

**Kathleen Sullivan's  
Dreams, Another Way of Knowing**

**WARNING! Sex Dreams Usually Aren't**

Typical work scene: The guys are gathered around Charlie as he describes his sexy dream from last night. Everyone smirks, chuckles, and whacks good ole Chuck on the back, congratulating him on his nocturnal success. The accepted notion is that Charlie should act on his titillating dream and seduce the little hotty in the typing pool.

Teenagers delight in dreams of having sex with music and movie stars, hoping the dreams are precognitive and predictive. Old ladies swoon when Rudolph Valentino or former lovers creep into their dream beds. Are the dream ghosts simply haunting lonely hearts? Has an "other world" connection occurred? Despite our treasured fantasies and wild hopes, even sex dreams are almost always symbolic and metaphoric, having little to do with material reality. (And yes, I have *heard* reports of THE loved one announcing himself in a dream before saying howdy in the flesh. Precognition *is* a fact in the dream world. And it is extremely rare.)

Sex dreams are not always pleasurable. This is true because dream sex is rarely about sex but is, instead, about intimate connection, (even deep conversation) or a blending of characteristics or personality traits. A woman called me in despair after her third dream about having sex with a neighbor. She hated this guy for a variety of reasons and imagined that physical contact with him would be repulsive. Unfortunately, believing that the dream was literal and directive, she thought she should pursue an illicit relationship with the neighbor despite their two marriages! Gads! Please do not abandon rational thinking processes in favor of superstition and old wives tales.

Beware of the Hollywood version of dream meaning. From the symbolic perspective, if you dream about having sex with a baby you are not a pedophile. Dream sex with an animal is not a warning of bestiality. Nor is sex with a family member necessarily suggesting abuse. A very distressed woman called for a second opinion on a dream of having sex with her father. She had been told by a mental health professional that this dream likely reflected sexual child abuse. Let's use this last example to examine the metaphoric and symbolic reality of sex dreams.

The first significant question for this woman was: "Describe the father in the dream. What did he look like?" Her answer: "He appeared about 60, with beautiful white hair and a healthy, vigorous body. Which is weird since my father was bald when he died at age 47 of cancer." So what is the dream suggesting? When the literal level is impossible or ridiculous, drop to the deeper levels of the unconscious. In this case, to the archetypal level, where the dreamer needed to embrace strong, healthy attitudes and behaviors in her business world, one of the realms of the father archetype.

What about the poor lady considering sex with her hated neighbor? I asked her to define the attributes or personality of the dream lover. "He's a lazy bum. He works just enough

to pay the bills. He spends all his time with his buddies creating ‘art’ from junk they collect at the dump.” These qualities were negative characteristics to the dreamer, a first generation immigrant from a culture that values a serious work ethic and the swift accumulation of wealth. To indulge in a freely creative activity (junk art) was cavorting with the devil.

Eventually this driven, anxious, and negative woman was able to experience the value of embracing her own creative potential. She joined friends on Saturday junkets to garage sales, hunting for her own variety of junk, antique glass. This was justified by reselling the found items at a profit! This simple activity provided dream lady with the passion she experienced in the dreams and lightened her spirit considerably. So, if you are having dream sex with an unusual person, assign the character 4 or 5 adjectives. You may find that the dream partner offers what you need to develop within yourself.

How about sex with animals? Use the process described above. Define the creature, all of its positive and negative aspects, to determine what you may need to blend into your own life. Sex with a dolphin translated to cavorting joyfully with others in the collective unconscious (ocean). That metaphor led the dreamer to join a large meditation group, bringing a great deal of *deep joy* to his life. One of the strangest animal sex dreams I have heard was told by a very timid woman, always quiet and circumspect. In a recurring series, she observed the very noisy mating of huge blue jays. Eventually, the dreamer “had sex with a gigantic jay.” It was definitely time for the quiet, withdrawn lady to “merge with a noisy, demanding energy that gets what it wants.” That definition sprang from the dreamer watching the jays swoop down and steal fries from plates at the outdoor section of Nepenthes Restaurant!

Finally, if your dreams take you into the arms of a co-worker perhaps you are being guided to consider the value of this person. Use your brain and your heart to consider the possibility of a beneficial connection.