believe the primary task of any leader is creating and sustaining a welcoming, collaborative, and embracing tone.

The advent of the world wide web has created a historically unprecedented situation where that most ancient of human efforts—seeking and exploring the deeper meanings and implications of our dreams—is now being undertaken worldwide by more people than ever before, both individually and in larger and larger self-selected groups. I believe that this stunning achievement of computer technology which allows these conversations to be shared in real time, simultaneously, visually face-to-face, all over the planet, has profound implications and enhanced possibilities for the evolution of human consciousness itself.

But that’s another article.

Reverend Jeremy Taylor resides in California and works and teaches around the world. He is one of the original four founders and a past president of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. He is the author of several well-respected books on dreams, is a pioneer in the field of participatory group projective dream work, and recently has blogged on dreams for Psychology Today magazine.



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