

... bring me a dream

How you can heal yourself by understanding your dreams

THARUNA DEVCHAND

YOU'RE standing happily in an expensive-looking lounge, sipping a glass of Dom Pérignon. A hole appears in front of you and a rush of water begins to flood the room. Panic. The water reaches your knees and you can no longer see the door, you try to swim, but it rises to the ceiling before you can find an exit. Lungs bursting, you struggle, your hands flailing about uselessly and then ... you wake up.

"If you dream about drowning, consider where you are drowning in your life," said Dr Ian Player, the founder of the Phuzamoya Dream Centre in the Karkloof, who believes that dreams are an extremely important aspect of one's life.

"Dreams are the purest form of truth, they never lie. A person has to be brave to talk about their dreams to other people because they reveal the innermost self."

ON DREAM THERAPY

The analysis of dreams stems largely from the work of Carl Jung who created the term "individuation". The individuation process is when one becomes more self-aware by discovering one's true self. He believed that dreams are a way of communicating with one's unconscious (hidden) side; a type of window for a person to see or confront their true self that guides them to solve problems in their lives and to attain a sense of wholeness. Jung argued that confronting and examining messages from the unconscious enabled people to learn about themselves and embark on a journey of transformation.

What's interesting about the physiology of dreams, says Dr Gloria Gearing, a medical doctor who's been working with dream analysis for over 40 years, is that only certain animals dream and all of these animals are predators. Dreaming, therefore, has something to do with depth of sleep and animals that are considered prey are lighter sleepers as they are constantly aware of approaching danger.

"The content of dreams is interesting," continued Gearing, "they startle us. We find them bizarre and creative. It surprises us even if it's imagery from our everyday experiences."

Gearing trained as a doctor at Wits University and moved to Mariannhill, after she married, to work at St Mary's Hospital. At the age of 46, while she was heading the maternity ward, she became fed up with life. Serendipitously, a friend lent her a book on Jung that led her on her journey into dream analysis.

"The more I read of Jung, the more it all made sense, but to understand humans fully, one must read [Alfred] Adler, [Sigmund] Freud and Jung in conjunction with each other."

She explained that there are seven cycles while sleeping in which people dream, all occurring during the REM (rapid eye movement) stage of sleep, a deep sleep.

"There are no definitions when it comes to analysing dreams. No one knows precisely what's going on," said Gearing. "If a person's theories don't make sense, the client should go to someone else, someone they believe and are on the same ground with."

Jennifer Thord-Gray, who has a more spiritual approach, became in-

involved in dream work through her practice of energy medicine and kinesiology and believes that dreams guide one to a form of enlightenment.

"When working with people, I started asking them about their dreams and found a direct correlation between their mental state and dreams."

After an incident in which she linked a child's insolent behaviour to the child having recurring nightmares in which his parents were being killed, Thord-Gray became aware of the power of dreams, a power that one could access to help oneself and others and push them forward towards growth.

"We are like magnets," said Thord-Gray. "We keep attracting the same problems. We need to face them, to make them conscious and move on so that there can be growth."

ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DREAMS

"Understanding our dreams helps us to heal and become whole. They work because they come to us in our sleep, when our minds are largely unconscious and are like snapshots of our true selves and inner emotions," said Gearing, who uses dream therapy as one of the ways to treat her clients. Dreams also reveal our shadows, the dark side within ourselves.

"If everyone understood their shadow, the world would be a better place," said Player.

Player believes that focusing on his dreams "woke [him] up". For the past 18 years he has been visiting Gearing weekly and has almost 60 books filled with the descriptions of his nightly dreams.

Writing one's dreams is important in understanding them. Since dreams are so fleeting and are often forgotten within 10 minutes of waking up, writing them down helps when analysing them and offers something to revisit days later or when the message of the dream seems to click [make sense].

"The unconscious is not bound by space and time," says Player. "It can explore everything, the future, the past, the present. It tells us where we are and where we could be heading. One of the most important things that Jung said is that which we do not deal with inwardly, we are likely to meet outwardly as fate."

Ancient civilisations believed that dreams were messages sent from God, while many cultures believe that they are messages from ancestors.

For Player, every dream is in some way significant, but Sazi Mhlongo, president of Traditional Healers of South Africa says that not all dreams have a message and that only mature traditional healers had the ability to interpret them.

Sarah Wager, a professional Sangoma who has been practising for nine years, says that "as a Sangoma you learn to recognise which dreams are dreams connected to the ancestors, which are part of the mind and which come from another source. Some dreams can reveal interference from an outside force, such as someone else's negative thoughts".

She added that the dream world is considered to be one of the most important ways for a person, especially a Sangoma, to receive messages from the *amadlozi* (ancestors). Specific dreams help you to understand what is happening in life, how the *amadlozi*

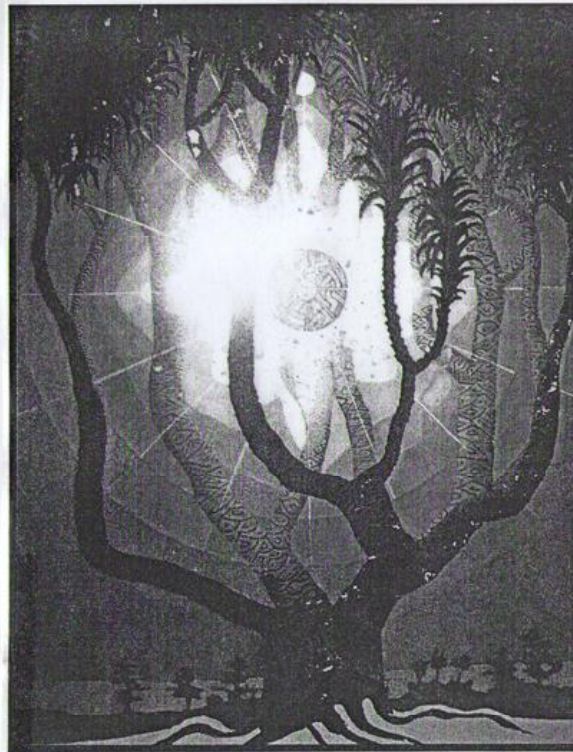


PHOTO: FILE

An illustration by Carl Jung – father of dream analysis.

are involved and what the issues might be. This aids in giving a person the correct guidance, direction or healing. "The dream brings wisdom and information that might not normally be understood or revealed in an awake state. Sleep allows other channels to be opened for interaction with the ancestors."

ON UNDERSTANDING OUR DREAMS

Dreams are based on symbols. Very rarely are dreams prophetic or

literal.

Mhlongo said that in African tradition these symbols come from a pool of general symbols that mean specific things. Wager adds that it is the context of these symbols that helps interpret the dream.

There are many online and published dream dictionaries that claim to help you interpret your dreams, but for Player, Gearing and Thord-Gray, the real key to interpreting your dreams is within yourself.

"The images that you have belong

NATAL WITNESS
Friday 16/3/2012

to you," said Gearing, "your experiences, your fears, your entirety. They are a product of you as a person."

She added that even dreams that seem like an unfolding of things experienced the day before have significance and contain a message.

While there is a pool of symbols with various possible meanings, the truest meaning comes from one's own experiences. For example, horses may be a good luck symbol but for someone who has fallen off a horse and broken a leg, horses may symbolise fear rather than luck. People in our dreams are often representations of ourselves, our animus (male within the female) or our anima (the female within the male). Even buildings are symbolic, for example dreaming of being in school may mean that there is something that needs to be learnt.

Player suggests talking to people about your dreams and meditating over the various symbols from your dream. Writing them down everyday is also very important, going through them symbol by symbol and thinking through a variety of associations until the right meaning is found.

"One of the associations will click," he said. "As you go through your associations, one of them will generate a lot of energy in you."

• On the last Saturday of every month various members of the Phuzomoya Dream Centre meet and discuss their dreams, listen to talks by various guests and watch films. The next meeting is on March 31. Those interested can contact Jennifer at 033 330 7344 or e-mail jennifer@earthmagic.co.za • tharuna.devchand@witness.co.za