

DREAMTIME

M A G A Z I N E



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Amazing Dreamers: Rev. Dr. Jeremy Taylor

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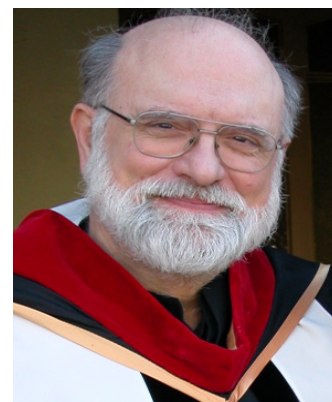
Do you remember your very first dream?

For many children, their first dream is one of their earliest memories. Dreams are awesome gifts. They can gift a child with self-worth, a spiritual sense of their place in the cosmos, and moments of profound joy.

Jeremy Taylor is a dreamworker with over 50 years of experience, and a co-founder of IASD. Something he always says resonates strongly with me: "All dreams come in the service of health and wholeness—even the worst, gut-wrenching, sweat-popping nightmares!" How true this is, and how I wish that every parent knew this so that they could guide children through the darkest nights of sleep and empower them to play creatively with their fantastical, deep dreams. After all, if just one dream can give

a child solace after trauma or help them to face change, what might be possible when we help children to do creative dreamplay on a regular basis?

I chose Rev. Dr. Jeremy Taylor to be my next Amazing Dreamer because of his enormous experience and dream wisdom, and his dedicated contribution to dreamwork over the past half-century. When Jeremy started working as a young man in the middle of the 20th century, dreams were just an "unwanted stepchild" in the scientific study of sleep. Over the years, he has played a significant role in lifting dream work up into the light of conscious awareness and attention, and making it a legitimate topic of conversation among intelligent and educated people around the world. His books include *The Wisdom of Your Dreams* and *Where People Fly* and *Water Runs Uphill*.



Here, Jeremy shares a childhood dream that made him wake up with his heart pumping with delight . . . and simultaneously changed his life forever.

JT: One of the most influential dreams of my life occurred when I was quite young—five or six years old. In my dream, I am exploring a dark castle with an unknown companion. We are searching for a great treasure, very afraid that we will get caught by "the Giant." I see something on the floor in a very dark room that I think may be what we are looking for, but it's too dark to tell for sure.

"Hey, look! I think that's it!" I whisper to my unknown friend. In that moment I suddenly realize that my unknown companion is the Disney character, Goofy. I hear him reaching for a pull chain to turn on an overhead light.

"No! No! Goofy! Don't turn on the light!" I whisper to him urgently. In the dream, I am afraid that turning on the light will draw the Giant's attention to us and we will get caught . . . But he does turn it on—and reveals the most exciting toy/model castle I've ever seen, filled with little moving action figures of me and Goofy and several other Disney characters... "Wow!!" I think to myself. "That's the best, most exciting toy ever!"

My excitement pops me awake in my little bed in my maternal Grandmother's house. I jumped out of bed and scampered downstairs to tell my Grandmother about it. At that time, I truly believed

that my adored Grandmother was the wisest person in the world and that she knew EVERYTHING . . . !

" . . . And the castle had us in it!" I told her, "There were all these little toy figures of me and Goofy and all the others, only we were all alive, and we were all moving around, all over the castle! It was like each room showed us all at different times—only all at the same time! All while we were living, and doing stuff in the castle!"

"That's nice, dear."

"It was wonderful!" I replied. "But what does it mean?"

"Oh, honey," she replied, turning to smile at me. "It's just a dream—it doesn't mean anything."

CJ: Oh dear, I recognise this well-intentioned yet unhelpful adult response so well from my own childhood, and I suspect many other readers will too! How did this make you feel?

JT: I was so shocked! I knew the dream meant something—something really important! I just wasn't exactly sure what. In that moment, the dominoes fell and I thought: but . . . but—if she's wrong about something as important as this—what else is she maybe wrong about???

That thought, and that dream, at age 5 or 6, changed my whole life. It was in that moment that I first realized: From here on out, I'm going to have to take total responsibility for my own life and my own decisions. I really can't rely anymore on the word, or advice, or direction of anyone about anything really important, no matter how nice, or wise, or loving they are . . . !

CJ: A powerful lesson to learn at such a young age, and yet look at where that life-changing thought led you: to a life devoted to dreamwork and helping others. Did you have any further insights into your dream as you grew up?

JT: I have lived with the memory of this dream, and its subsequent impact on my life for more than six decades. One of the things I know now about this dream is that the repeating cast of Disney characters constituted probably the first direct cultural experience I had as a little kid of archetypal figures appearing in an accessible art form; figures that changed costumes and settings all the time but who always retained their essential individual characters. All of this was long before I ever encountered anything about the psychology of dreams, or archetypes of the collective unconscious.

I also know now that the mysterious Giant who Goofy and I were trying to avoid and whose retribution I feared (but not enough to stop searching), is at one level a symbolic representation of my (single) mother, and the whole world of adults and American society in general. I also know that at an even deeper level, the Giant is a representation of the patriarchal God who claims to be the true owner of the castle and everything in it. Goofy in this dream is an example of what Carl Jung called "the transcendent function," reaching out from the depths of the unconscious to challenge a too-small version of God.

CJ: Great insights. What would you say is the best way for adults to react when a child shares a dream and asks about its meaning?

JT: Ask intelligent and caring questions about the experience of the dream. Make it clear you are interested and are imagining the child's dream as vividly and completely as possible.

CJ: Yes—that's the perfect way to get children thinking more about their dreams themselves. Do you think that raising awareness of the value of dreams could change the world for the better?

JT: I have devoted my entire professional and personal life to the proposition that raising awareness of the value and potential importance of dreams can change the world for the better.

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back story to explain why Sarella journeys into this particular kind of dream world, as opposed to, for instance, that of one of the most famous and successful mediums, who journeys to a dream Africa and goes on safari to capture and bring back exotic beasts. As with the best writers of fantasy and science fiction, he meticulously works out the logic of his imagined world and develops it consistently. For example, Sarella's guiding metaphor of the deep sea diver means that the deeper he dives, the greater the pressure he is under, and thus he must return from the dream world slowly or he will suffer the bends. Such details help shape the plot and lend great verisimilitude to the novel.



The central theme of the book is the relation between the dream world and the waking world, and the nature of the traffic between them. Brusso pushes this theme to its natural limit, as Sarella becomes obsessed with his female partner in the dream world, the mysterious Nadia. The psychiatric nurse who monitors him while he journeys (mediums may remain in a coma for days while in the dream world) warns that he is falling into the delusion that many mediums fall prey to, that the characters they meet and know in the dream world have lives of their own and continue to live in their world even after the medium departs with his treasures. In true Western fashion, she tells him there is no “down below” that he travels to, that’s just a formula that helps him focus his dreaming. He doesn’t “bring back” anything; the dream merely stimulates his faculty of materialization. But Sarella knows that Nadia is real, and begins to wonder if he might bring her back to this world—or permanently remain in hers.

All these threads come together in the climax of the book, when Sarella decides to go on one last journey, in which he will dive deeper than ever before in an attempt to retrieve the greatest art work ever while also reuniting with Nadia.

Brusso creates a phantasmagorical universe in which the dream world and the waking world interpenetrate. Had Sarella's dreaming been framed by a different metaphor (one medium dreams he is on safari, hunting a mythical creature; another that he is exploring space in a rocket, landing on unknown planets in search of unknown treasures), the feel of the book would have been very different. As it is, the guiding metaphor of the book is descent. Like Sarella's journeys, this book is a descent into the underworld; when you finish reading, you feel like you've been underwater for hours. In this case, not an unpleasant experience, and one that rewards the reader with a compelling story and much to think about.

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We cannot improve the world simply by taking sides in the archetypal battle between good and evil. Such simplistic solutions, no matter how attractive they may be, or how passionately we believe in them, will never solve the problem. Premature closure and mistaken literalism are the greatest problems all living, breathing, dreaming organisms on the planet face, individually and collectively, awake and asleep. The intellectual and emotional, intuitive and imaginal, creative and spiritual skills required for good dream work are precisely the same skills that

are required to transform and “save” the world.

CJ: Thank you, Jeremy, for those wise words. Here's to a world where both adults and children know why dreams matter!

Clare Johnson's new book with Jean Campbell, *Sleep Monsters and Superheroes: Empowering Children through Creative Dreamplay*, was created by an all-star team of dream experts precisely to help adults respond to and empower children with their dreams. It also explores nightmares, lucidity, bereavement dreams, sleep terrors, and the healing power of storytelling. DeepLucidDreaming.com