

Walter Bonime, *The Clinical Use of Dreams* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1962), pp. 2-3, and pp. 8-9.



Eugene Gendlin

A philosopher with interest in phenomenology and a practicing psychologist, Eugene Gendlin collaborated with client-centered-psychology pioneer Carl Rogers. Here he presents a list of questions to take to your dreams, although he makes clear (in guidelines I've not reprinted here) that it isn't necessary to apply all the questions to one dream. Just start with one question and follow from there. He further suggests that the dreamer ask the questions of the body—that is feel the answer not just as an intellectual exercise, but as a physical sensation. When asking the body, don't rush it; stay with the body feeling.

I've broken Gendlin's excerpt into three selections so you can have an opportunity to try some of the ideas in your own dream work before moving on, if you so choose. The first 9 of Gendlin's 16 questions are included in the first selection, and the second has the rest. In the third selection Gendlin shows us how to work with the biases we bring to our dream interpretation.

[Except for the standard centered and underlined headings and, my prefatory remarks in the Bias selection, the typography (including capitalization, boldface, and italics) is Gendlin's, not mine.]

ASSOCIATIONS, STORY, AND CHARACTER

1. WHAT COMES TO YOU?

What are your associations in relation to the dream?

What comes to mind as you think about the dream?

Or pick a part of the dream. What comes to you in relation to that?

2. FEELING?

What did you feel in the dream?

Sense the feel-quality of the dream. Let it come back as fully as possible.

Choose the most puzzling, oddest, most striking, or most beautiful part of the dream. Picture it to yourself and let a felt sense of it come in your body.

Or pick one part of the dream.

Then ask: What in your life feels like that?

Or: What does this feel-quality remind you of? When did you ever feel like that?

Or: What is new for you in that felt sense?

3. YESTERDAY?

What did you do yesterday? Scan your memory of yesterday. Also recall what you were inwardly preoccupied with.

Something related to the dream may come up.

Questions #1, #2, and #3 offer three ways to get associations. . . .

4. PLACE?

Visualize and sense the lay-out of the main place in your dream.

What does it remind you of?

Where have you been in a place like that?

What place felt like that?

5. STORY?

First summarize the story-plot of the dream. Then ask yourself: What in your life is like that story?

Summarize the events of the dream in two or three steps: "first . . . and then . . . and then . . ." Make it more general than the dream. . . .

Example: Crossing the River Dream

I had to cross this river, there was no way across, then I saw a bridge further down but when I got there it was only to an island in the river.

The story-summary might be: "First there seems to be no way, then there is one, but only part way. What in your life is like that?"

Or: "First you're discouraged, then it's better but not all O.K. What in your life is like that?" . . .

6. CHARACTERS?

Take the unknown person in your dream. Or, if you know them all, take the most important. (Or take them up in turn.)

What does this person remind you of? What physical feel-quality does this person in the dream give you?

Even a person whom you didn't see clearly may give you a bodily sensed quality.

With familiar people: Did the person look as usual?

Questions #4, #5, and #6 can be remembered together as Place, Story, and Characters. . . .

7. WHAT PART OF YOU IS THAT?

According to some theories, the other people in your dreams are parts of you. We aren't sure that's true, but try it out:

What feel-quality does this person give you? What sense comes in your body? You needn't name it, just have it.

If no quality comes, ask yourself: What is one adjective I could use for that person?

Now think of that adjective or feel-quality as a part of you. If that is a part of you, what part would that be?

You may or may not like this part of you, or know much about it. But let it be here for the moment, anyway.

Does the dream make sense, if you take it as a story about how you relate to that part of you? . . .

8. BE THAT PERSON?

Stand up or sit forward on the edge of the chair. *Loosen your body.* Now imagine that you are preparing to act in a play. The play is tomorrow. Now you are just getting ready, feeling yourself into the role. You are going to play that character from the dream. *Let the feel-quality of being that person come in your body.*