

Metaphors And Dreams

Hi, this is Kari Hohne with Inspired Radio thank you for joining me. Dream interpretation requires that we begin to see ordinary symbols in a more profound way. Dreams are very similar to how poems pack intense meaning into one symbol that can at first appear out of place. Translating the metaphorical language of dreams into something that the dreamer can understand allows us to understand who we are and what we are attempting to accomplish in our lives.

A metaphor is used in poetry and literature to expand the idea behind one object or thought by asserting it to be another. For example, a poet might say “a heart driven by a cold wind.” The heart with the idea of driving and the wind seem out of place. Since the heart is associated with being driven, it gives us a clue to explore the ideas behind driving a car. When we dream of transportation symbols we are exploring motivation or what type of energy propels us forward. To associate the heart with a cold wind, we are able to see our coldness, or perhaps our fear of intimacy. The associations created by combining symbols in this way, allows us to understand what is motivating the heart of the dreamer.

A poem can conjure feelings through imagery. The dream too, offers hidden clues as to how we can transform difficulty. In this case the wind brings about changes in temperature on the earth. Warm air attracts cold air and cold air attracts the warm air. This is what creates wind and any time the wind appears, we can be certain that temperatures will change. The idea of cold portrays our inner temperature or our predisposition to how we approach experience. Being cold can suggest aloofness and the wind can be commitment phobic – always on the move. Nature avoids extremes because it would lead to its demise. One who operates in perpetual coldness will experience life in arctic conditions. Since dreams explore what type of conflict we are working through, the wind suggests that change is at play and we might open to expressing ourselves differently if we are lacking the warmth of human relationships. Metaphors used in dreams, is how the psyche paints its condition using abstract symbols.

Dreaming takes concrete and ingrained thought patterns and transforms them into an abstract idea by comparing or combining them. This allows an old way of thinking to become genuinely new. For example dreaming of a woman with forks in her hair combines how we take a stab at nourishment

or fulfillment (forks) with our ideas since hair grows from the head. If we are unfulfilled we may be too critical or unable to see how our thoughts are undermining a sense of peace.

What is confusing in dream interpretation is how the mind draws upon concrete and real imagery so we think we are just rehashing experience. But in the dreamscape there is always a vague lack of boundaries and form. Nature functions on the principle of uncertainty and as natural creatures in a natural world, our concrete paradigm must also remain permeable. The unusual elements are the key to the deeper message revealed in dreams. The use of metaphors is how the dreaming psyche conceptualizes a breakthrough in our paradigm by contrasting concrete images that allow the mind to arrive at a sense of abstraction objectively.

Just like dreams, the use of metaphor in literature allows us to use a word or image in an improbable context. Whitman's poem – O Captain, My Captain portrays the idea of father along with the idea that life is about weathering the stormy seas – now, without his father's guidance. He refers to his father's death as a sturdy ship now anchored in a harbor. We can sense the cold hard thud of immovable reality in his use of symbols. Just as the vast majority of people do not express an appreciation for poetry – because it is presented outside of logical expression – most people ignore their dreams for the same reason. Dreams are not literal – they are metaphorical. They dig deeper into the richer feelings through association – something the mind is too busy to accomplish by day.

A dream analyst is someone who appreciates the abstract representation that dream symbols suggest. The same symbol can mean different things based on its other associations and so dream analysis requires an ability to see beyond just symbols. For example red can be a message about following passion or the idea of danger or stop. If we see red writing, we are alerted to stop and pay attention. A red shirt can refer to passion in work and a red car can symbolize basing motivation on passion. The psyche can condense very complicated situations into the same brevity and minimalist exposition that a poet seeks in expressing their craft. Understanding symbolism and metaphor are paramount for anyone wanting to become a dream analyst.

Dreams are also a creative vehicle, offering us the key to a new type of perspective. Consciousness can get bogged down in an absolutist perspective, but dreaming is the vehicle in which we set our paradigm free.

For example, one might look at a toaster and vacuum cleaner and see them both in their static condition. The improbable relationships that appear in dreams is like giving children a creative exercise to explore the differences and similarities between two appliances. How might a toaster be improved if it was compared to a vacuum cleaner? The cord might auto wind – a vacuum might sweep up the crumbs inside. Dreams first and foremost are suggesting clues for positive growth or change. The incongruent elements that appear in dreams are often the most telling in understanding what the dream is attempting to teach us. These nonsensical images are often dismissed when they are actually the most profound path to an enlightened perspective. \ In this way – dreaming leads us into a new way of understanding our life path.

Freud viewed the dreaming psyche as a compromise made between the clash of opposite psychic processes– conscious and unconscious. Energy moves between this closed system of conscious ideas and the unconscious flux of unprocessed feelings. From the two - new thought patterns can emerge that will lead to greater fulfillment. Consciousness can limit the exploration of novelty but dreaming uses a cryptic process of artistic camouflage that blends unconscious content with consciousness.

For example, we may not want to acknowledge how we have given our power away in some situation. We are living in fear but we have masked it beneath of lifestyle focused only on security. Not acknowledging fear places it in the unconscious realm. The psyche will fund a nightmare specifically to allow us to feel our fear. This is where Jung's idea of the Shadow becomes important. Those that stalk us in our dreams are really sides of us seeking to be understood and integrated. The stalker breaks a bottle and menacingly threatens us with it. We are being shown how we have bottled or protected something that needs to be broken so that life can affect us beyond skin awareness – in a sense – draw blood or return feeling to our lives. We are also seeing how not owning this assertiveness turns its energy back upon us or hurts us – through constant anxiety or dis-ease. We would examine all aspects of this stalker to understand what part of us has gone underground so that we can resurrect it.

But it is the cryptic trans positioning of stalker vs. victim that gives the dream the ability to bring something into conscious awareness. We wake up afraid – finally, we are seeing the root of our unhappiness as fear. Because the dream stays with us – we make an effort to understand it. This is why nightmares are a positive sign that power is being returned to the psyche.

In the same way that we are learning through daily experiences – we are learning through nightly experience. In understanding our destiny or life path, it is actually the nightly realm that can teach us the most. The mechanism of sleep allows for greater creative freedom to explore the unknown. In dreams, we are forced to be a witness. We can wander far from who we are by day but when we sleep we are being guided to return to our authenticity.

Our brain functions differently in sleep. The psyche responds to different input with goals that are less structured than when awake. During the day we can operate mechanically with ongoing behavior in social situations. The experience of the dream state is focused on internal change. Dreaming allows us to see beyond the walls of our defense mechanisms to explore who we might become.

Metaphor, through its vivid, unusual and dramatic thrust in dreams, brings feelings to the waking state. In the same way that we can listen to music and not understand how it can arouse intense feelings, the incongruous use of symbols transcends logical syntax to teach us through the unspoken language of imagery. Life is meant to be felt deeply and when we are operating in an unnatural or robotic condition – it will return us to ourselves.

For more information on dream interpretation pick up my book the Mind's Mirror at Amazon. You might also enjoy my Way of Dreams Interpretation Apps available for Iphone, Ipad Nook, Galaxy and Kindle. Until next time, thank you for listening to Inspired Radio.



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