

Deepen Your Clinical Practice with Dreamwork

A Three Step Methodology to
Explore the Dreaming Psyche




Dream Tending
STEPHEN AIZENSTAT PHD

Stephen Aizenstat, Founder of Dream Tending, Pacifica Graduate
Institute, and the Academy of Imaginal Arts and Sciences

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I believe that the DNA of our individual and planetary evolution is coded in the images of dreams. Combine this conviction with the idea that dream images not only live within us, they also exist all around us, in every animal, plant, and landscape of this world. Our dream images give meaning to our personal and collective life's story—the journey of who we are and who we are becoming.

—Stephen Aizenstat

Hello there,

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a nearly 40% increase in nightmares. A national survey conducted by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) reveals that almost 60% of Americans are now experiencing psychologically related insomnia. This has resulted in a large increase in the usage of antidepressant and sleep-aid prescription drugs.

When your clients bring you their dreams, what approach do you offer? Do you interpret them? Although there is nothing wrong with interpreting dreams, Dream Tending differs significantly in its approach.

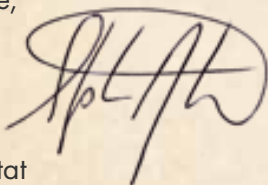
During my career as a depth and clinical psychologist, marriage and family therapist, and founder of Pacifica Graduate Institute, I have tended the dreams of thousands of people around the world. From my time in the field, I have crafted a three-step methodology of working with a dream that I find particularly generative.

As this has been my life's work for the past 40 years, I am honored to offer you this short guidebook to help you work with your clients' crippling anxiety, isolating depression, and emotional/psychological upheaval in these times of uncertainty.

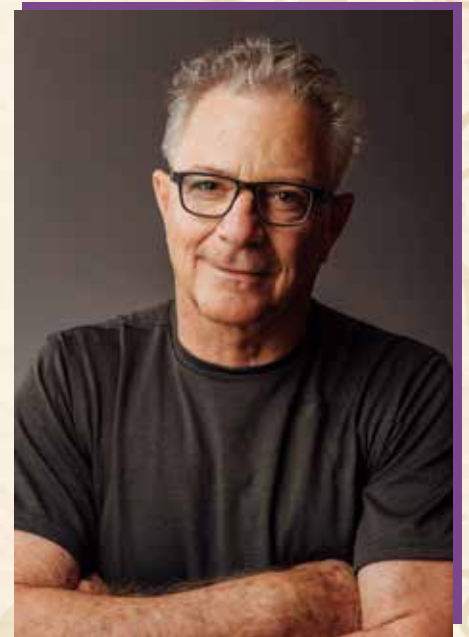
The guide that follows opens with a description of Dream Tending written by a past colleague of mine, clinical psychologist Larry Brooks. From there, you will find my original work in the order of association, amplification, and animation. This methodology of working with dreams is the praxis of Dream Tending.

I truly hope this practice aids you and your clients.

In the dreamtime,

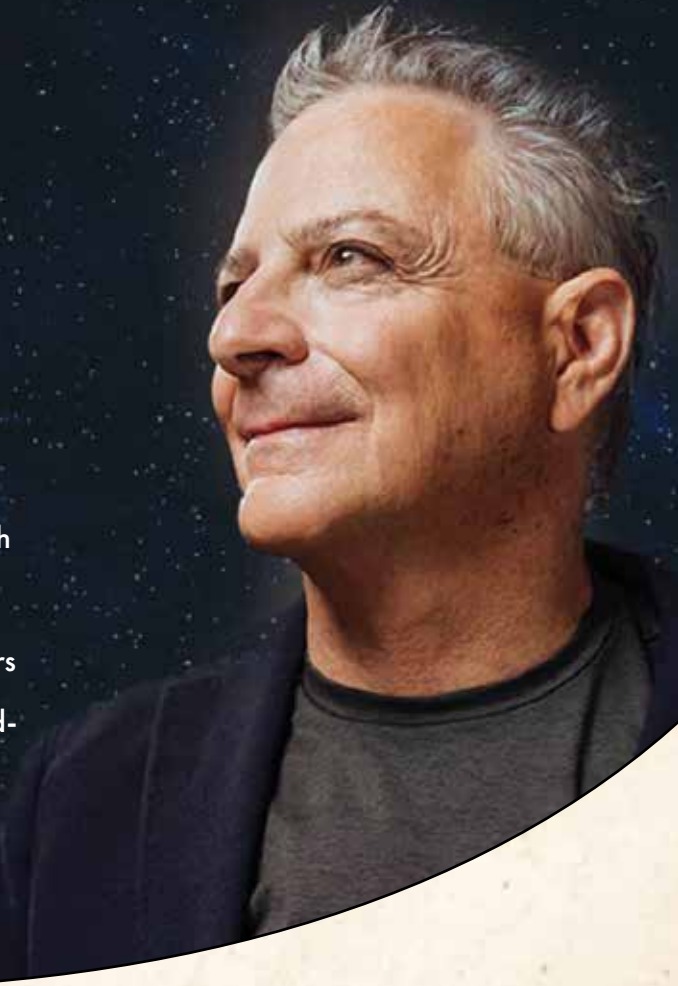


Stephen Aizenstat



Stephen Aizenstat

Stephen Aizenstat, Ph.D., is the founder of Dream Tending, Pacifica Graduate Institute, and the Academy of Imaginal Arts and Sciences. He is a world-renowned professor of depth psychology, an imagination specialist, and an innovator. He has served as an organizational consultant to major companies, institutions, and as a depth psychological content advisor to Hollywood film makers. Dr. Aizenstat has lectured extensively in the U.S., Asia, and Europe. He is affiliated with the Earth Charter International project through the United Nations, where he has spoken. He has collaborated with many notable masters in the field including Joseph Campbell, James Hillman, Marion Woodman, and Robert Johnson.



What is Dream Tending?

Dream Tending is a comprehensive dreamwork methodology that offers ways of accessing the healing powers of dreams. This approach views the dreaming psyche as multidimensional. Dreams are perceived as portals, opening the doors to the personal, collective, and universal realms of consciousness. Dream Tending is different from dream interpretation. To tend a dream is to experience the figures in dreams as embodied, with imaginal substance and pulse. As dreams are animated, it becomes possible to experience their intelligence and listen to their stories. These teachings inform our life purpose and respond to what the world is asking of us now.



Benefits of Dream Tending

- **Increase Your Awareness**
Learn how to befriend dream figures as companions of the soul.
- **Expand Your Consciousness**
Discover a shift in consciousness and experience liberation.
- **Discover Your Potential**
Move from the confines of your fears to a realm of creativity.

To Interpret a Dream or to Tend to a Dream?

By Larry Brooks, Ph.D.

What Is Dream Interpretation?

Freud's work is foundational to dream interpretation. The publication of his seminal book *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900 initiated a seismic cultural shift in understanding psychological phenomena and recognizing the importance of dreams. The key word in the title and the central principle of his book is *interpretation*. The dream is viewed as a riddle emanating from the individual's unconscious, holding a hidden meaning that needs to be deciphered. The knowledge and expertise of the dream analyst are grounded in a theoretical framework that directs the interpretive action of dreamwork. While much has changed since the time of Freud, the role of interpretation is still the predominant tool in dreamwork.

What Is Dream Tending?

Dream Tending is a way of working with dreams developed by Stephen Aizenstat. While it builds on the work of Freud and Jung, it is much more than a methodology. Influenced by James Hillman, founder of archetypal psychology, two qualities distinguish Dream Tending from dream interpretation—first, how it views the dream tender, and second, how it views the dream image. The term *dream tending* was intentionally chosen to emphasize a relationship to the dream characterized by caring and open-mindedness. This sensibility, grounded in a spirit of not-knowing, distinguishes Dream Tending from dream interpretation in which the psychotherapist occupies a position of authority by virtue of their expertise.

How Does Dream Tending Conceptualize Dreams?

Aizenstat views the dream image not merely as a symbol that has meaning, but as a "living image," in the words of James Hillman, or as "persons of the soul." Night after night, the dreaming psyche receives these images from a source greater than the individual. Aizenstat states, "Dream images are not representations of our personal nature only, but are also informed by the subjective inner natures of the things and creatures in the world. The imaginal field beyond the inter-subjective is the extra-subjective that I am equating with the autonomy of the image."

The Art of Dream Tending

Since dreams are not the product of a logical mind, you need to bypass the rational ego to access their deeper significance. To the extent that you interpret a dream, you are limited by the parameters of an interpretive system. In contrast to dream interpretation, in Dream Tending the ego is seen as an obstacle. It will prematurely foreclose inquiry and too quickly try to make sense of the dream. Hillman states, "Dreams call from the imagination to the imagination and can be answered only by the imagination." The dream image is like a boat moored to a dock. The image reveals itself and individuates when it is unmoored and allowed to drift.

Rather than interpret a dream, the dream tender animates the image. Animation is the heart and soul of Dream Tending. It is quintessentially improvisation, a playing with images guided by an attentiveness to affect and the nuances of the dream, along with an overarching curiosity and vigilance to the ever-present intrusive presence of ego.

The dream tender meets the dream with curiosity as if a tourist in a foreign country, gathers associations, and asks the dreamer what parts of the dream generate curiosity, attraction, fright, or repulsion. The answers to these questions lead to finding an emotionally resonant image with which to work. When the image is identified, the dreamer is asked to imagine the image in the room in order to interact with it. The dream tender is attentive to how the dreamer is telling the dream with words and gestures, and how the dreamer experiences the dream in the present.

Dreams, on occasion, evoke strong feelings in individuals, such as fear, repulsion, and shame. The dream tender helps the dreamer tolerate these difficult feelings and facilitates curiosity about the images in order to understand their deeper nature. As the dreamer moves through fear and repugnance to a relationship with the image, the image evolves, and something of value can be learned.

Dream Tending Methodology

I. Association

Methods of Association

Association or *associative* methods are those that link dream images to similar life events or circumstances. They are used to expand the dream, making connections to present or past life circumstances of the dreamer. These methods are used by the dream tender in the exploratory phases of dream interpretation, helping to create a context of circumstances, emotions, and events to which the dream offers insight and provides meaning.

A. Associate to Dream Elements.

1. Proceed chronologically through the dream, having the dreamer associate with the individual consecutive elements. In this way the dream becomes understood in the context of a more complete background. The dream becomes one part of the dreamer's current totality of life experience—the full picture.
2. Focus on one particular element of the dream. The dream tender can then go into considerable associative depth with a particular dream image, choosing to start with the most compelling element or the most (seemingly) innocuous image in the dream.
3. Replace an either/or uncertainty of dream content with a both/and. Take each of the apparent alternatives as an independent starting point for a series of associations, thereby opening both sides of the polarity. For example, the dream of a man in women's clothes would invite associations to aspects of the dreamer's experience of both the masculine and the feminine.

B. Associate to Metaphors and/or Puns in The Dream.

1. Identify metaphors in a dream and associate them to their possible meaning. Here are five common dream themes that may be viewed as metaphors and worked with in an associative fashion.
 - a. Dreams of nudity may be associated with honesty, openness, vulnerability, etc.
 - b. Dreams of flying may be associated with being "high," "on top of the world," etc.
 - c. Dreams of falling may be associated with "falling out of favor," "falling from esteem," "falling from grace," etc.
 - d. Dreams of finding money may be associated with discovering new riches, finding that which is of value, etc.
 - e. Dreams of examination may be associated with being "under examination" or being tested, etc.

The dream tender may notice other metaphorical themes that reoccur in the dreams of individual dreamers over time.

2. Identify puns in a dream and associate them to their possible meanings. Here are six ways of working with the pun in an associative fashion:
 - a. Dreams based on verbal puns in which one word represents another of similar pronunciation but different spelling—for example, a dream of men being dressed in gilt to express a feeling of their being steeped in guilt.
 - b. Dreams based on reversal puns—for example, a dream of filling full a jar, which expresses a sense of being fulfilled.
 - c. Dreams based on visual puns in which the dream creates a picture based on one sense of a word—for example, a dream of a baseball game to reflect a feeling of being involved in a base, underhanded game.
 - d. Dreams based on puns involving proper names—as when a dream of a man in long johns represents radio host Long John Nebel.
 - e. Dreams that create a literal picture of some colloquial or slang metaphor—for example, when a dream depicts a man "shooting me down" to express my fear of being attacked verbally, and a canceled cricket match to express my feeling that something is "not cricket."
 - f. Dreams that create a literal picture of common body language—for example, a dream of a bare chest to depict a feeling of "getting something off one's chest" and a dream of a one-armed man to reflect a feeling of being "disarmed."

C. Associate to Events, Moods, Characters, or Places in the Dream.

1. Associate to the events in a dream. The dream tender may find connections to the preceding day's events or significant personal historical events by having the dreamer associate with dream events.
2. Associate to the mood in a dream. The dream tender may find connections to past familiar feelings or moods by having the dreamer associate to the mood experienced while in the dream.
3. Associate to the places in the dream. The dream tender may find connections to familiar places in awake-life from the associations the dreamer has to places appearing in the dream.
4. Associate to the characters in the dream. The dream tender may find connections to people in the dreamer's life from the associations the dreamer has to people in the dream.

II. Amplification

Methods of Amplification

Amplification or *methods of amplification* are used by the dream tender to deepen the dream imagery, to enhance it, and to make connection with its archetypal references. Amplification is usually done in the information phase of dream actualization, although this process is also effective as the final step in the dreamwork.

An important distinction is to be made between personal developmental methods of association and archetypal methods of amplification. Personal developmental methods of association link dream images to similar life events, circumstances, and symbols. Archetypal methods of amplification stay with one symbol, discovering its essential characteristics and plunging into its core. A particularly important form of amplification is that of dramatization. Methods of dramatization are those that actualize the archetypal dream images, symbols, and patterns through various kinds of creative expression.

A. Research Dream Symbols for Enhanced Meaning.

1. Investigate religion, myths, fairy tales, and so forth for themes related to dream symbols. Identical motifs occurring in awake-life and reflected in dream-life may be age-old human situations and reflected in myth. These mythic, archetypal references often provide important perspectives and guidance about the meanings of the dream symbol.
2. Investigate dream figures and themes for cultural analogies. The dream tender uses the techniques of "like" or "as" to identify similarities to cultural or mythical figures or themes.
3. Employ etymological references. Etymology—the study of the origins of words—is an effective tool for penetrating fundamental concepts. In dreamwork, the use of etymological references is a particularly efficacious method of amplifying the dream image by tracing it back to its root origins.

B. Determine the Major Dream Symbols' Most Essential Characteristics

1. Associate around major dream symbols to establish core meanings. Establishing a network of connections, the dream tender allows for essential characteristics to emerge, become amplified, and present themselves as basic themes.
2. Identify the symbol's archetypal base. This is a process of reductive amplification. The dream tender guides the dreamer in a process of reducing the symbol to its most essential characteristics in order to identify the archetype underlying it.

C. Express the Dream in Poetry and/or Story.

1. Use the dream as a creative source for stories and poems. The dream tender may gain additional insight into the dream after the dreamer enlarges it, or amplifies it, into a new form such as a story or a poem.
2. Translate the dream into a folktale. The traditional folktale structure offers a way of using a culturally evolved pattern for the purposes of amplifying dream material.
3. Translate the dream into a parable. A dream may seem to appear as a teaching story or parable designed to illustrate a lesson. The dream tender may suggest that the dream be amplified (re-experienced and re-written) as a parable offering guidance for awake-life activity.

D. Express the Dream in Music and Dance.

1. Move through the sequences of a dream expressing the feelings and actions of the dream. The dream tender may assist the dreamer in finding appropriate music that helps capture the mood of the dream and allows for fuller expression by the dreamer. Amplifications through body movement often evoke elemental, archetypal forms and gestures.
2. Actualize the archetypal patterns of the dream through dance. The dream tender suggests the dreamer dance the dream. Many times certain primal scenes or patterns will emerge from the dance. The following questions facilitate amplifications:
 - a. What are the primal gestures and scenes?
 - b. Are they expressive of your total personality or only a part?
 - c. How can you dance the dream to resolution?
 - d. What meditation, sharing, or journal work is needed to bring the experience to consciousness?
 - e. If you are a rational person (a thinker), how can you dance your dream to get your body to use its archetypal energies more fully?
3. Translate the dream images into music. By actualizing dream images with music, the dreamer can experience the elemental pulse of the dream-the basic rhythm. This, in-and-of-itself, can illuminate the archetype being expressed.

E. Express the Dream in Mythic Drama and Ritual Form..

1. Enact the dream as a dramatic presentation. In a group setting, various people may be asked to “play” different characters in the dream and reenact it as a dramatic presentation. This method often has a powerful emotional and psychological impact on the dreamer and the drama participants. Care and skilled leadership is required from the dream tender to ensure a constructive, healing experience.
2. Design a ritual to amplify or actualize. Rituals are one of the oldest and most powerful forms of the healing arts. They can be used in dreamwork as a method of evoking and transforming the archetypal dimensions of a dream. Sometimes, there will be ritual acts illustrated right in the dream itself, which the dream tender may help amplify into enactment. The dream tender must be knowledgeable in the craft of ritual in order to provide caring leadership and safety.

F. Express the Dream Through Art.

1. Give dream images tangible form through painting, drawing, and clay sculpture. For many people, it is easier to relate to dream images expressed in some tangible form. The dream tender may suggest a method of artistic amplification that includes a dialogue between the dreamer and the objects that are created
2. Actualize dream paintings or sculptures in a creative context. The dream tender may suggest to the dreamer that amplificatory artwork be developed in one of the following ways:
 - a. Draw, paint, or sculpt contrasting symbols in dreams.
 - b. Cluster dream symbols and paint them as a mandala.
 - c. Be aware of central healing figures and symbols.
 - d. Keep a journal of dream drawings.

III. Animation

Methods of Animation

Animation or *Dream Tending methods of animation* are based on the idea that dream images are alive. Methods of animation return to the vitality that is inherent in the dream image. Dream Tending methods of animation are used to “re-animate” or “resuscitate” dream images, that is, to bring back to life images that have otherwise been reduced to the medium of narrative or description.

Unlike the personal developmental methods of association that link dream images to similar life events, or archetypal methods of amplification that enhance dream images through investigating similar symbolic references, the “ecological” methods of animation focus on the actuality of the image.

These methods explore the dream image as a living phenomenon in and of itself. Dream images are experienced as active, embodied, imaginal entities, with presence and pulse. Information about the dream is generated, therefore, not through an interpretive method of image-linking, nor through an analytical process of image enhancement, but through an animating process of embodied correspondence among the dreamer, dream tender, and dream image. For example, an elephant appears in a dream. In addition to considering the dream elephant from the personalistic point of view (elephant as representing my animal instinct) or from the perspective of the collective (elephant representing a sacred animal or deity), the emphasis here is on the living, breathing activity of the elephant as a “living image” of the dream. Methods of animation are used to enliven the field of consciousness that exists between dreamer and dream image so that the embodied presence of the image can be experienced as alive.

A. Tend Dream Images in a Manner that Regards Their Existence as Imaginal Beings—as Having Body, Presence, and Pulse.

1. First, listen deeply into the movements of your own psychic nature. Then, bring this quality of mindfulness into relationship with the dream. Engage the dream from the depth of your nature, evoking the deeper natures of dream images.
2. Tend the dream in silence, noticing the activity of the dream images in relation to each other and in relation to you. Do nothing. Ask nothing. While “tending silence,” stay in the immediacy of the experience—be present in the “here and now” activity of the dream.
3. Again, come back into yourself and listen to your own heart, to the pulse that moves through you in the immediacy of your present experience. Now, return to the dream and select an individual figure and follow it around. Watch its activity, stay with it. Write down feelings, associations, and imaginings you are having as a result of being affected by the figure. Take care not to explain or analyze the figure from your “reasoned” perspective. Repeat this exercise with a “less obvious” figure.

B. Use Tools of Animation to Bring the “Breath of Life” to the Dream.

1. Attend to breathing. Pay attention to your own breathing and bring yourself into a mindful state of being, into your own resonant nature. Now, mindfully enter the dreamscape and patiently watch an image. Notice the activity as it “comes to life.”
2. Become co-respondent with the dream image. Once active, the image body will move about on its own behalf. Follow its motion and attune to its “cadence” or “breath.” Become sympathetic to its sense of self, its sound or pulse. In other words, become co-respondent with it, according to its nature.
3. Resonate with the harmonic of the dream image body. Each image, as image body, is a medicine of the soul. As a medicine, the image body affects our physical body in a resonant way. We experience the affective quality of an image as a felt sense. Attend to the harmonic that is created when a dream image is animated as image body.
4. Notice how we are affected in non-causal ways by the correspondence between the physical body and dream image bodies.

C. Tend the Dream as a Living Event Situated between Dreamer and Dream Tender.

1. Experience the dream image as existing between the dreamer and the dream tender, as if “hosting” the dream as “guest.” Engage the dream as if it is a living reality, in the room along with you. Invite the presentation of the “other bodies”—the shades, the ghosts, and the mythic people of the dreamtime.
2. Take the articles—a, an, the—out of the dream. This practice returns body to image. For example, tell the dream as “snake slithered” rather than “the snake slithered.”
3. Make physical allowance for the presence of the “third body.” Angle your chairs slightly away from a face-to-face arrangement. This configuration, as opposed to sitting directly across from one another, allows the necessary space for the dream images to be present in the room. It is as if the dreamer and the dream tender become part of the dreamscape that is occurring between them, rather than the dreamscape being imagined as located exclusively inside the dreamer’s head. 7

D. Witness Dream Images in the Particularity of Their Appearance.

1. Notice the particularity of dream images as they become increasingly visible and distinct. Look for specificity of color, texture, detail of facial features, and so on. To particularize is to recognize the unique characteristics of the dream image and thus to bring life to the image.
2. Make a distinction between a general category of dream figures such as “snakes” and the particular dream image “snake” that is occurring in this specific dream. For example, is the snake of this dream a rattlesnake or a cobra? And, even more important, what distinguishes this rattler or cobra from another?

E. Use Your Senses to Experience Dream Images as Embodied Presences.

1. Use your senses of hearing, smelling, and touching to experience dream images as embodied. To smell, hear, or touch an image is to bring a quality of physical contact to an image. Using the senses to experience imaginal figures brings the dreamer into an “embodied” relationship with the dream image. Sensate contact connects the dreamer with the living image, recognizing that dream images have presence and body. For example, the smell of the dream ocean, the sound of the dream crow, or the texture of the dream dress brings with it an experience of an image with imaginal body.
2. When looking at dream images imaginally, view them with “soft eyes” and with “focused eyes.” Soft eyes is a style of seeing in which the dreamer looks with relaxed, “peripheral eyes,” taking in the wide scope of activity. Focused eyes is a style in which the dreamer narrows their vision to see particularity. In both cases, the dreamer looks at dream images as if they were in the room. There is a sense of seeing the invisibles as visible. Using soft and focused eyes provides the dreamer with styles of seeing that allow the dream image to be viewed as an imaginal presence with image body.
3. Listen responsively to any sound that is present in the dream. To listen responsively is to hear into a dream image—to take the time to listen to the sound that is being generated from deep inside the image. It is as if the dreamer waits and listens for echoes, responsive to the sound that resonates from the essential nature of a dream figure.

Dream Tending and Imagination Programs

Do you want to ignite your creativity and have a greater understanding of the human experience? Do you want to help your clients find their life purpose, tend their nightmares, and befriend frightening reoccurring dream images? Do you long to be part of an extended community of like-minded psychotherapists and people in the healing professions who are called to the value of imagination and dreams?

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