

Protocol for Exploring Emotion in Dream Imagery “Image Activation” Protocol (6 Statement Scripted Role-Play)

Robert J. Hoss, MS

Step #1 – Re-envisioning the Dream: Ask the subject to go back into the dream, or if a long one to the most significant or emotional segment, and tell it as if it is happening now in the first person present tense. Recording the dream with an audio recorder is optional but good to keep as a record.

Step #2 – Noting the “Important” Imagery: ask the subject to move to the most emotionally significant or seemingly important part of that segment and notice what is going on and what characters and objects are involved.

a) Ask them to “note one or two dream images (characters and things in the dream) that seem most important or curious to you – that attract your attention or draw you to them”: _____

b) “is there a dominant or “Central” image?” _____

Step #3 – Scripted Role-Play (let the dream speak):

a) Choose one: chose a dream image X from step #2 to explore. It is often best to pick one the subject is the most curious about, that most draws their attention _____

b) “Becoming” that thing X in the dream: It is often difficult for a subject to fully immerse themselves in the role of a dream image or “thing” so the investigator should provide two options – one of immersing oneself in the dream image X and answering the questions, or if they can’t to imagine how X might answer them. **Procedure:** Begin by having the subject close their eyes, go back into the dream and envision X – then raise a finger when they are there. Then ask them to take 3 deep breaths bringing the image closer on each, with the goal of merging with it on the third breath – and to look out at the dream from its perspective and role – raising a finger when they are there. When there, tell them that you will now ask them 6 questions and they are to answer as that thing X, in the role it is playing or situation it is in, in the dream. If they cannot get into the role, ask them to focus on X and its situation in the dream, and imagine how X would answer each question.

c) The 6 Questions or Statements: Remind the subject that they are to remain in role, and answer in the first person present tense (using “I am or I feel statements) – not to think about the answers – just let the first thing that comes to mind come out. Now ask the six questions, carefully recording the response exactly as the subject states it. It is usually not useful to let them to speak more than a few sentences in answer to each before proceeding to the next unless it appears important to do so. You may want to set a limit of *N* statements.

1) What or who are you - describe yourself & how you feel in that role: _____

2) As X what is your purpose or function? _____

3) What do you like most about being X ? _____

4) What do you dislike about being X ? _____

5) As X what do you fear the most, what is the worst thing that can happen to you? _____

6) As X what do you desire most? _____

Note: if any question evokes an unusually strong response or emotional outpouring, stop at that point and explore the connection, or if it appears that it would be harmful to continue then cease the process.

At the end of the questioning ask the subject to open their eyes and shake off the image and come back to being fully present within themselves and their surroundings.

Step #4 – Waking Life Connection: Now ask the subject to close their eyes while you read back (or play back) each statement to the subject (don’t repeat the question just the statement) and ask them to listen to the statements not as if it were X but as if it is THEM saying it about a situation or way they have felt lately in THEIR life. Have them raise a finger if they get a “connection” or “aha!” Put a check mark by those statement(s) and then ask the subject to open their eyes.

Step #5 – Exploring the Emotional Connection: Go back to each statement that evoked a connection and ask the subject to describe the situation and feelings it recalled. Record these descriptions. To explore the picture-metaphor itself, ask how the words they evoked in the role-play statement relates to the incident or feelings recalled. If the questioning recalls a generalized situation or a specific incident have them describe it and record that.

Note that proper ethical protocols, appropriate clinical monitoring and informed consent must be used in applying this protocol as appropriate to the research situation. All responsibilities for its proper and healthy application lie with the user.