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## Dream decoders

Boulder workshop helps unravel subconscious scenarios

*By Pam Mellskog  
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — In part of her dream, Billie Ortiz figured she should have brought binoculars to see the Dalai Lama. A sea of people sat between her and the stage, after all. But she soon realized that putting her glasses on did the trick. It zoomed her to front and center of his presence as if by magic.

To decode her dream, Ortiz, 45, attended a daylong dream portrayal workshop at the Caritas Spiritist Center in Boulder on Saturday. The event's half-dozen participants draped themselves in colorful costumes, used theatrical techniques and solicited the input of a half-dozen participants to re-enact dream scenarios.

The group determined that this snippet of Ortiz's dream could hint that she possessed more spiritual authority than she appreciated in her waking life, she said.

Group dream work often begins with writing the title of a dream, such as "Alone in a boat in the middle of the ocean," on a piece of paper and dropping it in a basket. Working one dream for meaning with a group can take hours. So, the facilitator pulls out just a couple.

Then, the dreamers get busy exploring surreal scenarios by following six principles established by California-based Jeremy Taylor, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister with 40 years invested in dream work.

Laura Deal, dream portrayal facilitator Michael Tappan and Billie Ortiz, from left, participate in a dream interpretation class in Boulder. Costumes and theatrics are used to set the appropriate mood. **Times-Call/Lewis Geyer**

“All dreams — even the worst gut-wrenching, sweat-popping nightmares — come in the service of health and wholeness,” Taylor, 63, said during a phone interview of principle No. 1.

For instance, dreams about death often symbolize major change, he said.

Other dreams unfolding in the subconscious mind can alert the dreamer to his true self. Principle No. 4 underscores this by proposing that “No dreams come just to tell you what you already know.”

Taylor recalled mentoring a graduate student struggling with writer’s block on his thesis and experiencing a disturbing, recurring dream about being chased by native peoples.

Ultimately, he and Taylor worked through the dream enough to understand that the young man needed to abandon his research in the sociology department to pursue anthropology.

Such revelations prompted Taylor to call dream work self-empowering.

“Everybody lives an unknown interior life, particularly to themselves,” he said. “And dreams give us reliable glimpses into that unseen world. ... All the important decisions and creative possibilities and meaningful insights begin in that unseen world and try to make their way into consciousness.”

Gloria Coelho, Caritas Spiritist founder and executive director, hosts dream workshops to create a safe forum that honors this type of work. She called dreams her higher self, a guardian angel, an inner guidance for the way they can inform waking reality.

Common dreams, especially those that involve being chased, typically call the dreamer to stop and face something.

When one man relayed a dream about being chased by a fire-breathing dragon, she encouraged him to struggle for a moment of lucidity, face the dragon and ask: “What do you want from me?”

“Suddenly, this terrifying dragon turns into Puff the Magic Dragon. It was that student’s smoking habit,” she said. “Black slime seeped out from every scale. The man thought of that as his lungs.”

Science remains fuzzy on the importance of dreams. But Coelho and her fellow dreamers find dream work gives them insights as valuable as the restful sleep packaging them.

“It isn’t about ‘You tell me your dream; I’ll tell you what it means,’” she said. “It’s about helping people make the associations and the connections.”

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