

Structural Dream Analysis

Typical dream patterns (found in a cross case analysis)

Pattern 1: No dream ego present

In the dream there is no dream ego present, the dreamer just observes a scene as if watching a movie and does not actively take part in the dream. In some cases the dream ego flies above and looks down on a scene or happenings in the dream.

Pattern 2: The dream ego is threatened

In dreams of this kind the dream ego is threatened, e.g. attacked or injured and usually tries to escape or protect itself against the threatening figures. In b) to d) below, the dream ego very often reacts with panic and either feels powerless or tries to escape from the threat. Often this results in the dream ego being chased by the threatening figures. The dreams in this pattern can be differentiated depending on the severity of the threat.

- a) the dream ego is damaged, e.g. severely wounded, or even killed. In some cases the killing has already happened and the dream ego is found as a dead body.
- b) the threat to the dream ego comes from a force in nature, e.g. a natural disaster, earthquake, fire, flooding, storm etc.
- c) the dream ego is threatened by (dangerous) animals.
- d) the dream ego is threatened by human beings, e.g. criminals, murderers or “evil people”, or human-like figures, e.g. ghosts, shadows etc.

Pattern 3: The dream ego is confronted with a performance requirement

The dream ego is confronted with a performance requirement, which is set by another figure or agency in the dream. The dream ego is confronted with a task which it has to fulfil, or is required to find something or to give something to another person in the dream so that they can fulfil a task etc. The most common form of this pattern is the examination dream. An important part of this pattern is that the initiative is not with the dream ego but with other figures confronting the dream ego with a requirement. The dream ego is subjected to their control and power.

- a) Examination in a school or university setting.
- b) The dream ego is subject to an inspection by an official person, e.g. a ticket inspection on the train where the right of the dream ego is questioned.
- c) the dream ego has the task to find something (which was lost before), get something, produce something etc.

A very typical pattern in these kind of dreams is that the dream ego does not feel capable of performing the task, does not possess the right tools or capabilities, or has failed to bring these devices, has lost them on the way etc. For example, the dream ego is not prepared for the examination, or arrives too late for it.

Pattern 4: Mobility dream

The dream ego is moving towards a specified or unclear destination, e.g. traveling and making use of different forms of transportation like bicycle, car, bus, train, airplane, ship etc. An interesting differentiation is the question whether these transportation devices are public or individual. Again this form of dream can be differentiated depending on the extent of the dream ego's agency which shows in the extent to which the dream ego determines its own movement.

- a) disorientation: the dream ego has no idea where to go, even where it is and there are no signs of direction etc.

- b) the dream ego is locked up in a closed space, imprisoned etc., and is looking for a way to get out.
- c) the dream ego wants to move, travel etc. but has no means to do so, e.g. it misses the train
- d) the dream ego attempts to move and has some means of transportation but cannot control the movement, e.g. it cannot steer a car
- e) the dream ego is moving but the way is blocked or the means of transport breaks down or crashes and movement cannot be continued
- f) the dream ego is moving, making use of some means of transportation but it is going the wrong way, is in the wrong train or bus, or is not authorized to use it (e.g. has no ticket) and therefore cannot continue the journey
- g) in the positive form, the dream ego succeeds in moving towards and reaching the desired destination.

Pattern 5: Social interaction dream

The dream ego is occupied with making contact or communicating with another person or figure in the dream. The dream ego wants to get in contact with another person, or is in communication and attempts to communicate something to the other person, or is more generally occupied with creating a desired contact with the other person which can include sexual contact. This dream pattern can be differentiated depending on the dream ego's activity and how successful it is in reaching its desired contact.

- a) the dream ego wants to get into contact but is ignored by others
- b) the dream ego is criticized, devalued or made ridiculous by others and feels shame
- c) the dream ego is successful in creating the desired contact
- d) a special case: the dream ego is aggressive towards others (even kills others) which expresses the will of the dream ego to be separated and autonomous.

Patterns – Course of therapy – Ego functioning

