



## Summary of The FiveStar Method of Dream Analysis

by G. Scott Sparrow, [www.dreamstarinstitute.com](http://www.dreamstarinstitute.com) (copyright 2023)

Resources: [“A New Approach to Dream Analysis Congruent with Contemporary Counseling Methods”](#)

### Step 1: Sharing the dream and feelings

Dreamer shares the dream in the first-person, present tense. Meanwhile, the dream workers listen to the dream as if it's their own. If the dreamer is sharing without including feelings, the leader should interrupt the dreamer ask for feelings. After sharing the dream, the dreamer and dream workers review the feelings that arose during the dream narration. Be aware that dreams arise in response to felt dissonance; that is, the dream ego is become aware of something that is not integrated, which sets up a certain tension that generates the dream. Comment on the nature of the felt dissonance, if any, and ask the dreamer to relate to it, too, and identify the forces in tension.

Language Tips: As a prelude to having a member share a dream, the leader should say **Please share your dream in the first-person, present tense, as if it were happening right now. Meanwhile, the group members and I will listen to it as it were our dream.** If the dreamer leaves out the feelings that arose during the dream, gently interrupt when it seems important, and inquire **What are you feeling now?**

Resources: [“Dissonance as the First Cause of Dreaming”](#)

### Step 2: Formulating the theme or process narrative (PN)

In collaboration with the dreamer, the dream workers distill the action in the form of a succinct summary. Avoid mention of specific images and names. Use generic nouns like “someone,” “something,” or “somewhere” to replace specifics names, objects and places. Examples: **I am trying to get somewhere and encounter an array of obstacles blocking my way, but I don't give up** or **Someone is trying to get away from a threat but cannot find a place that feels safe; eventually the threat turns into something less imposing.** (State the process narrative wither from the standpoint of, “I am...” or “Someone

is...” depending on the need for the dreamer to identify with or maintain distance from the dream drama.)

Language Tips: As a prelude to formulating the process narrative (PN) in Step Two and dreamer responses in Step Three, the leader might say, **I’d like to explore a couple of dimensions of your dream before we discuss the meaning of the imagery or symbols, ok?**

**Specifically, I want us to arrive at what’s called a *process narrative*, which is the story line from beginning to end of the dream without regard to any of the specific names, places, objects, etc. It’s a generic statement of what’s happening. Then I’d like for us to examine your responses over the course of the dream—where you felt, thought, chose, or reacted in some way to what was happening.**

*(If the dreamer is familiar with the PN already, ask him/her to formulate it before you offer your version. If not, you can formulate it, and then get the dreamer to ratify it, or suggest changes. If you’re working with a group, then ask someone to offer one, then get the group and dreamer to modify it until it feels accurate.)*

You can start the PN as a summary, such as: **So, what I see happening in this dream is that you (or someone) ...***Formulate process narrative with dreamer group and dreamer’s participation.*

Resources: [“Viewing the Dream as Process: A Key to Effective Dreamwork”](#)

### **Step 3: Dreamer Response and Imagery Change Analysis**

In collaboration with the dreamer, the dream worker highlights and troubleshoots the dreamer’s responses to the dream content by simply focusing on where the dreamer responded or reacted to the dream situations and characters. The dream workers use “process questions” and “process descriptions” to highlight the circular relationship between the dreamer’s responses and the imagery changes. An example might be: **When you (felt/thought/assumed/responded), the image changed, and then you ...** Follow up with questions such as these: **Is this a new response, or is it familiar?** or **What was constructive about your response?** or **What was unfortunate about your response?** Then ask **What could you have done differently? How do you think the dream image would have responded to that?**

The dream workers may participate vicariously by saying, **If this were my dream, I can imagine myself feeling/thinking/assuming/acting...** A group leader may incorporate additional protective measures, such as discouraging eye contact with the dreamer, and speaking to the group instead of the dreamer, to make sure the dreamer’s autonomy is preserved.

Language Tips: When you get to Step Three, you can use “process descriptions” to describe the dreamer’s responses and their impact on the dream. Process descriptions establish the circular or reciprocal nature of dream ego responses/dream imagery changes, such as: **Now, as for your responses in the dream, it occurs to me that when “A” happened, you did “B” and then when “C” happened you responded by doing “D.”** Or you may start with the dreamer’s response as the first step in the circular dynamic: **When you did “A” the (image/person/situation) changed in response, and then you did “Y” in response to that.**

To assess the dreamer’s chronic or habitual responses, you might say: **Let’s look at what’s familiar or habitual about your responses and how they impacted the dream characters or situations. Go through them.**

**Let’s look at what’s new or creative about your responses and how they impacted the dream characters or situations. Go through them.**

**What would you like to have done differently, and do differently in any future dreams?**

Resources: [“Analyzing Chronic Dream Ego Responses in Co-Creative Dream Analysis”](#)

## **Step 4: Imagery Analysis**

This step may involve a variety of non-invasive methods of imagery analysis, which may include:

**Amplification:** The dreamer shares his or her associations with the images (amplification). The dream worker/dream group can also provide associations and ideas, but use protective measures, such as using the qualifying words, “If this were my dream...” to make sure the dreamer’s autonomy is preserved. Amplification may involve discussion of general universal meanings/archetypes.

**Dialoguing:** (Optional Advanced) As an added step, the dream worker/dream group may have the dreamer describe him/herself as the image, and then dialogue with the dreamer to enhance awareness and deepen the relationship with that part of him/herself. Experience with using Gestalt-congruent questions and prompts is important, such as What do you feel? What are you aware of? And What do you want to say to...?

**Metaphor Analysis:** (Optional Advanced) What are the principal metaphors in the dream? What broad domain of experience does the image relate to? What concrete experience(s) of the dreamer anchors and makes understandable the broad domain?

Language Tips: Ask the dreamer to tell you what associations he/she has to a particular image: **Tell us your associations with bumble bees.** Allow yourself (and any dream group members) to make associations, but use qualifying language, **I think of bumble bees as...** or **If this were my dream, a bumble bee might signify...**

As for dialoguing with an image, such as a bumble bee, it's best to introduce the dialogue gently in this form: **What would you say to the bumble bee if the dream were happening again right now?** The use of this conditional question puts less pressure on the dreamer. After having the dreamer respond to this conditional question, you can then directly ask, **If you were the bee, how would you respond to the dreamer?**

Resources: [“The Construction and Analysis of Dream Metaphors from the Standpoint of Co-Creative Dream Theory”](#) and [“Imagery Change Analysis”](#)

## **Step 5: Formulating a Plan of Action**

At this stage, the dream worker asks the dreamer, **Where is this issue/relational process occurring in your life?** Or, **What does the dream say about your progress or lack thereof?** And you might ask, **“What would you like to do differently in the waking state context, or in the dream if this type of encounter should arise again?”** You may also engage the dreamer in Dream Reliving to explore the impact of new responses, especially to nightmares. This imaginal work will have a significant effect on one's waking and dream reality. Any efforts to apply the dream in the dream state and/or waking life situations can be analyzed subsequently and new efforts formulated based on the progress made or difficulties encountered.

Resources: [“Meditation and Dream Reliving”](#)