

# Association, Amplification, & Animation

excerpted from:  
Dreamwork: A Manual of Established and Emerging Methods  
of Working with Dreams

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**INFORMATION PHASE**  
**IN THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH:**  
**METHODS OF ASSOCIATION**

Association—Associative methods are those that link dream images to other similar life events or circumstances. Many dream therapists describe the art of association as central to their methods of interpretation. C. Hall (1953) states that "in free-associating to a dream one free associates to each phrase or sentence in the dream, in turn, and then reconstructs the meaning of the whole dream from the separate association."

Similarly, Freud sought to elicit associations from dreams in order to determine the significance that each aspect of the dream had for the dreamer.

Freud (1952) wrote:

By following the associations which arose from separate elements of the dream divorced from their context, I arrived at a number of thoughts and recollections, which I could not fail to recognize as important products of my mental life.

Methods of Association are used to expand the dream, making connections to present or past life circumstances of the dreamer. These methods are used by the therapist in the exploratory phases of dream interpretation, helping to create a context of circumstances, emotions, and events to which the dream offers insight and provides meaning.

**Methods of Association**

**A. Associate to Dream Elements.**

1. Proceed chronologically through the dream—having the dreamer associate with the individual consecutive elements. In this way the dream becomes understood in the context of a more complete background. The dream becomes one part of the dreamer's current totality of life experience (the full picture).
2. Focus on one particular element of the dream. The dream therapist can then go into considerable associative depth with a particular dream image—choosing to start with the most compelling element or the most (seemingly) innocuous image in the dream.

3. Replace and "either/or" uncertainty of dream content with a "both/and." Take each of the apparent alternatives as an independent starting point for a series of associations thereby opening both sides of the polarity. For example, the dream of a man in women's clothes would invite associations to aspects of the dreamer's experience of both the masculine and the feminine.

**B. Associate to Metaphors And/Or Puns in The Dream.**

1. Identify metaphors in a dream and associate to their possible meaning. Here are five common dream themes that may be viewed as metaphors and worked with in an associative fashion.
  - a. Dreams of nudity may be associated with honesty, openness, vulnerability, etc.
  - b. Dreams of flying may be associated with being "high," "on top of the world," etc.
  - c. Dreams of falling may be associated with "falling out of favor," "falling from esteem," "falling from grace," etc.
  - d. Dreams of finding money may be associated with discovering new riches, finding that which is of value, etc.
  - e. Dreams of examination may be associated with being "under examination" or "being tested," etc.

The dream therapist may notice other metaphorical themes which recur in the dreams of individual dreamers over time.

2. Identify puns in a dream and associate to their possible meanings. Faraday (1974) suggests six ways of working with the pun in an associative fashion:
  - a. Dreams based on verbal puns in which one word represents another of similar pronunciation but different spelling—for example, a dream of men being dressed in gilt to express a feeling of their being steeped in guilt.
  - b. Dreams based on reversal puns—for example, a dream of filling full a jar which expresses a sense of being fulfilled.
  - c. Dreams based on visual puns in which the dream creates a picture based

on one sense of a word—for example, a dream of a baseball game to reflect a feeling of being involved in a base, underhanded game.

- d. Dreams based on puns involving proper names—as when a dream of a man in long johns represented Long John Nebel.
- e. Dreams which create a literal picture of some colloquial or slang metaphor—for example, when a dream depicted a man “shooting me down” to express my fear of being attacked verbally, and a cancelled cricket match to express my feeling that something was “not cricket.”
- f. Dreams which create a literal picture of common body language—for example, a dream of a bare chest to depict a feeling of “getting something off one’s chest” and a dream of a one-armed man to reflect a feeling of being “disarmed.”

**C. Associate to Events, Moods, Characters, or Places in the Dream.**

1. Associate to the events in a dream. The therapist may find connections to the preceding day’s events or significant personal historical events by having the dreamer associate with dream events.
2. Associate to the mood in a dream. The therapist may find connection to past familiar feelings or moods by having the dreamer associate to the mood experienced while in the dream.
3. Associate to the places in the dream. The therapist may find connections to familiar places in awake-life from the associations the dreamer has to places appearing in the dream.
4. Associate to the characters in the dream. The therapist may find connections to people in the dreamer’s life from the associations the dreamer has to people in the dream.

## INFORMATION PHASE IN THE ARCHETYPAL APPROACH: METHODS OF AMPLIFICATION

Amplification—Methods of Amplification are used by the dream therapist to deepen the dream imagery, to enhance it, and to make connection with its archetypal references.

Amplification is usually done in the Information Phase of dream actualization, although this process is also effective as the final step in the dream work.

"Amplification is the process of elaboration," explains Mahoney (1966), "of making fuller and more explicit all parts of the imagery of dreams in order to create a comprehensive background against which the motifs, movements, and signal information of specific dreams stand out clearly, illuminating the problems of the dreamer in somewhat the same way a design stands out on a great tapestry."

Alex (1971) describes the process of Amplification as one that "carefully associates around and enlarges upon each dream object, thereby arriving at a network of connections that help to determine the dream's meaning."

An important distinction is to be made between Personal Developmental Methods of Association and Archetypal Methods of Amplification. Methods of Association link dream images to other similar life events, circumstances, or symbols. Methods of Amplification stay with one symbol—discovering its essential characteristics and plunging into its core.

Williams (1980) points out that "symbol association usually unearths the personal unconscious wherein our specific life material is stored and activated. Symbol amplification generally brings out the collective unconscious, the realm of the archetypes which underlie all existence, inner and outer."

A particularly important form of Amplification is that of dramatization. Methods of dramatization are those that actualize the archetypal dream images, symbols, and patterns through various kinds of creative expression. Methods of dramatization are used to express certain symbols in one or more of the art forms, such as in graphic or plastic art, poetry, music, meditation, ritual, dance, creative movement, or theater. As Williams (1980) explains, the attempt is to re-express the archetypal energy of the dream in a kind of "distillation to essence." Another term for this type of dramatization is "enactment." J. Hall (1977) describes the concept of enactment as "an 'acting in,' inward toward the symbolic, but an inward meaning poured

outward into the world, so that it is caught and held in a symbolic form, as foamy seawater can be caught in a cup or a strange fish can be drawn up from the depths and studied."

Methods of dramatization are useful to the therapist in that they allow the client to approach dream material in a somewhat "tangible" manner. These methods allow the client to get in touch with the archetypal images of the unconscious by giving the actual dream language the opportunity to express itself visibly.

Jung explained

For some persons it is easiest to write dream images down; others visualize them; and others again draw or paint them with or without visualization. If there is a high degree of conscious cramp, often only the hands are capable of fantasy; they model or draw figures that are sometimes foreign to the conscious mind . . . a new attitude is created, an attitude that accepts the irrational and incomprehensible simply because it is happening. (1960b)

### **Methods of Amplification**

#### **A. Research Dream Symbols for Enhanced Meaning.**

1. Investigate religion, myths, fairy tales, and so forth for themes related to dream symbols. Identical motifs occurring in awake-life and reflected in dream-life may be age-old human situations, and reflected in myth. These mythic, archetypal references often provide important perspectives and guidance about the meanings of the dream symbol.
2. Investigate dream figures and themes for cultural analogies. The dream therapist uses the techniques of "like" or "as" to identify similarities to cultural or mythical figures or themes.
3. Employ etymological references. Etymology—the study of the origins of words—is an effective tool for penetrating fundamental concepts. In dreamwork, the use of etymological references is a particularly efficacious method of amplifying the dream image by tracing it back to its root origins.

**B. Determine the Major Dream Symbols' Most Essential Characteristics.**

1. Associate around major dream symbols to establish core meanings. Establishing a network of connections, the dream therapist allows for essential characteristics to emerge, become amplified, and present themselves as basic themes.
2. Identify the symbol's archetypal base. This is a process of reductive amplification. The therapist guides the dreamer in a process of reducing the symbol to its most essential characteristics in order to identify the archetype underlying it.

**C. Express the Dream in Poetry and/or Story.**

1. Use the dream as a creative source for stories and poems. The dream therapist may gain additional insight into the dream after the dreamer enlarges it, amplifies it, into a new form such as a story or a poem.
2. Translate the dream into a folk tale. The traditional folk tale structure offers a way of using a culturally-evolved pattern for the purposes of amplifying dream material.
3. Translate the dream into a parable. A dream may seem to appear as a teaching story or parable designed to illustrate a lesson. The dream therapist may suggest that the dream be amplified (re-experienced and re-written) as a parable offering guidance for awake-life activity.

**D. Express the Dream in Music and Dance.**

1. Move through the sequences of a dream expressing the feelings and actions of the dream. The dream therapist may assist the dreamer in finding appropriate music which helps capture the mood of the dream and allows for fuller expression by the dreamer. Amplifications through body movement often evoke elemental, archetypal forms and gestures.
2. Actualize the archetypal patterns of the dream through dance. The dream therapist suggests the dreamer dance the dream. Many times certain primal scenes or patterns will emerge from the dance. The following questions facilitate amplifications:

- a. What are the primal gestures and scenes?
  - b. Are they expressive of your total personality or only a part?
  - c. How can you dance the dream to resolution?
  - d. What meditation, sharing, or journal work is needed to bring the experience to consciousness?
  - e. If you are a rational person (a thinker), how can you dance your dream to get your body to use its archetypal energies more fully?
3. Translate the dream images into music. By actualizing dream images with music, the dreamer can experience the elemental pulse of the dream—the basic rhythm. This, in-and-of-itself, can illuminate the archetype being expressed.

**E. Express the Dream in Mythic Drama or Ritual Form.**

1. Enact the dream as a dramatic presentation. In a group setting, various people may be asked to "play" different characters in the dream and re-enact it as a dramatic presentation. This method often has powerful emotional and psychological impact on the dreamer and the drama participants. Care and skilled leadership is required from the dream therapist to insure a constructive, healing experience.
2. Design a ritual to amplify or actualize an especially significant dream. Rituals are one of the oldest and most powerful forms of the healing arts. They can be used in dreamwork as a method of evoking and transforming the archetypal dimensions of a dream. Sometimes, there will be ritual acts illustrated right in the dream itself which the dream therapist may help amplify into enactment. The dream therapist must be knowledgeable in the craft of ritual in order to provide caring leadership and safety.

**F. Express the Dream Through Art.**

1. Give dream images tangible form through painting, drawing, and /or clay sculpture. For many people it is easier to relate to dream images expressed in some tangible form. The dream therapist may suggest a method of artistic

amplification that includes a dialogue between the dreamer and the objects that are created.

2. Actualize dream paintings or sculptures in creative context. The dream therapist may suggest to the dreamer that amplificatory artwork be developed in one of the following ways:
  - a. Draw, paint, or sculpt contrasting symbols in dreams.
  - b. Cluster dream symbols and paint them as a mandala.
  - c. Be aware of central healing figures and symbols.
  - d. Keep a journal of dream drawings. [For an expanded discussion of this approach, see Williams (1980).]

## INFORMATION PHASE AT THE “ECOLOGICAL” APPROACH: DREAMTENDING METHODS OF ANIMATION

Animation—DreamTending Methods of Animation are based on the idea that dream images are alive. Methods of Animation return to the dream image the vitality that is inherent to the image to begin with. DreamTending Methods of Animation are used to “re-animate” or “resuscitate” dream images, that is, to bring back to life images that have otherwise been reduced to the medium of narrative or description.

Unlike the Personal Developmental Methods of Association which link dream images to other, similar life events, or Archetypal Methods of Amplification which enhance dream images through investigating similar symbolic references, the “Ecological” Methods of Animation focus on the actuality of the image. These methods explore the dream image as a living phenomenon in and of itself. Dream images are experienced as active, embodied, imaginal entities, with presence and pulse. Information about the dream is generated, therefore, not through an interpretive method of image-linking, nor an analytical process of image enhancement, but through an animating process of embodied correspondence among the dreamer, dream tender, and dream image. For example, an elephant appears in a dream. In addition to considering the dream elephant from the personalistic point of view (elephant as representing my animal instinct), or from the perspective of the collective (elephant representing a sacred animal or deity), the emphasis here is on the living, breathing activity of the elephant as a “living image” of the dream. Methods of Animation are used to enliven the field of consciousness that exists between dreamer and dream image in order that the embodied presence of the image can be experienced as alive.

### DreamTending Methods of Animation

- A. Tend Dream Images in a Manner that Regards Their Existence as Imaginal Beings—as Having Body, Presence, and Pulse.**
1. First, listen deeply into the movements of your own psychic nature. Then, bring this quality of mindfulness into relationship with the dream. Engage the dream from the depth of your nature, evoking the deeper natures of dream images.
  2. Tend the dream in silence, noticing the activity of the dream images in relationship

to each other and in relationship to you. Do nothing. Ask nothing. While “tending silence” stay in the immediacy of the experience—be present in the “here and now” activity of the dream.

3. Again, come back into yourself and listen to your own heart, to the pulse that moves through you in the immediacy of your present experience. Now, return to the dream and select an individual figure and follow it about. Watch its activity, stay with it. Write down feelings, associations, imaginings you are having as a result of being affected by the figure. Take care not to explain or analyze the figure from your “reasoned” perspective. Repeat this exercise with a “less obvious” figure.

#### **B. Use Tools of Animation to Bring the “Breath of Life” to the Dream.**

1. Attend to breathing. Pay attention to your own breathing and bring yourself into a mindful state of being, into your own resonant nature. Now, mindfully enter the dreamscape and patiently watch an image. Notice the activity as it “comes to life.”
2. Become co-respondent with the dream image. Once active, the image body will move about on its own behalf. Follow its motion and attune to its “cadence” or “breath.” Become sympathetic to its sense of self, its sound or pulse. In other words, become co-respondent with it, according to its nature.
3. Resonate with the harmonic of the dream image body. Each image, as image body, is a medicine of the soul. As a medicine, the image body affects our physical body in a resonant way. We experience the affective quality of an image as a felt sense. Attend to the harmonic that is created when a dream image is animated as image body. Notice how we are affected in non-causal ways by the correspondence between bodies.

#### **C. Tend the Dream as a Living Event Situated between Dreamer and Dream Tender.**

1. Experience the dream image as existing between the dreamer and the dream tender—as if “hosting” the dream as “guest.” Engage the dream as if it is a living reality, in the room along with you. Invite the presentation of the “other bodies”—the shades, the ghosts, and the “little people” of the dreamtime.

2. Take the articles (“a,” “an,” and “the”) out of the dream. This practice returns body to image. For example, tell the dream as, “Snake slithered.” rather than “The snake slithered.”
3. Make physical allowance for the presence of the “third body.” Angle your chairs slightly away from a face-to-face arrangement. This configuration, as opposed to sitting directly across from one another, allows the necessary space for the dream images to be present in the room. It is as if the dreamer and the dream tender become part of the dreamscape that is occurring between them, rather than the dreamscape being imagined as located exclusively inside the dreamer’s head.

**D. Witness Dream Images in the Particularity of Their Appearance.**

1. Notice the particularity of dream images as they become increasingly visible and distinct. Look for specificity of color, texture, detail of facial features, and so on. To particularize is to recognize the unique characteristics of the dream image and thus to bring life to the image.
2. Make a distinction between a general category of dream figures like “snakes” and the particular dream image “snake” that is occurring in this specific dream. For example, is the snake of this dream a rattlesnake or a cobra? And, even more important, what distinguishes this rattler or cobra from another?

**E. Use Your Senses to Experience Dream Images as Embodied Presences.**

1. Use your senses of “hearing,” “smelling,” and “touching” to experience dream images as embodied. To smell, hear, or touch an image is to bring a quality of physical contact to an image. Using the senses to experience imaginal figures brings the dreamer into an “embodied” relationship with the dream image. Sensate contact connects the dreamer with the “living image,” recognizing that dream images have presence and body. For example, the smell of the dream ocean, the sound of the dream crow, or the texture of the dream dress brings with it an experience of an image with imaginal body.
2. When looking at dream images imaginally, view them with “soft eyes” and with

“focused eyes.” Soft eyes is a style of seeing in which the dreamer looks with relaxed, “peripheral eyes,” taking in the wide scope of activity. Focused eyes is a style in which the dreamer narrows his vision to see particularity. In both cases, the dreamer looks at dream images as if they were in the room. There is a sense of seeing the invisibles as visible. Using soft and focused eyes provides the dreamer with styles of seeing that allow the dream image to be viewed as an imaginal presence with image body.

3. Listen responsively to any sound that is present in the dream. To listen responsively is to hear into a dream image—to take the time to listen to the sound that is being generated from deep inside the image. It is as if the dreamer waits and listens for echoes, responsive to the sound that resonates from the essential nature of a dream figure.