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The Gifts of Dreaming

with Robert Moss
by Julia Griffin

Robert Moss teaches "Active Dreaming" — a way of participating in our dream world that, he says, creates a bridge between ordinary dreamwork and shamanism. In this connection, he leads innovative dream programs all over the world.

His ongoing research includes applications of conscious dreaming and ways of using dreamwork for healing, care of the dying, creativity, conflict resolution, and scientific discovery.

Julia: What do you mean by "Active Dreaming"?

Robert: I call my work Active Dreaming because I feel the most important thing in dreamwork is to act on our dreams in physical reality. The first essential in Active Dreaming is

to keep a dream journal. Then we honor our dreams by acting on them.

One way of honoring our dreams is to share them with others. I think that dreams should be talked about openly.

If the dream is symbolic, then we can try to interpret the symbolism. In this regard, it's important to understand that we — the dreamer — are the final authority on what our dream symbols mean.

If we have a dream that pertains to physical reality, then we can honor the dream with direct action. For example, if I dream of wearing a shirt that is of a certain color, I might decide to wear that color shirt the next day. If I don't have one like that, I might buy one.

If the dream pertains to my behavior with someone with whom I work, I might make a note to remember the dream and perhaps alter my behavior toward that person.

If a dream is from the spiritual world, I'll make a picture that represents the energy. If there is a guide in the dream, I might find a picture of the guide and paste it into my dream journal.

If we have a dream of Horus, the Greek god with the face of a hawk, we could take time to imagine being that god in his hawk form.

I sometimes have workshop participants make up plays or songs about their dreams. Then everyone will act out the dream.

I'm saying to use the dream in some way in the physical world. This is the message of dreaming.

Julia: Can you tell me how you became interested in dream work?

Robert: I was raised in Australia and was very sickly as a

child. As a result, I died several times and "came back" from the dead. At age eleven, I dreamed of a huge serpent that filled the sky, coiling around a large staff. I didn't know that this was the symbol of Asklepios, the Greek god of healing. I didn't know what the dream meant — but I began to heal. My sicknesses came to an end. So I've known from a very early age that dreams are powerful and can invoke healing.

I studied the aboriginal dreaming techniques in Australia, and I studied with Iroquois. I even learned the Mohawk language. In fact I teach many shamanic techniques and often employ drumming.

Julia: You write that there are four bodies in which we dream and three types of dreams. Please tell us about these.

Robert: First is the physical body, the one in which we live. There is a dense energy field that surrounds the physical body.

The second is a relatively dense body called the energy body or the "double" (in German, the *doppelganger*). Egyptians called it the *ka*, and ancient magicians were believed to have many *kas*. The energy body can receive and give healing, and it can detach — but if detachment from the body is complete, physical death occurs. Sometimes, the energy body can be seen just before death.

The third body is the astral body — also called the dream body — and is more subtle than the energy body, but like the energy body it cannot travel beyond the astral plane. The dream body acts as a bridge between the physical brain and the mind. The Greeks called it the *soma pneumatikon*. This is the vehicle that is surrounded by the aura and can be seen by clairvoyants. The ancients believed that the astral body could not travel beyond the sphere of the moon — that is, the spiritual or astral sphere of the moon.

To travel past the sphere of the moon, one must have the fourth body, the Light Body. It is the shining, celestial body,

and it must be earned. It is acquired through spiritual initiation. Through the Light Body, one can travel to many levels of the shamanic Upper World, and may experience being fire or fog.[1]

The three types of dreams have to do with three worlds or spheres that are encountered in dreaming. The first type consists of dreams that relate to everyday reality. They involve elements of daily life that have been transposed or that intersect in unusual ways. Invoking clarity, or looking to see what the dreams are saying, is the proper way to relate to this first sphere of dreams.

The second sphere is the broad band of symbolic dreams. The symbolic world is one that goes beyond our present knowledge, and the symbols reflect our consciousness. This second dream world tends to be the focus of most dream interpretation.

The third sphere of dreaming is involved with other worlds or alternate realities. This experience of reality exceeds our physical experiences. Training and initiation often take place here. Dreams in the third world may guide us an understanding of the future order of our lives. This world can actually be the source of what happens in waking life.

Julia: Do you see change in those who participate in your dream workshops and who apply your techniques?

Robert: I immediately see that their eyes begin to shine with what I call Soul Presence. They become completely present and aware.

In aboriginal societies, illness and depression are thought to be related to soul loss. Important components of the self may be lost when we experience loss or heartbreak or other emotional traumas. If we look around, we will see that many people are truly the "living dead." They seem to have no soul energy. Soul retrieval is one process of claiming these lost parts of the soul, but they also can be reclaimed through dream work. Dream reentry is a powerful technique

for retrieving soul energy that has been lost in the past.

Julia: So could you describe dream reentry for us?

Robert: Dream reentry is one of the central concepts of Active Dreaming. We can use it to finish dreams, or to go back into a dream to gain greater understanding.

Dream reentry is achieved by establishing our intent for reentry, then focusing on the locale of the dream. We establish intent by asking questions like, "What was the dream about?" or "What does the dream character have to tell me?"

The dreamer summons the landscape of the dream by vividly recalling all possible details. This brings the dream into focus.

Once we have reentered the dream, the next step is to allow the dream to continue beyond where we woke up, and see what happens. The characters may change, or the dream may change its direction.

The best time to reenter a dream is just after awakening from it — although if a dream is disturbing it is permissible to wait, or to reenter the dream with a partner.

Let me use one of my own dreams as an example.

I dreamed of walking on lush, green grass while inhaling its sweet scent. I felt the new grass beneath my bare feet. I looked beneath the grass, and there was a Tree. I knew that the Tree was powerful, that it was filled with secrets and love. Also, however, I was humming a song, and I knew that I had to finish the creation of the song before I could visit the Tree. But I awoke before I had completed the song.

I invited a friend to drum the next day, and I practiced dream reentry to get back into the dream. I knew that I had to fulfill the intent of finishing the song and getting to the Tree. So I composed my song, which went something like,

"Please the Mother and re-enchant the Earth." Then I was able to visit the Tree.

When I did this, I saw a great Mother Bear beside the Tree, and the whole scene had a magical quality. I received a blessing from the Bear and Tree.

Another example occurred in last weekend's workshop with a woman who had not been in touch with her dreams for over three decades. When she was sixteen, her father had died of a heart attack, and a part of her Soul Presence had been lost. I used a dream reentry technique to enable her to go back to the time of her father's death. In this waking "dream," she opened a door and found her father. But in doing so, she also found healing and forgiveness.

Dream reentry is a technique that honors our dream space. It gives us a way of learning to hear what our dreams have to tell us. A dream encounter can be a space we may visit again and again. Through dream reentry, for instance, I can use my dream of the Bear and the Tree as a creative space for when I need direction. I also visit the Tree when I write, and I can find whatever words I need there. I use this as an exercise for groups as well.

Julia: In your book, you describe what you call Dreamgates. Can you tell us about Dreamgates?

Robert: Dreamgates, like my place of the Bear and the Tree, are crossing points or locales within the imaginal realm that teach us how to contact masters and energies on other planes. By using and identifying these Dreamgates, we learn about the makeup of our collective and individual environments. Realize that these "imaginary" worlds are actually the real world. They are a Third Kingdom between the physical universe and the higher realms of spirit.

One of my favorite Dreamgate exercises teaches us how to travel through the imaginal worlds through the image of a dream library. Through practice, we can learn to simply shift our attention and enter the dream library, or some other

Dreamgate, at will. The library exercise can be practiced to find any information we desire. Its uses are limited only by our imagination.

Dream Library Exercise

Visualize your dream library. Just allow the image to come into your mind. It might be a library from your childhood or a secret room filled with books.

Focus on your intention. Think of the creative idea or research project that interests you. Think about the magical qualities that a book in your library may have, or about receiving guidance from a master teacher.

While keeping the intention in mind, "journey" to your library. See yourself stepping into the image on your mental screen. Mentally recreate the library in vivid detail, with color and furnishings.

Find the book or database, or visit with the master teacher. Bring back the gifts from your journey by writing them down in your dream journal. Honor your vision and begin work on your project.^[2]

Julia: Do you try to control your dreams or change the scenery?

Robert: No, I think dream control is useless. It's like being in a sailboat in the ocean and trying to change the ocean or the wind. My navigational skills can be improved. I can learn more about the current or the flow of the ocean, but I can't change the ocean.

I think that dreaming is the same. I can become a better navigator of my dreams. I can learn to navigate through synchronicity. Dream reality is actually the hidden order of reality. In the dream world, we learn to cross over to create an alignment with a deeper logic that is found in our soul.

Both the dreaming and the waking world are a web of symbols. Everything is a message. Some messages are welcome and some are not — but I listen to both kinds. If I

pay attention to all of the messages and become aware of synchronicities, I can understand the navigation process. I can find this hidden order of reality.

Julia: You seem to place a great deal of emphasis on traveling to "other worlds" and bringing objects or energy back into this world. How does that work?

Robert: We can compare the dream world to Harry Potter's school. It's very real — more so than the physical world. If we really consider the dream world, we see that it is composed only of symbols that are reflective of our energy. And there is real magic in the dream world. Our total experience takes place in a multi-dimensional universe, and the dream world is a plane, a reality, with locales like a city or town. Like Hogwarts. It is very real.

I believe there are spiritual teachers in the dream world who are always trying to reach us and share their power with us. Dreaming is a way for these teachers and other higher beings to communicate with us. Their gifts and powers can change our lives. This is an important focus in dreaming.

Julia: What is your interpretation of nightmares?

Robert: Nightmares are really unfinished dreams. I see them as friends, ways to educate the little self or the ego. The ego is terrified of change and flees in terror. Whenever we move into exploration or change, the ego is afraid of being destroyed. Dream reentry can be used to "finish" the dream and explore the unknown.

For example, a Louisiana mother had a nightmare of being led toward a black hole by her dream guide. The woman knew in her dream that she was being urged to journey through the black hole, but she was afraid to do so, and she woke up.

In doing dream reentry, she focused on the depth of the hole, its place in the Universe, and the presence of her dreamguide. Then she continued through the black hole —

and discovered an incredibly beautiful world.

Dream reentry also allows us to confront the characters or creatures of our nightmare. For example, one woman dreamed of a snake that terrified her, coming close to her face — but in dream reentry, the snake turned out to be her ally. It became her guide into shamanic initiation.

In dream reentry, another woman realized that the demon of her recurring nightmares actually represented her own rage about the abuse she suffered in childhood. Her dreams were a graphic statement that it was her anger, and not the past itself, that she needed to deal with.

The important thing is to face the challenges in nightmares, to look beyond appearances to the immense force that causes the dream. When one faces the challenges, the nightmare becomes an ally. When one takes the right posture, it is possible to align with this teacher in the realm of extraordinary events.

Julia: What are your insights about children and dreaming?

Robert: Children are the most talented and gifted of all dreamers. They are our dream teachers. Almost all school children think that dreaming is fun. They recall their dreams easily and have prophetic dreams about the near future.

The adult world steals this ability by not encouraging dreaming and not asking children about their dreams.

When my daughter, Sophie, was four years old, she dreamed of disgusting monsters that chased her through the dream. So she put on a dragon costume and chased the monsters — who then turned into beautiful, rainbow-colored birds that flew with her through the dream.

This demonstrates that children are born knowing shamanic techniques. It is we, the adults, who should learn from the children, our most gifted dream teachers of all.

Julia: Are there any particular techniques you would advise for those who hope to become more talented dreamers?

Robert: The library visualization can be used to learn about your consciousness and higher consciousness. But the absolutely most essential tool is your dream journal. Writing down dreams is an essential part of becoming an Active Dreamer.



Robert Moss, professor of history at Australia National University, is an author, shamanic counselor, and dream teacher who conducts dream workshops throughout the world. He also has been a war correspondent, magazine editor, broadcaster, and best-selling novelist.

Moss's books on dreaming are *Dream True*, *Dreamgates*, and *Conscious Dreaming*. He also has produced the *Dreamgates* audio program (different from *Dreamgates* the book), a 6-tape training program that includes guided dream reentry inductions.

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Footnotes:

1. Moss, Robert, *Conscious Dreaming: A Spiritual Path for Everyday Living*.
2. *Ibid.*

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