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To help you begin to understand your dream:

Jungian analyst Robert Johnson, in the book *Inner Work*, created a four-step way to work on dreams in an effort to bring our conscious and unconscious selves together.

Dreams are usually expressions of our inner life; our inner process; something our unconscious is trying to tell us. Even if the dream includes dream images from our outer life, it is still about our inner process of individuation, or finding our true self.

Primary subjects or images = shows our effort to integrate some unconscious part of ourselves in consciousness or our resistance against our inner self, the ways we set up conflict with it rather than learn from it.

Very occasionally, predictive dreams occur about our outer reality, but these are rare. The unconscious has the habit of borrowing images from external situations and using them to symbolise something that is going on inside the dreamer. For example, should your wife appear in your dream it is likely that this is an expression of the anima (see end page re archetypes) or the feminine within a man. Resist temptation to externalise and believe the dream is telling you something about your wife. It is more likely telling you something about your inner feminine expression. So, it is better to ask what characteristics you have in common with the dream image.

Your dreams are a mirror of part of your inner character – a part of yourself you do not know well.

We have everything we need to know about ourselves inside ourselves. We can find this through our dreams if we but discover how to look. Most importantly, take your time with this process. It could take days or weeks for you to unravel the deepest meanings of your associations.

The four-step approach to dream analysis –

1. Making associations that spring from our unconscious in response to dream images
2. Connecting dream images to inner dynamics – look for and find the parts of our inner selves that the dream images represent
3. Interpreting – put together that discovered in steps 1 and 2 and arrive at a view of the dream's meaning taken as a whole
4. Doing rituals to make the dream concrete or more conscious



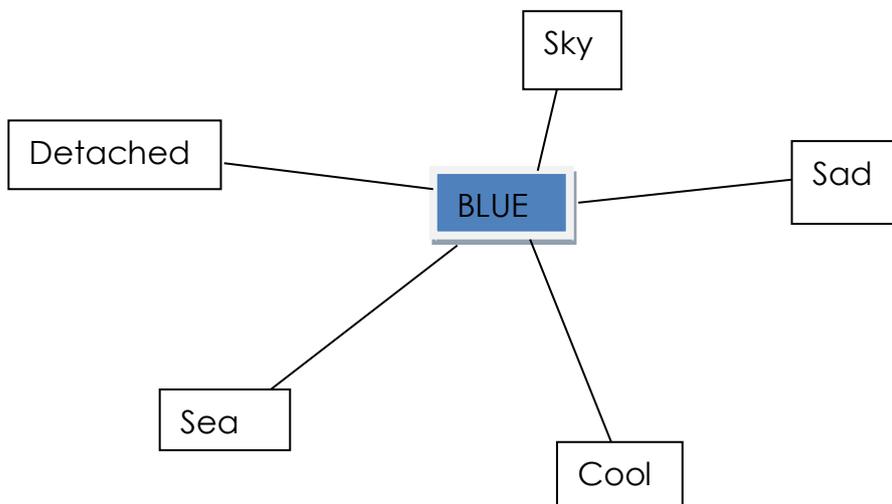
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The four steps in greater detail:

1) *Making associations that spring from our unconscious in response to dream images:*

- a) Go through the dream and write down every association you can think of for each dream image. An image is each part of the dream i.e. you saw a tall, blonde, girl. Tall and blonde and girl are all images from your dream. Starting with the first image, think to yourself, “what feeling do I have about this image? What words or ideas come to mind when I think about it?” These associations will be anything you spontaneously connect with the image. Don’t try to decide which association is the correct one, just write them ALL down.
- b) Definition of associations = any idea, word, mental picture, feeling, or memory
- c) Definition of dream image = persons, objects, situations, colours, sounds, smells, speech.
- d) Re-visit this several times until you have all associations (don’t make associations to associations, only to the original dream images. So, for the dream image ‘blue’ your associations could be:



- e) Another thing to be aware of are the colloquialisms that the image might inspire. For example, with the image of ‘pennies’, colloquialisms might be: “pennies from heaven,” “worth every cent,” “a penny saved is a penny earned,” and so on.
- f) Finally, not all associations will be applicable for this dream image at this time. So, when you are satisfied that you have all the associations to this image go



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for the one that 'clicks' or resonates with you. Feel the energy connection; see something not seen before; go to the association that brings up a surge of energy.

Don't force it, take your time, and come back later if you need to.

If associations take you to an *archetype* (see final sheet) - work to find out more. Go to fairy tales, myths, the Bible, other religious traditions, other stories and films, etc., to discover their traits/roles. Dreams with archetypes have a mythical quality: things are larger or smaller than real life, there are otherworldly animals, or the figures may have an aura of royalty or divinity. Write down the personal associations that come from this information.

2) *Connecting dream images to inner dynamics:*

Inner dynamics = anything that goes on inside you, any energy system that lives and acts from within you e.g. emotional events, such as a surge of anger; inner conflict; an inner personality acting through you; a feeling; an attitude; a mood.

Go to each image, one at a time -

- What part of me is that?
- Where have I seen it functioning in my life lately?
- Where do I see the same trait in my personality?
- Who is it, inside me, who feels like that or behaves like that?

Write down each example you can think of in which that inner part of you has been expressing itself in your life.

3) *Interpreting - put together that discovered in steps 1 and 2 and arrive at a view of the dream's meaning taken as a whole.*

The interpretation ties together the meanings of all the images in your dream. Now you can ask yourself questions like: "What is the central, most important message that this dream is trying to communicate to me? What is it advising me to do? What is the overall meaning of the dream for my life?"



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Don't expect your dream interpretation to come out perfect on the first try; keep working at it until it makes sense and fits with the overall pattern of events in the dream.

An adequate dream interpretation should be able to sum up your dream in a nutshell. It should supply a specific application of the dream's message to your personal life, to what you are doing, to how you are going to live. So, write out your interpretations and once again, follow the energy, the interpretation that arouses the strongest feelings in you. Your dream, itself, should provide you with some small clue as to which interpretation is correct.

There are four principles for validating interpretations:

- 1) Choose an interpretation that tells you something you didn't know
- 2) Avoid the interpretation that is self-congratulatory or ego-inflating
- 3) Avoid interpretations that shift the responsibility away from yourself because dreams are never about changing or finding fault in others
- 4) Learn to live with dreams over time—fit them into the long-term flow of your life.

4) *Doing rituals to make the dream concrete or more conscious.*

This you will devise for yourself once you are happy that the dream's meaning is understood. Once you have interpreted your dream, act consciously to honour it. This step requires a physical act (symbolic or practical) to affirm the message of your dream. The ritual neither has to be big or expensive as the most powerful rituals are the small, subtle ones.

Consciously seek to transform the ritual act into an active, dynamic symbol. Johnson says that each ritual must be custom-made out of the raw material of your inner self. And if you can't think of anything, just do *something*, anything: Take a walk as you think about the dream, light a candle. Use your common sense, but don't act out.



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Archetypes

Jung believed that within our unconscious we hold images, patterns, myths and ideas that are inherited aspects and understandings common to all humanity and can be identified from the effects they produce. Thus, we all have a universal idea of 'mother' or 'father' which is an archetype, and many other concepts such as wise old man, child, demon, sexual union, love etc.

Information taken from Inner Work by Robert A. Johnson (Harper & Row 1989)