

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

Twists on Naked Dreams

Marion Woodman, renowned Jungian analyst, insists that her clients commit one hour a day to dreamwork. If the analysand begs a reprieve because she doesn't recall REM dreams, Woodman counters by saying that, like the dream, all of life is symbolic. Therefore, the non-re-caller can accomplish valuable awareness by choosing a chunk of life experience and working it as if it were a dream.

Consider the following simple example from a woman who seemed inexorably stuck in a problematic job and an equally difficult marriage. For a period of 5 weeks she was frequently irritated by runaway coins from her wallet. It seemed that every time she paid for something her change would have fallen from her coin section. Digging for what she needed in the bottom of her voluminous purse caused many embarrassing moments. Twice she dropped her entire wallet, releasing all the coins to roll around on the floor. Finally she examined the recurring phenomenon symbolically. "This is the dream of a woman who must continuously be aware of *change* and the problems caused by not tending to it appropriately." This humorous view of the awkward life situations actually helped her commit to dealing with the other *changes* in her life that so desperately needed attention.

Following Woodman's example, I present three dreams sent by readers after my last column on recurring dreams. All three dreamers offered unusual adaptations of the naked dreams and all were willing to engage with me via email. Shortened to the essence, here is the first dream: *I am at a nudist resort. Everyone around me is nude, but I am wearing many layers of clothing. I struggle to get the clothing off (there is SO much of it) and then I look down and see that all my clothing has somehow returned, and I have to start all over!*

The dreamer, who identified himself as a nudist (he enjoys the relaxation of nude beaches and resorts) reported this interpretation: "I suspect the dream has to do with my desire to be naked more often, but life being what it is, it's something I can only do infrequently." Makes sense to me. Now let's pretend there is a deeper, symbolic level. Clothing usually defines the societal roles we play. We dress differently for work, for gardening, to play baseball or to attend a wedding. Most of us play many roles and therefore wear a variety of "uniforms." We are constantly adjusting our persona to fit the situation. How would it be, then, to play no roles, to be as authentic as we were at birth? Perhaps for our dreamer, to escape from the layers of mundane roles brings a kind of freedom he finds rejuvenating. Since his identity as *nudist* is important to him, at the deeper symbolic level, being free of cover-up and role playing may be profoundly valuable for him.

The second recurring nude theme, from a university student, presents an unusual twist. Instead of being upset about being naked in public, she discovered that she is only concerned when she is at home. *“I’m at home and feel awful if I’m caught without clothes. I hide behind my dresser or shower curtain when I hear someone coming. I hide, terrified that I will be seen.* Until asked, the dreamer didn’t realize that the dream house is not where she now lives but is always her parent’s home. That awareness allowed the young woman to recognize her fairly consistent fear of being shamed and ridiculed by both of her parents whom she described as hopeless perfectionists.

And what about a deeper implication of this piece, beyond the parental connection? I wondered if this young woman has difficulty with any form or self-exposure with others, if she finds it necessary *to emotionally hide* from everyone, as she does in her recurring theme. She assured me that she has already overcome that tendency. *“That was true when I arrived here (Santa Cruz) from the mid-west, but a few years in California has freed me a lot.”* I’m glad.

I know an inquisitive 3 year-old who tugged on the clothing of visitors to ask, *“Are you naked under there?”* He would have been fascinated by the final spin sent by a middle-aged guy. *I’m taking a bath, or at least lying in a tub full of water, fully dressed, even socks and shoes. This does not seem weird to me.*

Tad wrote that this dream theme had repeated throughout his first two marriages. His third wife, a dream student of Jeremy Taylor’s, offered an interpretation based on the events that preceded the dream. She had noticed that Tad usually had the dream after arguments or “heavy” talks with her or his sons. She complained that he would not engage in discussions about his relationship problems. Instead, he froze up, withdrew emotionally or physically left the room. Water often refers to the emotional realm. So, lying in a tub of water fully clothed may be protecting oneself by maintaining layers to hide the *naked truth*. I’m sure Marion Woodman would love that dream!

If you check out a recurring awake-life experience as if it were a dream, send your interpretation to dremwvr@fastmail.fm.