

The Dream-to-Freedom™ Technique

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Explore specific means of identifying and addressing emotional issues by integrating the complementary therapies of energy psychology and dream work.

Introduction: The therapeutic process often starts with surface-level problems, peeling away emotional layers until the critical issue surfaces. However, it is possible to begin at a deeper level when integrating energy psychology with dreamwork. Dreams focus on the important unprocessed emotional issues of the day, thus dreamwork can quickly bring to consciousness the most important issues at that point in time, that a person is dealing on a subconscious level. On the other hand dreamwork alone - in the absence of other therapies - is not necessarily effective in reducing the emotional stress that may surface. Energy Psychology (EP) complements dreamwork by providing a method for reducing emotional stress and reducing the emotional barriers to healing, once a condition is identified. Combining the two disciplines integrates the primary benefits of both into one technique which is useful for self-help or in a therapeutic setting. In this workshop participants will learn this unique "Dream To Freedom" technique, which provides a specific means for identifying and addressing emotional and psychological issues through: 1) an effective 6-step Gestalt-based dreamwork method for easily identification of current unresolved emotional and psychological issues, 2) new applications of EP methods to the dreamwork process and outcomes and 3) the opportunity to follow along and practice the integration of EFT with personal dream or image work.

About the Presenters:

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Energy Psychology Meets the Dream World

Both dreams and energy psychology engage similar mechanisms in the brain, in particular our limbic system. When experiencing an emotionally impacting event in waking life, our limbic system (particularly the amygdala) assigns it an emotional "tag" which brings it to our attention and creates a response to the threat (a fight or flight response). The event is not only registered as a waking episode but is converted to an emotional memory – perhaps an emotional "snap shot" which might contain a

representative image of the experience. These emotional memories, if not dealt with, become generalized over time creating inappropriate threat reactions to future situations, that may be similar but not necessarily threatening. These become emotional barriers to our growth, driven by old fears and misconceptions.

Energy Psychology is specifically designed to reduce emotional reaction and stress. The Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), for example, combines acupuncture with mental activation of the problem state and desensitization exercises. It is a simple, rapid and effective approach to relieve emotional distress related to anxiety disorders, such as phobias, negative self-beliefs etc. When an emotional memory leads to fear and anxiety, “tapping” acupoints while mentally holding the image associated with that memory, changes our neurochemistry, reducing the anxious response to that memory. Tapping an acupoint is thought to send signals that help reprogram memory paths in the cortex, the amygdala, the hippocampus, or other associated areas of the brain. These very areas are found to be active while dreaming.

Dreams likewise work to process current situations that trigger these emotional reactions, and furthermore attempt to reverse the underlying fears and misconceptions through a process called “compensation” which will be explained below. We have therefore found EP techniques to be quite useful in reducing the same emotional distress and anxiety barriers that our dreams are dealing with. Combining the two not only rapidly identifies the current issue to be worked on, but targets both the stress reaction and the underlying fears and misconceptions.

Dreams and Dreamwork:

When we dream our brain is mostly “awake.” Only the executive functions are “asleep,” functions such as rational thought, linear logic and decision-making, and episodic memory, as well as sensory and motor functions. Centers in the brain, such as the limbic system (which processes emotion), as well centers that form associations (visual and sensory representations) and those which process information as holistic patterns, are all very active. The dream is simply our way of viewing the inner works of this process, which communicates in its own internal symbolic “language.”

C. G. Jung and F. Perls observed that dreams are driven by a natural tendency to bring resolution and closure to unfinished emotional problems of the day. When we sleep and dream, episodic memory is disconnected, so that we cannot recall the specific event, but the emotional context of that event, if unresolved, comes to the surface to be processed. Those emotions, stimulate early threat reactions as well as underlying fears and misconceptions, which have over time become part of our internal model of reality – our belief systems. Furthermore, external events that do not fit that internal model, become new threats to that model. The dream not only illuminates the current issue or threat, but tries to accommodate it by finding a “fit” between the current experience and our internal model. When the internal model is corrupted by old fears and misconceptions, dreams illuminate those barriers as well, and “compensate” by projecting adjustments in order to achieve a “fit.”

For example, the following dream illustrate how dreams illuminate the current emotional situation, the old fear response, and a compensating “adjustment.” This dream came to a woman caught in an emotional situation, but terrified by a long standing fear of expressing any emotions for fear that she would “drown” or be consumed by them. *“I was standing on an island in the middle of a stormy ocean. Water was rising all around me and I was terrified that I would drown. Suddenly a voice told me, ‘the water is just your unconscious, go ahead and dive in and you will be fine’”.*

The metaphors and analogies above were somewhat obvious, but this is not the case with all dreams. The “language” of the dreaming mind is unique, but it is not something mysterious, it is simply how the dreaming brain communicates – the information being processed is represented by association, metaphor and predominantly visual imagery. Dreams essentially communicate using image combinations, just as we communicate with word combinations in waking life. The most effective way to decode those symbolic dream images begins with an understanding that each image represents a combination of emotions and emotional memories. The creation of a dream image appears to involve the amygdala, which in the waking state assigns an emotion to every image that enters our senses. When we dream, it seems the amygdala continues to associate imagery with emotion, creating dream images to represent the emotions that it is processing. Unfortunately deciphering the emotions that an image represents, is not obvious to the cognitive mind, but there is a simple technique called role-play which I will discuss below, that immediately and effectively reveals those associations.

Furthermore, it is not necessary to understand the whole dream. Dream images are much like a holograms; there can be a wealth of information contained in just a single image. This concept is illustrated in the dream of a man who was having a terrible time at work with a female boss who he could never please, consistently failing the more he tried. He simply wanted her approval, but his ego stood in the way of admitting this to himself or to her. He dreamed: *“I am standing in a sweet potato patch and she is on the other side of a barbed wire fence.”* Fritz Perl’s once stated that the most diminished, dehumanized element in a dream can represents the most alienated parts of our personality (the most emotional content), so I asked him to imagine himself as the sweet potato (the role-play process I mentioned above). He stated, *“I am a sweet potato, butter me up and I’ll be good.”* Within the lowly sweet potato was the primary emotion of the dream and the very thing that left him stuck in waking life, the feeling he was unwilling to express to his boss or admit to himself.

Principles of the Combined Procedure:

Combining dreamwork and energy psychology requires an approach that targets the strengths of each; applying the dream so as to illuminate the emotional situation the subject is subconsciously dealing with, and applying energy psychology to use that knowledge to reduce the stressful response that has been preventing closure and progress. Most dreamwork methods deal with metaphor and association, but often use time consuming techniques that remain at the level of cognitive dialogue, sometimes missing

the deeper underlying issues. I therefore prefer to use a Gestalt based role-play tool (as in the above sweet potato dream example), that is not only quick but very effective in surfacing the emotional content within a dream image and comparing it to waking life issues. It effectively bypasses our cognitive filters by engaging our rational mind in a fantasy. In order to bring the complexities of Gestalt work to a level where it can easily be used for self-help or to augment other therapies, I created a simple 6 question role-play script that reveals emotional content without going too deeply. The 6 questions are specifically designed to reveal analogies between the dream and waking life roles, as well as the conflicting beliefs, misconceptions, fears and desires that drive our waking behaviors. In the few minutes it takes to do the 6 question role-play script, one or more emotional barriers, along with a wealth of contributing factors, is revealed.

Once the emotional barrier is defined, EP techniques can be applied to reduce the associated emotional stress. This begins by picking the most significant issue that the dreamwork surfaced, and using that to focus on a specific stressful waking life incident and visualizing the scene. A stress level is estimated, and the specific issue is then verbalized in terms of a “setup statement,” using terms such as “even though I .. (describe the issue)..., I know that/I chose to ..(desired outcome)...” A feature of this technique is that information gained from the dreamwork, as well as the emotions specific to the situation, are used to structure the setup statement, as opposed to using standard setup phrases. The subsequent EP acupoint tapping and bridging sequences use the setup statement, and a short version (reminder phrase), while holding the stressful scene in mind, to reduce the stress level. Sometimes other aspects of the problem surface in the process, which can also be reduced in subsequent rounds by changing the setup statement to reflect the new aspect. The dreamwork also helps with subsequent rounds since many of the aspects that arise, were revealed in the role-play statements. The net result of the combined procedure is that the person can now more easily move past the emotional barrier and cognitively deal with the waking situation, without the emotional reactions that previously left them stuck.

This reduction of emotional barriers, also helps with dream closure and defining next steps. While some dreams project a path to closure (as the example which suggested that the dreamer face and embrace her emotions), most dreams end badly or unresolved. A fun but effective technique that uses the dream to project closure, is to spontaneously imagine a new ending for the dream that “works” in the context of the dream. This new ending is then related as a new metaphor for a possible waking solution and checked out, to ensure it is a practical, healthy solution that indeed enables progress. If so, next steps are defined for applying this solution. This works even best if applied after the emotional barriers are reduced by application of EP. The “new dream ending” technique is an optional step that can be useful in defining the very next steps that the subject can take in life to actualize the work done.

The Procedure: (The “*Dream to Freedom*” Technique)

Step # 1 - Explore the Dream

- a) Tell the dream in the first person present tense, as if you are re-experiencing it.

- b) Explore obvious feelings, metaphors and analogies to a waking life situation.

Step #2 - Explore an “important” Dream Image (6 “magic” questions)

- a) Pick one dream image that seems particularly important or curious.
- b) In your imagination “become” that dream image (envision it in the dream, take 3 deep breaths and on the 3rd breath, merge with it as best you can)
- c) As that image, answer the following questions, first person, present tense (or imagine how the image would answer), and record or write down the answers:
 - 1) What are you? Describe yourself as that dream image (I am...).
 - 2) What is your purpose or function (My purpose is to)?
 - 3) What do you like about being a ___?
 - 4) What do you dislike (or what is the downside) about being a ___?
 - 5) As a ___ what do you fear most?
 - 6) As a ___ what do you desire most?

Step #3 - Compare to your Life Situation ✍

- a) Feed back or review each role-play statement and for each one ask: “Does this also sound like a statement relating to a recent waking situation or feeling?”
- b) If the dreamer becomes aware of a waking life connection with the role-play statement, then rephrase the statements in terms that more specifically describe the waking situation (role, purpose, likes/dislikes, fears and desires respectively):
 - 1) “I am” role analogy ___
 - 2) “My purpose is” analogy ___
 - 3) “I Like” analogy ___
 - 4) “I Dislike” analogy ___
 - 5) “I Fear” analogy ___
 - 6) “I Desire” analogy ___
- c) Most Emotionally Significant Issue or Conflict:
Review the waking life analogies and ask which one(s) seems the most emotionally significant. Discuss. If a conflict scenario is obvious (statements describing opposing sides of the situation) express the nature of that conflict.

Step #4 – Integrate Dream Outcomes with EP

- a) After identifying the waking life situation above, picture a specific incident that brings this situation and feeling to mind, and describe it.
- b) Rate how stressful it is from 0 to 10, with 10 being the most stressful.
- c) Setup Statement: Create a setup statement based on the most significant life analogy statements in step #3, refined by the feelings expressed in the specific experience (use wording from the 6 questions when appropriate).
Even though I__ (expression of stress condition..) ___
I know that/I choose to __ (desire/purpose/etc..) ___
- d) Reminder Phrase: To assist you in keeping the problem in mind, repeat at each point a shortened version of your Set Up Statement called the Reminder Phrase.

Step #5 - Emotional Freedom Technique

- a) State the Setup Statement three times while rubbing chest “sore spots” (alternatively tap point 8)
- b) Tapping Sequence:
 - ? While stating the Reminder Phrase to hold the problem in mind, tap 7 times or so in succession on each of the 8 acupoints
 - ? Bridge the tapping sequences with the 9 Gamut procedure (below)
 - ? Again state the reminder phrase and tap 7 times on the 8 acupoints
- c) Checkout – Stress Level Reduction? Re-rate your level of distress.

Step #6 - Adjustment for subsequent rounds

Repeat the above up to 5 times, adjusting the Setup Statement to accommodate any new information that surfaced, until the level gets down to 1 or 0. If it does not go down, it is likely that other aspects related to the situation have arisen, and can be worked on one by one.

===== **Example** =====

“Blue Truck” dream, from a session with a woman who was stuck and confused, fearful of hurting others thus always placing others needs before her own.

Step # 1 - Explore the Dream

- a) Tell the dream in the first person present tense: *“I am on a busy sidewalk and need to get to the other side, so I follow someone across an intersection, even though I know it is not safe, since four trucks are coming . Three stopped but the fourth (a blue and white truck) keeps coming, only stopping when he sees me standing in the middle of the intersection.”*
- b) Explore obvious feelings, metaphors and analogies with a waking life situation *“I feel that I am at an intersection in my life, particularly regarding a relationship, not knowing where I’m going or which way to go. Should I follow this person? Is it safe? It is very much like my waking life right now.”*

Step #2 - Explore an “important” Dream Image (6 “magic” questions)

- a) Pick one dream image that seems particularly important: *The blue truck.*
- b) In your imagination “become” that dream image - answer the following:
 - 1) What are you? Name and describe yourself as that dream image. *“I am a big blue truck, I have big windows, I am unique.”*
 - 2) What is your purpose or function? *“My purpose is to move, but I don’t know where I am going.”*
 - 3) What do you like about being a big blue truck? *“I am higher than the others, I have a different point of view, I can see ahead and over things.”*
 - 4) What do you dislike (the downside) about being a big blue truck? *“Being so different than everyone else.”*
 - 5) As a big blue truck what do you fear? *“That other trucks won’t like me, and won’t include me, because I am different and not afraid to run over things.”*
 - 6) As a big blue truck what do you desire most? *“To provide a smooth comfortable ride to the passengers.”*

Step #3 - Compare to your Life Situation

- a) Feed back each role-play statement and ask for each: "Does this sound like a recent situation or feeling in my waking life?"
- b) Rephrase the 6 statements in terms that describes the waking situation:
 - 1) "I am unique, with higher perceptions, I tap into others feelings easily."
 - 2) "My purpose is – 'to be on the move,' but I don't know where I'm going. I have just left a 25 year relationship and am in another that I am uncertain of."
 - 3) "I like that – have a different, perhaps "higher" point of view than others."
 - 4) " I dislike – that I stand out like the black sheep of the family."
 - 5) "I fear that – I will be excluded."
 - 6) "I desire to - avoid confronting anyone for any reason, because I want it to be comfortable for the other person."
- c) Most Emotionally Significant Issue/Conflict:

"I feel like I am always trying to make others comfortable, so I always place myself second. As a result I am not getting where I want to go - I am stuck and I want to keep moving." Note: this is much like the visual imagery of the truck and the dreamer stopped unable to move in the middle of the intersection. Also note that the dreamwork identified other obvious underlying conflicts that also might surface during subsequent rounds of the energy psychology procedure below.

Step #4 – Create the Setup Statement

- a) Describe a specific incident: "I want to move, but the man in my new relationship likes it here, so I avoid talk about it. I can picture a scene where I started to talk about moving, but then shut up when he started getting upset."
- b) Rate how stressful it is from 0 to 10: "It is an 8"
- c) Create setup statement: "Even though I put others first - I know I can still move."
- d) Reminder phrase: "put other first"
- e) Tap acupoints => 9 Gamut sequence => Tap acupoints
- f) Rate the stress level: "it is a 5"

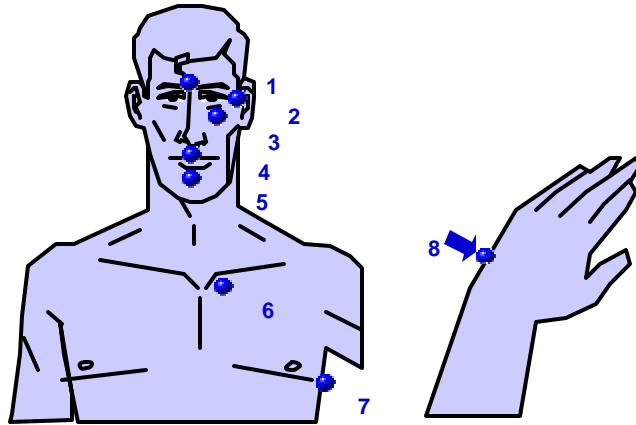
Step #5 – Subsequent Rounds

This session took 3 rounds to get the stress down to 0. The setup statement was adjusted to state: "Even though I am still putting others first, I know that 'I can still move," and the reminder phrase to: "still putting others first" The final stress level came down to a 0."

Optional Step #6 – Dream Closure:

- After the stress barrier was reduced, a spontaneous resolution technique was applied using the original dream:
- a) Review Dream Ending: She was asked to close her eyes and go back into the dream and review what she was trying to do in the dream and how it ended.
 - b) New Dream Ending: She was then asked to spontaneously make up a new ending for the dream that works. She said: "I take a quiet back road out of the city."
 - c) Analogy for Life Solution: "Quiet my fears and find a way of quietly pursuing my option of moving out of the city."
 - d) Check it Out – Is it practical and appropriate, allowing you to move forward, or does it leave you stuck again: "It allows me to move forward."
 - e) Next Steps – to bring the solution about: "Begin by discussing both my needs as well as my partners and look for a compromise."

Acupoint Tapping Sequence



9 Gamut Sequence

