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The Dream Helper Ceremony

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Reinventing Medicine:

Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era of Healing

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Larry Dossey, M.D.

Robert L. Van de Castle, the former director of the Sleep and Dream Laboratory at the University of Virginia and professor in the Department of Behavioral Medicine, has developed methods of purposefully using nonlocal mind, through dreams, to help others solve problems.

Van de Castle's interest in shared dreams began when he participated as a subject in a series of dream experiments at Maimonides Hospital in Brooklyn during the 1960s. The goal of these studies, which were conducted by researchers Stanley Krippner and Montague Ullman for more than a decade, was to determine whether an individual, while dreaming, could receive specific information from someone else. Volunteers in a sleep laboratory would be asked to dream about a picture that was going to be randomly selected after they had gone to bed, a picture that would be focused on by a distant "sender." Or the individual would try to dream about a picture postcard that would not be selected until the following day. The dreamers were awakened when their brain waves and eye movements indicated they were dreaming. Independent judges later decided if there were correlations between the image that was sent and the dreams. Stunning similarities were often seen. In one experiment, Henri Rousseau's painting *Repast of the Lion*, in which a lion is biting into the body of a smaller animal, was selected as the dream target. The dreamer had several dreams about violence and animals. In one dream, about dogs, "the two of them had been fighting before. You could kind of see their jaws were open and you could see their teeth.. .. It's almost as though blood could be dripping from their teeth." For this particular dreamer, the judges confirmed that five of eight dreams corresponded to the image that was sent. The odds against a chance explanation for this outcome were over one thousand to one. The Maimonides studies are classics in dream research, and they strongly suggest that dreams are an avenue of nonlocal communication between separate, distant persons.

"There are more ways of communicating with each other than those acknowledged by current science. . . . [We are all] midnight swimmers in a common cosmic sea," researcher Van de Castle concluded from his participation in the Maimonides dream experiments. Along with Henry Reed, a former psychologist at Princeton University, Van de Castle devised the "dream helper ceremony" so that people can help one another through dreams.

Van de Castle and Reed wanted to provide each individual with an Opportunity to learn and grow as a

result of participating in the ritual. They discouraged frivolity, emphasizing instead a sense of reverence for the power of nonlocal mind. The strategy was to use telepathic dreaming in a group context to be of service to someone.

In the dream helper ceremony, rather than focusing on a target picture, as in the Maimonides experiments, the "dream helpers" focus on a target person. This individual acknowledges that he or she is troubled about some problem but does not discuss it or give any hint whatsoever as to its nature. At night, before retiring, the dream helpers gather around the designated individual and engage in some activity to create a feeling of closeness and bonding—meditating, singing, silently holding hands, or praying together. The target individual may loan some personal object such as a photograph or piece of clothing or jewelry that enables the dream helpers to form a sense of closeness. That night, the dream helpers renounce their right to experience personal dreams and devote the total activity of their unconscious dream life to the individual in need. They ask that they be used as vehicles for healing and understanding. They may record the dreams they experience that night so as to provide the target individual with every piece of information they've gained. The following morning the dream helpers gather and discuss in detail their dreams from the previous night. "A fascinating pattern emerges as the warp of one dreamer's images is laid against the woof of another's, and dream strand after dream strand is woven into the rich collective tapestry," Van de Castle states.

In conducting dream helper ceremonies on many occasions, Reed and Van de Castle were impressed with the collective accuracy of the dream helpers in identifying the problem for which help was being sought and often coming up with a potential solution.

In one ceremony, black-and-white themes prevailed among the dream helpers' dreams. One person reported driving a black car into the town of White Hall. Other dreams dealt with someone hesitant to accept an Oreo cookie; ordering an ice cream cone with one scoop of chocolate and one of vanilla; the black and white keys of a piano; Martin Luther King, Jr., preaching in front of the White House. Several dreams also dealt with family conflict, dissension, and parental lectures about obedience. The target person, a white woman, was surprised by these dreams because she knew none of the dreamers, and none of them was aware that she was dating a black man and struggling with the question of how to deal with the negative reactions that were certain to come from her family. One dream helper dreamed that his watch was slow, and another dreamed about a movie in slow motion. In their discussions, the dream helpers suggested that the target person proceed slowly and bring up the issue with her family only after making sure of her wish to continue the relationship.

In another dream helper ceremony, after all the dreams had been reported the target person revealed she needed insight about entering a new but undetermined vocation. In almost every instance the dream helpers reported a violent theme in their dreams—wild animals, someone hit on the head with a hammer, and other acts of aggression. Some of the violent dreams dealt with mother-daughter relationships. In one there was a mother duck and several drowned ducklings. When Van de Castle asked the target person why she thought so much violence appeared in the dreams and why they concerned mothers and daughters, she broke down and revealed that her mother, a former psychiatric patient, had been violent and cruel to her as a child. Her mother had tried to drown her once in a tub of boiling water, which might have related to the drowned baby ducks. In their discussion, the dream helpers suggested that the target person consider resolving her longstanding conflict with her mother with the aid of a therapist before moving on to a new occupation.

Skeptics often say that dreams are so general they can apply to anyone's situation and can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways. Van de Castle and Reed do not find this to be the case. The specificity of dreams was demonstrated in a weekend workshop, with Reed working with one group and Van de Castle the other. Although the target person in each group was a female of about the same age, education, and socioeconomic status, the dreams in the two groups diverged markedly. Dreams for person "A" were right on target and did not apply to person "B," and dreams for person "B" were specific for her. Van de Castle says, "It seemed as if each target person was a psychic magnet attracting only dream filings of a very specific metal."

Stanley Krippner facilitates a dream group that meets monthly in Berkeley, California. Krippner was the director of the Maimonides Medical Center's Dream Laboratory and is currently the director of graduate

studies at Saybrook Institute in San Francisco. Krippner emphasizes how different his methods are from the way dreams have been handled traditionally in psychoanalysis, which assumes that the analyst understands the dream's symbols better than the patient, whose "defenses" prevent her or him from properly interpreting them. In contrast, Krippner's "group dreamworking" method takes the power away from the therapist and places it in the hands of the dreamer. In the group situation, the dreamer can share as much or as little of what she has learned in the interpretation process as she chooses and can stop the process at any time. The group's function is only to stimulate and support the dreamer in her task of understanding, never to dictate.

Dream helper ceremonies bind individuals together in the common cause of helping someone in need. The dream helpers give freely of themselves during dreams, holding nothing back. A feeling of love, caring, and empathy envelopes everyone concerned—all hallmarks of Era III therapies. Seldom does any single dreamer grasp the full extent of the target individual's problem. But when all the different insights are combined, a solution is often forthcoming.

Dream ceremonies should never be undertaken lightly and never used as mere entertainment. The target person's problem should not be trivial but instead be worthy of the time, attention, and energy of the dreamers. The dream helpers should not participate unless they are willing to commit totally to dealing with the problem.

(taken from pages 98-102.)

Dream helper ceremonies bind individuals together in the common cause of helping someone in need. The dream helpers give freely of themselves during dreams, holding nothing back. A feeling of love, caring, and empathy envelopes everyone concerned. To read more about what he says of Dream Helper Circles, [click here](#). Larry Dossey, M.D., Author of *Reinventing Medicine*. "This is fantastic Henry. To dream that you are murdered suggests that some important and significant relationship has been severed. You are trying to disconnect yourself from your emotions. The dream may also be about your unused talents. In my case, several of my dreams were anxiety dreams, as someone else has pointed out. I was fearful, and that translated into my dreams as the ultimate fear"being murdered. In my later years, i had reached the age where i was very aware of my own mor. Continue Reading. One example of this is a Dream Helper Ceremony. Created by Dr. Van de Castle and described in the *Intuitive Heart*, this process involves a group of people who are willing to help each other solve problems through dreams. At least two people volunteer to work on undisclosed personal issues. They put their names in a box, then "the group blesses the synchronicity of the draw, so that who will best be helped by this process will be the one chosen." Everyone in the group then dreams on behalf of the chosen person, without knowing the specific issue that person is working on. Each member of the group remembers their dream from that night, writes it down, and then shares their dream at the next gathering of the group.