



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Dream Realization: Inspirational Writing in Your Dream Journal*

**M**y most satisfying moments of rapport with a dream have occurred when I stopped trying to interpret the dream, when I quit looking *at* it and began looking *with* it, trying to see the world in the way my dream sees it. While looking through a dream out into my life, as though a metaphorical looking-glass, I'll have flashes of lucid vision. "Aha! Of course!" I'm surprised by a recognition of the truths operative in my life, and I feel elevated into a superconscious awareness of meaning. The dream remains uninterpreted, but it doesn't matter. The dream becomes, not exactly understandable, but rather a poetic best expression of truth. The dream itself is transparent; it is life that grows with meaning. I'll be awed by the dream's uncanny ability to envision with images so personally suited to transform my experience, I then become acutely aware of the Presence, of the "I am," and realize once again how, for "that that I am," a dream is

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a most natural mode of seeing in these encounters. My dream brings no judgments. I feel neither guilt nor shame, pride nor power. I simply feel how I am. Meaning is. It is only afterward that I may respond with a judgement, perhaps with an automatic decision to persevere or to change course.

One day, the phrase “dream realization” came to me, I liked the sound of it, as it reminded me of “self-realization.” Something like self-realization is what happens to me during those moments when, seeing through a dream, I realize the truth of the dream’s ultra-conscious vision, and I come into an awareness of the presence of the Self.

Reflecting on the processes that invite moments of dream realization, I have found that it is mentally reexperiencing the dream over and over again that returns me to that frame of mind from which the dream’s perception arose. Also helpful is empathizing with the images of the dream, giving them voices with which to speak and eyes with which to see. Along with its images, the dream also has a story, a meaning within its narrative, having the thrust of an allegory, requiring only an instant to grasp. Experiencing my life in terms of the images and story of my dream, I am often granted metaphysical perceptions and discover that the dream envisions even the most mundane aspects of my life in mythic dimensions. I realize that the Self that I am, the dreamer and creator of my life, moves in an expanded, timeless consciousness, in contact with Olympus. The dreams become for me seeds which have fallen from the sky; and by nurturing them I grow to new heights of awareness.

Since the process of dream realization is difficult for me to describe, I have worked to develop a more concrete approach. The result has been a special workbook teaching inspirational writing as a method of dream interpretation. Titled, *Dream Solutions! Dream Realizations!* it includes many “meditations” for writing in a dream journal.

Keeping a dream journal is a tangible method for providing a reflective atmosphere for communing with dreams. Moreover, while journal writing involves processes that are easier to grasp, it also allows for the elements of inspiration and surprise that are essential to dream realization.

### **Inspirational Writing**

Self-expository writing—writing about yourself and your life—when focused through the imagery of your dreams, can be a powerful tool of discovery. It does require some practice, however, to develop a mental attitude that best allows the inspiration to come through in the writing. That is, even though we are all familiar with writing, we can be prone to “writer’s block.” To avoid this

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problem, you are encouraged to practice “inspirational writing,” a term coined by Edgar Cayce to describe a writing form of meditation.

The easiest way to understand inspirational writing is by observing your breathing and how it operates and interacts with your awareness of it. Most of the time during the day, and all night, you breathe quite normally, without having to pay any attention to it. Your breathing is automatic. Now for a moment, pay attention to your breathing.

If you are like most people, once you begin to pay attention to your breathing, you have the sensation that you are controlling your breath, the timing of the inhalation and the exhalation. Try to relax yourself for a moment, then gently observe your breathing and see if you can observe it without controlling it.

If you relax, and are patient enough, you will gradually begin to be able to simply witness your breathing as it happens all by itself, the way it happens all the time on its own when you are not paying any attention to it. Such a practice, observing your breathing without interfering with it, is actually an ancient form of meditation. If you practice it, you will find that during the exhalation, you let go and become very relaxed, and during the inhalation, you witness the mystery of inspiration! That the word “inspiration” is used for our breathing may give you a clue about inspiration as it is used in creativity. The processes are related.

Now let’s consider three forms of writing. The first is “conscious, intentional writing.” Very often it is like when you first try to observe your breathing; you feel you are in control, that you have to think up what to write, and you are conscious of your choice of words or of your lack of words to express what is on your mind. This type of writing we are all familiar with, and it is the type of writing you will be tempted to perform in the meditation exercises. You will read instructions like, “make up a sentence that uses the word, ‘X’” and you will sit back and try to think up such a sentence, then write it down. Sometimes that will work and sometimes you will get stuck. Conscious, intentional writing is not the best kind of writing for this experiment in “Dream Realizations.”

Consider another form of writing, “automatic writing.” Just as we can breathe quite well without paying any attention to our breathing, so it is possible to write without paying any attention to our writing. By distracting, blocking, or blanking the mind, people have learned that it is possible to let the “unconscious speak directly” through their writing. Sometimes this approach to writing has been called “stream of consciousness writing.” By whatever name, you are not being asked to attempt that form of writing. You don’t have to

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### **Inspired Heart Meditation A Preparation for Inspirational Writing**

Just close your eyes now and turn your attention inward, toward your breathing. Allow yourself to become aware of your breathing. Just let your breathing happen, on its own, naturally, while you simply become aware of it. Let it be, while you are aware of it, let your breathing be. Let go of any control of your breathing, and simply watch it happen by itself. Just allow yourself to discover the natural flow of your breathing. Just allow yourself to go with the flow.

PAUSE

The breath naturally comes and goes. It's a natural flow that has a lot to teach you. Let's begin by placing your focus on the exhalation, the breath flowing out. Notice how the breath flows out. It's a natural letting go, a relaxation. Let the exhalation teach you how to relax, to let go. With each exhalation, you learn how to relax a little bit more. With each exhalation, you learn how to let go a little bit more. Just let yourself relax and let go a little bit more with each exhalation.

PAUSE

As the breath goes out, and you relax and let go, you release all control over your breathing. You can now accept the coming in of the next breath. Let each incoming breath come to you on its own power, in its own time. Let each incoming breath teach you how to accept, to receive.

PAUSE

As the breath goes out, relax, let go and wait for the next incoming breath to come on its own. Let go of any need to make the inhalation happen according to your own will and simply accept the incoming breath as it comes on its own. Each cycle of breathing gives you another opportunity to experience the relaxation of letting go and trusting the next breath to come on its own. Discover that you can trust in the breath to come on its own.

PAUSE

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Experience the breath as taking care of itself, taking care of you, removing the old air and bringing you new air. Experience the breath as a gift, taking care of you, cleansing you and renewing you, bringing you the gift of life. Enjoy the feeling of the breath of life coming to you as a gift. Life breathes you, spirit breathes you.

PAUSE

Experiment for a moment with feeling gratitude for this gift of life. Just allow yourself to feel grateful for the gift of life coming to you freely, giving you what you need. See what it is like to experience gratitude for the breath that comes to you as a gift. Give yourself permission to enjoy the feeling of gratitude.

PAUSE

Focus your feelings of gratitude in the area of your heart. Let your heart be the center of your experience of gratitude and notice how it responds.

Allow gratitude to soften your heart. Allow your heart to become warm, expanding, blossoming with love. Allow your entire body to become in harmony with this feeling of love.

PAUSE

Your heart is open now and a channel of love. Discover the higher consciousness that resides in your open heart. Listen as your heart speaks to you. Feel the love flowing through your heart as it gives you an important message for you now.

PAUSE

Accept the truth of your heart. Accept this opportunity to allow the higher consciousness of love to bring you needed wisdom or inspiration.

OK, now, let's take this meditation onto paper. Open your eyes and allow your pen to write from the heart, trusting the inspiration.

WRITE

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learn to go into a trance to get your inspirations for your journal. Your dreams are your natural, creative trance state. When writing in your journal, you are encouraged to be alert, relaxed and aware, and to experiment with inspirational writing.

Inspirational writing is like gently observing your breathing without interfering with it. In fact, it helps to focus on your breathing for a moment, remind yourself that you can be aware of your breathing without stopping the flow, before you begin each writing exercise. With inspirational writing, you are aware of the purpose of the writing, and you are aware of what you write as you write it, but you experience the writing as almost happening by itself.

To perform inspirational writing, you reverse the usual procedure. Normally, as in conscious intentional writing, you first think up what you want to say, then you record your thoughts. In inspirational writing, you do the reverse: you begin by writing, with your purpose in mind, and you observe what you write. You are not recording your thoughts on paper, but rather you are noting in awareness what you write.

It helps if you approach the meditations in inspirational writing in the spirit of fun and not allow your seriousness of purpose to make you up-tight. Don't look at your journal as a monument in which you will engrave your words of wisdom for all to read from now to eternity. Rather, look at your journal as a playground of learning. Like a playground, it is a safe place to experiment, to play with words and ideas, to "mess around." You don't have to be neat! Relax and enjoy your adventure.

### **Dream Journal Meditations**

I have tested dream journal meditations orally with live audiences and in written form with participants in the A.R.E. Dream Research Project. I have observed that writing inspirationally in a dream journal meditation, though not inevitably promoting experiences of dream realization, often does give dreamers a sense of rapport with their dreams. Being convinced that this approach can be effective, I am confident in presenting one of these meditations to you for your experimentation.

Presenting the meditation in printed form, however, does pose certain problems. A dream journal meditation, as a form of inspirational writing, is best approached in innocence, without planning ahead. When the instructions are printed, the reader may look over the entire meditation first, and can become tempted to speculate and anticipate what might result. A more serious problem is that for some people the printed instructions arouse something like

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“test anxiety,” eliciting concern about doing the meditation “correctly.” Be assured that the instructions are meant to serve only as a guide. In this regard, let me share with you a dream related to me by someone who was working with some journal meditation instructions I had printed.

*“I am in college...a hospital...hurrying upstairs to talk to a friend on the top floor about a test I must take. I am afraid. It is a test where I must read problems and then translate them into formulae and work them out. During the test, the teacher, named Bonanza, says, ‘Be quiet a moment and let me figure this out.’”*

The dreamer appreciates the dream journal as being a place of learning and healing, and wisely seeks inspiration from the “friend upstairs.” But the dreamer regards the meditation itself as a test, and is anxious about performing it correctly. I have to accept with good humor the dreamer’s perception of the meditation instructions as being like “problems” with “formulae,” and you may appreciate this simile yourself after you have experienced the meditation. I like the teacher’s name because it aptly expresses the fruitfulness of inspirational writing. The teacher gives some good advice: Simply be quiet and let the intelligence flow.

Learn from this dream. Approach the meditation not as a test or a challenge to your skill, but rather as a game. Pretend that the meditation is not serious, and be playful, experimental. But also approach it quietly, remaining open to inspiration. Most of all, allow yourself to be surprised.

### Meditation One: Dream Realizations

\*1. Select a dream. The meditation works best with our ordinary, everyday type of dream, but falls short with those very special, highly symbolic dreams. A good bet is your most recent dream.

\*2. It’s helpful to rewrite the dream in the present tense, as if the dream were happening right now. As you write, reexperience the feeling of the dream. It’s also helpful to be quick and brief. A long dream may be effectively condensed. If details seem important write them out, but there is no need here to include details simply for their own sake.

*Example: “I see a flock of lambs and their mother. They are so cute. I want to pet them. The mother looks at me in such a way that I am shy to approach. I don’t want them to run away.”*

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\*3. Read over the dream, and as you do, notice which words grab your attention. What words elicit a special response, touch on a sensitive nerve, or seem important? Underline about four to eight of these key words.

*Example: "flock... lamb... mother... cute... pet... shy... run away."*

\*4. Take each word in turn and allow it to develop into a truthful statement about yourself. That is, for each word, compose and write sentences about *yourself* using that word. This will get you behind your dream, looking through it out into your life. To get started, it may be helpful to pause for a moment and tune in to your breathing, until you can trust in inspiration.

Let the key word freely spark phrases and sentences about yourself and how you are living and experiencing your self. Use your pencil to play with the word, to discover the play on words, to experiment. Let your pencil do the writing while you ignore rules of grammar and spelling and simply meditate upon the feeling of the word. Be permissive with pencil rather than pushing. Be patient with the task at hand rather than demanding. If a particular word doesn't seem to yield sentences about yourself, try playing with rhymes and word games, jot down a few things the word reminds you of, or go on to the other words on your list and come back to this word later. But try to persist until you have written several meaningful sentences about yourself for each of the words you have underlined. If other thoughts and sentences come to you in the process, write them down too.

Write truthful and meaningful sentences about yourself, not about the word. For example, using the word "flower," don't write, "flowers are pretty." Instead, try using something like, "I wish my creativity would begin to flower." If the word were a person's name, like "Mary," don't write, "Mary is my friend." Instead, try something like, "When I'm with Mary, I feel very confident about my abilities." Use the word in a sentence to say something like, "When I'm with Mary, I feel very confident about my abilities." Use the word in a sentence to say something important about yourself.

*Example:*

**"Flock:** flock, smock, clock, dickety dock, I'll flock to what I like...I join the flock of the faithful when I find the ideas appealing... Sometimes it's comforting to be part of the flock, part of the crowd."

**"Lamb:** Lie down with the lamb, lambskin, lammy, on the lamb, hiding in the flock I can go on the lamb and not stick out... innocent as a lamb, I'd love to recapture the innocence of the lamb...what has become of my innocent little lamb?"

**"Mother:** It's good to have a mother... can I be a mother? Who do I mother and whom do I look for to be my mother? ...I mother by careful and attentive listening,



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giving tender loving care...I mother by hugging and supporting...the kind of mother I like best makes me feel good about myself. When I'm a mother I protect the innocent, the weak, the vulnerable, the new idea, the creative child."

**"Cute:** cute, mute, cuteness doesn't become me...when am I cute?... I am cute when I am not trying to be but let myself express in innocence something that I like, a way of being, being myself... I am cute to someone who sees me in a certain way, an appreciative way.

**"Pet:** My little pet, my little treasure, I treasure what I pet, I stroke and admire what I pet... I don't want to be someone's pet... My pet belongs to me... I pet what I like, I pet what is mine, my pet, little pet, my pet peeve my special little pet."

**"Shy:** I would be shy of my cuteness. If someone told me I was cute it would make me shy... when am I shy and when am I proud... I'm shy of a critical eye, protective of innocence, of vulnerability."

**"Run away:** I can run away when I am afraid... I'll run away from parts of myself that I don't want to face... I'll run away from attention when it makes me shy... I run away to hide or to avoid intensity of feeling... Where do I run to when I run away? I change shapes or attitudes or exposure, what do I show, I run certain aspects of my being away, hide them from view, clam up or turn a deaf ear?

\*5. Read over what you have written and make some additional notes about the themes and concerns that seem to be coming through. What seems to be on your mind?

*Example:* Innocence and cute, certain aspects of my being. Owing or being proud of, certain attitudes toward aspects of my being. Being shy and self-conscious. Being aloof, hiding, or dealing with feelings of embarrassment or vulnerability. Protecting certain aspects of my being.

\*6. Reread your dream and compose several different titles for it. To title your dream, focus on the essence of its story. Think of a phrase that captures the central theme of the dream. Write down several different titles until you arrive at one that you really like.

*Example:* "Lambs Too Cute to Pet." "Mother Won't Let You Pet the Lambs."

\*7. Take each dream title from your list of titles composed in the previous step and pretend that the dream title refers to you and your life. How could that title be about you? Write a statement explains what the title might mean in relation to you.

Rather than thinking up something to write, then recording your thoughts, put your pen to paper and allow yourself to write whatever comes, observing

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your writing without controlling it. Allow your pen to be moved by your inner source of wisdom. While you focus on the dream title, let your moving pen do the thinking. Doodle with words:

*Example: "Lambs Too Cute to Pet: Perhaps I like admiration, but sometimes it spoils what is admired. If in innocence I act in a way that someone thinks is cute, that's fine, but if it is brought to my attention, if I'm petted and admired, then the innocence can be lost, or a shyness sets in that makes the behavior go away. Sometimes it is best not to always know what you are doing if knowing it will spoil it."*

*"Mother Won't Let You Pet the Lambs": Perhaps there is a protective device inside of me that prevents me from always knowing about certain of my creative ways, a mothering instinct that keeps certain things from my awareness. I can have a tendency to want to exploit my creativity, and whatever innocence is involved would be lost. Knowing what is best for me, sometimes perhaps I act out with my awareness partly in darkness so that I can't spoil it by self-exploitation.*

\*8. As a final integrative act, take one of the titles you gave to your dream and use it as a theme for a brief essay about yourself. A good way to get started is to look through the material that you wrote during this meditation and note words and phrases that strike you as particularly meaningful or important. These could be either words or phrases from your dream itself, words or phrases that you wrote about the key words in your dream, or what you wrote about the title, or about what seemed to be on your mind. You can also use other words or phrases that occur to you as you play around with this material creating your poem.

*Example: "Mother Won't Let You Pet the Lambs: Sometimes a sacrifice is necessary. The innocence of the lamb can be sacrificed so that we can eat of its life's blood, growing in our own self-awareness, or we can sacrifice some self-knowledge in favor of allowing the innocence to remain. The mother of the lamb seems to favor the latter, indicating that sometimes it's better for the right hand not to know what the left hand is doing, even if that means that the right hand can not be proud of the left, has to let go of the self-admiration or respect, that sometimes things work out better if you are not the proud owner of your deeds, but your deeds done in innocence pass by unclaimed by you."*

\*9. To write a poem, think of it as a brief arrangement of words that convey meaningful feelings, that capture or express some of the changes that you've encountered in your work on Dream Realization. Don't be concerned about the format of the poem—rhyming and the line length, etc.—but rather concentrate on finding words that match your feelings or imagery. Work with this material,

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changing it, adding to it and rearranging it; gradually mold it into a unified whole that expresses the theme of the dream title you have chosen. In other words, take the title of the dream and accept it as the title of an essay or poem that you will write about yourself. The raw materials for this essay or poem are contained in what you have written about yourself. The raw materials for this essay or poem are contained in what you have written about yourself using key words from your dream. All you need to do is to edit your material, rearrange it, and form it into a coherent expression of the theme of your dream. The resultant will be a personal statement envisioning your life in terms of the images and story of your dream.

*Example: "Mother Won't Let You Pet the Lamb"*

Innocence of the Lamb  
Can exist within me, if unpetted  
Unfettered by my admiration  
There's a protector in me, a Mother  
Of the Cute, of the Creative  
It won't let me turn my innocence  
Into my Pet Pet  
Sad not to hold  
But better to be.  
I'm glad mother won't let me pet the lamb.

### Meditation Two: Haiku Dream Realization

Somewhat like a moment of self-realization, when I can look through the eyes of my dream's ultraconscious vision and experience some truth—that for me is a dream realization. Creative writing, playing with the words in my dream record, often fosters dream realization. Sometimes it also provides an avenue of self-expression.

Dream realization and creativity require a relaxed, playful spirit. The limitations of a fixed form, however, may paradoxically stimulate such playful creativeness. As Rollo May suggests in his book, *The Courage to Create*, there can be no creativity without the presence of limits. If we are willing to accept and work with them, limitations breed transcendence. With that in mind, I offer a traditional form whose limits provide an excellent opportunity for dream realization through creative writing—the Haiku.

*Sev'nteen syllables  
In lines of five, sev'n, five:  
Image brings meaning.*

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I've found three applications for Haiku in dream work. First, in playing around with the words in my dream record, and with new words that come to mind as I try to fit my writing into the form constraints of Haiku. I discover new feelings about my dream images. In fact, Haiku is well suited to developing and expanding an impression of a single dream image or symbol into a full expression of meaning.

*Ugly face monster  
Hate, anger, rage - tears of rage!  
Your eyes crave my love.*

Second, Haiku may also be effectively used to condense an entire dream into a concentrated, seventeen-syllable vision. This type of condensation can be especially helpful in a dream group. Here we have many people who wish to share a dream and receive reactions from others. But time is limited. Also, in the usual telling of a dream, the dreamer often wanders through the story—sometimes backwards!—adding parenthetical remarks, explanations, and apologies along the way. If the dream is particularly long, the listeners can become confused. Certainly the emotional impact of the dream's vision is diluted, if not lost. I've found it to be a popular practice to take a few minutes at the beginning of a dream group session for each of us to prepare a Haiku version of a dream. We each then read our Haiku dream aloud and, after a moment of silence to let the dream touch us, reactions are generously forthcoming. We also find that the Haiku dream reveals the heart of the matter and thus quickly promotes fruitful discussion.

Finally, as a form of dream interpretation, Haiku dream realization can become an effective exercise in superimposing dream reality upon our ordinary vision. Here are the instructions I give: Condense the essence of the dream into the first two lines of the Haiku. Use the third line to convey some truth about your life that correlates with the dream's vision.

*Mouse flower blooming,  
Unearth surprise, if you please.  
Shyness winks at me.*

Since this third Haiku exercise requires more patience and analysis, I encourage practice with the first two exercises, which can be more freely rendered. But if you can perceive in proper perspective the challenge of formal Haiku, a third line that presents an unexpected complement to the first two is both consistent with tradition and also yields valid dream realization.

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### Meditation Three: Opportunity for Dialogue

Symbols in a dream can be treated as projections of unconscious aspects of the dreamer's personality. We may then take advantage of the dream to gain consciousness of the symbolized attributes and how they function within us. The common method for doing so is the process of empathizing with the dream symbol, that is, experiencing the symbol from the symbol's point of view. Different traditions of dream interpretation have different methods of teaching this process. Gestalt therapy uses psychodramatic dialogue, where the dreamer enacts the role of the dream symbol, or alternates between two symbols, and engages in dialogue. In Psychosynthesis, the role playing enactment is done through fantasy or reverie methods. Within the Jungian tradition, besides using fantasy, the use of artwork to express the symbol is also encouraged. Similar effects as those achieved by the above methods can also be achieved through inspirational writing in a dream journal, as has been demonstrated by Ira Progoff (see his book, *At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal*). What will be presented here are some specific ways for empathizing with dream symbols and engaging them in dialogue; this method is especially suitable for use in a dream journal.

To get the best advantage of a dream journal, recognize that it need not be merely a record of past facts and events, but can also be treated as a protected



space, or playground, where psychological facts can be discovered and meaningful events can occur. the journal can be a living mirror for meeting yourself. For a journal to have such a living quality, it is helpful if you meditate briefly just before each spurt of writing. Ira Progoff suggests attuning yourself to the flow of spirit in your breathing, then allowing the same flow to transpire through your pen as you begin writing. A meditative approach puts you into a re-

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ceptive frame of mind, preparing you to discover something new rather than merely to record old thoughts. When approached meditatively, writing in your dream journal can be a surprisingly inspired experience.

### How to Begin

Getting started is often the hardest part. Here is a relatively easy way to get the process started. First, we have a dream. For example:

*I am swimming down a river. I see an inner tube floating across the river. There is a deer hiding in it. Reaching shore, the deer is confronted by a wolf. I swim to shore and catch them both in the inner tube, holding them close together. I sense a rising tension.*

To get into the spirit of any particular dream symbol, simply rewrite the dream from the perspective of that symbol. This task gives you something specific to write about while “standing in the shoes” of the symbol and helps to get the empathic process flowing. To begin, read over your dream, pick a symbol, then close your eyes and try to re-visualize the dream as it would appear from the perspective of that symbol. With that orientation in mind, rewrite your dream. Begin with the statement, “I am...” and identify the symbol:

*I am the deer. I am sneaking quietly across the river in an inner tube. When I reach the other side there is a wolf in front of me. Then a person comes out of the river and throws the inner tube over me and the wolf. Now I am face to face with the wolf - he is so near - and my heart beats fast with fear.*

After the dream has been rewritten, you may continue the process by allowing the symbol to express itself: How does it feel about the events in the dream? What does it have to say to the other symbols in the dream? If you first meditate upon your breath, you may visualize your inhalations as bringing you the inspiration and awareness of the dream symbol and your exhalations as carrying this awareness to your pen as you begin writing.

*I am a poor, frightened, innocent deer. I have few defenses except to hide. Crossing the water is very scary, for I so vulnerable when I swim. hiding in an inner tube, I felt safe crossing the water, but then, on the other side, I am confronted by a wolf. I'm sure he wants to harm me, to take advantage of me. I am about ready to run, but suddenly I am captured along with the wolf in the inner tube. What was once my hiding place is now my prison. Why have I been captured? What is going to happen to me now? You, person who captures me, why have you done this? Why don't you let me go?*

Having the dream symbol express itself in such a manner usually paves the way for dialogue. But before we discuss approaches to dialogue, there are a few points to consider.

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First, the process of empathizing with a dream symbol and allowing it to speak may sometimes be confused with automatic writing, a process that could lead to “dissociation” or “possession.” Such confusion may create mental blocks for some people, inhibiting their ability or willingness to engage in empathic writing. But while automatic writing is a process that bypasses the conscious mind, the process of inspirational writing operates in cooperation with the conscious mind. When you write as if you were the symbol, you maintain awareness that you are giving permission to a part of you to express itself through the role of the symbol while you remain a silent witness. Inspirational writing operates in the direction of increased conscious awareness while at the same time allowing for spontaneous expression, making it quite similar to the process of meditation upon the natural flow of breathing. The intended effect is not entrancement but rather greater clarity of consciousness.

Second, since the purpose is to gain awareness of how the energy behind the symbol operates in your daily life, it is helpful at some point to reflect upon what has been written. See if what you learn from the symbol may be integrated into your conception of yourself. For example, with regard to what was written earlier by the “deer,” I may reflect:

*Deer...innocence...uses hiding as a defense...finds that his protection is now like a prison...how am I like a deer?...I am like the deer when...I pretend to be innocent...when I use innocence as a guise to protect me from criticism...when my defense of innocence prevents me from reaping the rewards of forthright risk-taking...*

Generally, it is not a good idea to attempt to operate in both modes - empathic writing and reflection - simultaneously. It is not advisable to analyze what you write while trying to let the empathic writing flow. But after a section of writing is completed, a period of reflective writing can be helpful to digest what has transpired and to guide the direction of the subsequent dialogues.

Finally, it is possible to work with each and every symbol in the dream, allowing each a chance to present the dream from its point of view and to express itself. How many symbols you choose to role play is up to you. Sometimes it is necessary to work with several symbols until one really begins to come alive with meaningful remarks that stimulate insight and lead to dialogue.

### Dialogue

Dialoguing with dream symbols does not necessarily create an “interpretation” of the dream, but does provide an opportunity to interact with your inner life and to achieve a working alliance with it. It is not possible to prescribe

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exact methods and topics of dialogue that would be fruitful in all cases. but we can outline some general suggestions that may provide some idea of the possibilities.

We will discuss three approaches to dialogue. First, the dreamer dialogues with a symbol. Second, two or more symbols from the same dream dialogue with one another. Third, symbols from different dreams are found to set up special situations for dialogue. Each approach has its own particular usefulness.

Dialoguing ourselves with a dream symbol - the first approach - presents an opportunity for a more conscious and fruitful integration of the energy of that symbol into our lives. Sometimes we begin the dialogue with a discussion of the symbol's activity in the dream:

*Deer: Why have you captured me here in this inner tube with the bad, mean wolf?*

*Me: I want to take a good look at you, deer. I captured the two of you to see what can be learned from this predicament.*

*Deer: But I'm innocent. Why won't you just let me go? It's the wolf that needs talking to - he's the bad guy.*

*Me: It was clever of you to use an inner tube to sneak across the river...clever as a fox...I can't believe that you are so innocent.*

*Deer: I needed to get across the river. I would have been very vulnerable swimming out in the open. The inner tube was a convenient coincidence.*

*Me: Why were you trying to swim over to the other side?*

As the dialogue continues within the context of the dream situation, there may arise occasions for periods of reflective writing, when you attempt to formulate what is being learned. The dialogue may also leave the boundaries of the dream setting itself and begin to focus on how the symbol operates in your daily life. As you enter this domain, you may wish to negotiate a better working alliance with the symbol.

*Deer: Now be careful with me, don't shock me with insight, as I am more useful to you as a quiet presence rather than as a blatant energy.*

*Me: Oh yeah? Tell me more about how you live within me. I see you as my characteristic defense of innocence, something that sometimes gets in the way of my taking bold steps.*

*Deer: Some things are better accomplished quietly; sometimes it is better for one hand not to know what the other hand is up to. I give you a quiet manner in the forest of life. The other*



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*creatures are not afraid to go about their business in my vicinity, and so, with my help, you learn more from others than you would if you presented a more aggressive face.*

**Me:** *I see what you mean, and I appreciate that quality. But sometimes, like you, I get too attached to my veneer of innocence, using it as a defense that actually inhibits me. Don't you ever come out of hiding, don't you ever assert yourself?*

**Deer:** *Yes, sometimes I can be a stag...*

Here are some possible questions to ask when dialoguing with a dream symbol. These questions are merely *suggestions*; use your own intuition to bring out important points.

*"Tell me, [Symbol], about yourself, what you are like, your major characteristics or qualities."*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], about how you felt about the events in the dream."*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], how would you have liked the dream to have ended?"*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], about how you felt about how the I treated you."*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], what would you ideally like to receive from me?"*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], what do you represent within me?"*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], what do you have to offer to me?"*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], what do you need from the me in order for you to be able to make this gift?"*

*"Tell me, [Symbol], is there anything else you'd like me to know, or do you have any other suggestions for me?"*

When dialoguing with a dream symbols, try to maintain a flexible attitude. For the purpose of growth or healing, it is sometimes necessary to be firm, sometimes yielding. If the dream symbol seems downtrodden, rejected, or repulsive, it is often necessary to be accepting and sympathetic, perhaps allowing the symbol to have a moment of catharsis - or even letting it tell you off! - before you can expect it to cooperate with you. Frightening or highly aggressive symbols require special strategies. All your skills in listening, negotiating, compromising and loving are relevant. Often you will discover that fairy tales, myths and Biblical stories provide examples of how to deal with difficult situations. You may find yourself like a Daniel facing a lion, a David facing a Goliath, or a Princess kissing a toad. And like the Princess who kissed the toad, you may be rewarded by a surprise gift, such as an insightful statement about yourself or the discovery of a new talent.

One gift that is often helpful to ask for is that the symbol please come to your awareness during the day at times when it is active within you. For example, if the "deer" were to remind me of its presence every time I was using

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innocence as a defense in some situation, or when I needed to be more “invisible” in a situation, I could get a better feel for the activity of the deer in my life and learn to integrate it more creatively. Receiving such a gift could also lead to an ongoing relationship with that symbol and the special awareness it embodies. Remember, however, that symbols from the unconscious have the power of fascination, so be careful to retain an attitude of discernment when listening to what they say.

The second approach to dialogue involves having two or more symbols from the same dream speak with one another. Here is an opportunity to learn about the functional relationship between different psychological energies. There are usually many combinations within a dream, and which one you choose depends upon what you sense to be important or potentially fruitful. Conflict between symbols in a dream often means an opportunity for healing, to replace conflict with harmony, to reconcile an internal struggle between, for example, apparently opposed energies. In our dream example, the situation between the deer and the wolf provides an opportunity to resolve conflict. To get started, simply tune in to each symbol and let it express its viewpoint on the situation portrayed in the dream:

*Deer:* You wanton wolf, how horrible of you to lie in ambush for me, to want to do me harm.

*Wolf:* Delicious deer, it is simply my nature to hunt for food and to snatch whatever tempts me.

*Deer:* We are so different. I am innocent, quiet and shy, while you are mean and aggressive.

*Wolf:* Perhaps, but if I eat you, then some of you will be in me.

*Deer:* It's hard to imagine your wanting some of my qualities.

*Wolf:* Everyone loves a deer, but who loves the wolf?

*Deer:* I'm not so popular when I sneak into a garden to eat the lettuce.

*Wolf:* But no one would shoot you for that, or leave traps around to catch you. It's our contrast that angers me, for you seem so innocent compared to me, and I seem too despicable compared to you. I'm really not such a bad sort.

The dialogue between symbols sometimes can go on and on without apparent effect. It may be useful to pause for a moment of reflective writing, to become aware of the significance of the dialogue. Afterwards, the dialogue may continue on another level:

*In the dialogue between the deer and the wolf, I recognize a conflict I have between innocence and power. The wolf seems hurt because everyone hates him. This makes me think that part of my aversion to expressing power is that I don't want to be disliked by others. So I hide behind an image of innocence. But perhaps the wolf's power*

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*could bring out the stag in the deer. The deer's innocence might restore the wolf's aggression to a natural instinct for assertion and less one of revenge.*

***Me:** Hey, you two, wolf and deer, perhaps you have something to offer one another and need not fight. Deer, can you find nothing to admire in the wolf?*

***Deer:** I do like the way the wolf can walk in the open without fear of attack. I admire his courage.*

***Wolf:** I admire the kinship that the deer enjoys with the other animals in the forest. Sometime's a wolf's life is so lonely; I have only the moon to share my song.*

Once conflicting symbols have expressed some willingness to exchange viewpoints, the process of reconciliation has begun. Continuing the dialogue, perhaps with intermissions of meditation and reflective writing, may lead to some compromise solutions. It is not necessary, however, to force the dialogue to a satisfactory conclusion. The process of reconciliation will continue silently within you, perhaps emerging in a new form in a later dream.

Sometimes a pair of conflicting symbols from a dream seem incapable of reconciliation, even when you step in yourself to try to help. Maybe you are too close to conflict to offer the necessary reconciliation, even when you step in yourself to try to help. Maybe you are too close to the conflict to offer the necessary diplomacy. If so, try the third approach to dialogue. Search among your other dreams for a symbol that might provide the necessary healing touch or at least a different attitude.

***Laughing Woodsman:** I am the laughing woodsman, at home in the woods and alive to the humor of its nature. Hey, what's this? A deer and a wolf caught in an inner tube? Ho ho ho! You two look mighty uncomfortable.*

***Deer:** It's no joke!*

***Wolf:** I didn't put us in this spot, believe me!*

***Woodsman:** Ho ho ho! Here, wolf, let me pick you up and put you over my shoulder. You look mighty silly sitting here cuddling with the deer.*

***Wolf:** I want to get back to my hunting.*

***Woodsman:** We'll hunt together. We'd make a good team - once your anger wears off. You won't be lonely with me around. We can sing together. And you, deer, the next time you want to cross the river, allow yourself to float downstream as you slowly make your way across. That way, you'll blend with the current and you'll have the force of the river behind you.*

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### Dreams and Creative Writing

Experiment with different scenarios, using situations and symbols from various dreams, or create special situations, such as a courtroom, and let the symbols interact. Another special situation for dialogue is preparation for dream incubation (see Chapter Three). Take a dream symbol that represents an attribute in need of transformation to a symbolic place of healing. Empathize with that “place” and allow it to express its special vibrations. Introduce the supplicant symbol to your symbol of healing or wisdom and allow them to dialogue. Engaging in such inspirational writing before going to bed will often prepare you for the needed transformative dream.

Dream shields, as you’ll read about in an upcoming chapter, provide interesting starting points for expanded dialogues. My workbook, *Dream Solutions!* provides even more ways to use dialogues in a dream journal to explore beyond the horizons of the immediate dream material. What begins as an exercise in developing self-awareness transforms into an experience in creative writing. With patience and discernment, the dialogue with our symbolic life allows healing and art to become one in self-acceptance and expression. It also blossoms into literature and mythology, the renewal of culture. ✨

