

Dream Dialogues I: Interview Method

Dream dialogues aim to explore the meaning and ‘hidden message’ of dreams. Dream dialogues are based on the assumption that every element of the dream represents a part of the self (i.e. an I-position); in other words, every ‘it’ in the dream represents an ‘I’ (Chusway & Sewell, 1992). Exploring dreams through chairwork enables individuals to re-own and integrate these parts of the self, as well as illuminating the important existential themes they represent.

The ‘interview’ approach to dream dialogues which follows is based on the Voice Dialogue approach (Dyak, 1999).

Process of dialogue:

1). The facilitator asks the client to describe the dream in the present tense and using first-person language.

Facilitator: “Talk me through the dream as if you are there again, right now. What happens? As the dream unfolds, what do you see, hear, and feel?”

2). After describing the dream, the facilitator invites the client to change seats, or move their current seat, and speak from the perspective of the self-within-the-dream (the ‘Dream Self’).

Facilitator: “I’d like to speak to Jacob-in-the-dream. Where in the room should that self be? [Client moves to a new location]. OK, so you’re Jacob-in-the-dream...”

Example questions for the Dream Self:

- Tell me what’s happening.
- What are you doing?
- What are you feeling?
- What do you want or need?
- Do you have a message for (individual having the dream)?
- Is there anything in particular that you want from, or want for (individual having the dream)?”

3). After speaking with the Dream Self, the client returns to their original chair or original location in the room.

Facilitator: “Thank you for speaking with me, Jacob-in-the-dream. I’d like to speak with Jacob again now. Please come back to the centre. [Client returns to their original location].”

4). The client and therapist / coach spend some time reflecting on what the Dream Self has conveyed and the client’s reactions to hearing this.

Facilitator: “Now we’re going to separate Jacob-in-the-dream [gestures to location in the room where the client just spoke from] and re-centre... How are you feeling? What happens inside when you reflect on what Jacob-in-the-dream shared with us?”

5). If time permits, and if it feels safe to do so, the facilitator invites the client to speak from the perspective of another aspect of the dream.

Facilitator: “Next, I’d like to speak to the chair that Jacob-in-the-dream was sitting on. Where in the room would that self be? [Client changes seats]. So, you’re the self that appeared as a chair in this dream. Tell me about yourself. Do you have a message for Jacob?”

6). After speaking with the second self-in-the-dream, the client is asked to return to the centre again and separate from this part of their self.

Facilitation notes:

- As with other Voice Dialogue sessions, working with dreams usually begins by asking the Inner Protector whether it is safe to proceed with this work. This ensures that the dialogue is safe and will not distress or overwhelm the client.
- Be wary of inviting the client to speak from the perspective of very powerful aspects of the self which are present in dreams (e.g. wild animals, storms, dangerous individuals etc.). These are powerful energies and must be respected. It is often safest to observe and describe these I-positions from a distance, rather than asking the client to embody them.
- It is important that facilitator approaches dream dialogues without preconceived ideas about their meaning: let the client’s I-positions explain themselves and speak for themselves.
- **Dream dialogues can be incredibly powerful. It is recommended that therapists and coaches undergo the necessary training and supervision in dream dialogues before venturing into this work.**

Further reading:

Dyak, M. (1999). *The voice dialogue facilitator’s handbook: Part 1*. Seattle, WA: L.I.F.E. Energy Press.

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