

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Session

Dreams

UU Fellowship of Athens, Georgia, April 15, 2015, from Angi Hansen

Opening Words:

"At least from the dawn of recorded history, people were compelled to interpret the meaning of the stories and images in their dreams. In fact, in centuries past, societies invested dreams with even more power and importance than the experiences of their waking lives. In ancient Greece and Rome, for example, dream interpreters actually accompanied military leaders into battle, so essential was the understanding of dream content. Over time, the Christian belief that dreams were the work of the devil influenced Western culture to such an extent that dream interpretation was discouraged, perhaps out of a fear that the content of dreams could undermine the moral teachings of the Church. But dream interpretation continues today, and while the focus has largely shifted from decoding a divine message sent by a deity to uncovering a meaning anchored in the dreamer's own psyche, the tendency to look for meaning remains, as it has for thousands and thousands of years, possibly from the beginning of time."

Phyllis R. Koch-Sheras and Amy Lemley, clinical psychologist and author
from *Dreamscaping*, edited by Stanley Krippner, Ph.D., and Mark Robert Waldman

Check-in

Focus/Topic: *Dreams*

The precise function of dreams is unknown from a neuroscience perspective, although many competing theories exist. Some say that dreams help with learning; some say they help with problem solving; some say they're like static discharge during neural housekeeping; some see them as spiritual or messages from the divine; some see particular dreams as heralding mental or physical illnesses; but science agrees that everyone does dream, even though not everyone remembers their dreams.

1. How do you react to dreams in general—do you tend to cultivate them (e.g., with dream journaling), brush them off, not remember them in the first place, etc.?
2. What benefits or pitfalls do you find from paying attention to your dreams?
3. What do you teach your children about dreams and managing their dreams (both positive and negative)?
4. Of the many competing theories, do any seem to fit the role that dreams have played in your own life?
5. Who do you talk to when you want help interpreting or thinking about a dream?
6. Do you have any dreams that have haunted you for years? Decades? How do you think they have influenced your life (if at all)?
7. What techniques (if any) do you find personally helpful when interpreting your own dreams?

Likes & Wishes

Closing Words:

"Dreams are like icebergs rising out of the deep waters of the unconscious. Some are icebergs of the past, helping us understand past traumas and undigested memories, and thus are *retrospective*. Dreams are *integrative* in that they enables us to perceive and reconcile our many conflicting subpersonalities. They also are *prospective* or anticipatory, icebergs of the

future, depicting what is emerging, images of what the individual potentially can become. Looking backward and forward simultaneously, the dream's essential function is always to expand the aperture of consciousness, the circumference of perception, the sphere of identity."

Greg Bogart, psychotherapist and author

from *Dreamscaping*, edited by Stanley Krippner, Ph.D., and Mark Robert Waldman