

You have the ability to transform your life by paying attention to your dreams. Applying the DreamTracking techniques will help you understand the language of your dreams, gain greater insight into their meaning, and live a more authentic life.

DreamTracking: Track Your Dreams and Transform Your Life

By Bambi Corso-Steinmeyer

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DREAMTRACKING

Track Your Dreams and Transform Your Life

BAMBI CORSO-STEINMEYER

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In praise of *DreamTracking*

“Like Mark Twain, I only want to hear about the Moon from someone who has been there. The only authors on dreams that I trust have done a lot of dreaming and show that on every page of their work. Bambi Corso-Steinmeyer satisfied me that she is a lifelong dreamer when she reported that at age 15 she started keeping a dream journal and became fully aware that in dreams we may journey to another life we are living in another reality. In her excellent book *DreamTracking* her passion rouses us to do more with our dreams, while her tools for everyday practice help us to become dream detectives. Follow her lead and you’ll enjoy the adventure of tracking clues from your dreams, of comparing the situation and behavior of your dream self with that of your waking self, of constructing your personal dictionary of symbols, and of picking up messages from both your body and your soul. As you track the storyline of your dreams, you might find that your Big Story is tracking you, with the sense of deeper purpose and the vital energy that can get you through drab and difficult times.” —Robert Moss, bestselling author of *Conscious Dreaming*, *The Secret History of Dreaming*, and *Growing Big Dreams*

“Shining a light into the shadows has always been a part of human healing, and Bambi’s heartfelt and soulful book is a beautiful beam of enlightenment, a paean to the power of admitting—in both senses: owning up to and allowing in—that, as Carl Jung taught us, most of the shadow is pure gold. She generously swings open the doors of the unconscious and helps guide us toward the great work of Creativity itself, that of getting what’s on the inside out. In her capable and user-friendly hands, we see that dreaming is ultimately about awakening.” —Gregg Levoy, author of *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life* and *Vital Signs: The Nature and Nurture of Passion*

“Bambi is an expert in traversing the rich landscape of dreams. Using her soulful approach and DreamTracking skills, she shows us how to follow the tracks of images in our dreams that ultimately lead us to our truest self. *DreamTracking* is an intimate journey inward using the portal of dreams.” —Kathleen O’Keefe-Kanavos, talk show host and award-winning coauthor of *Dreams That Can Save Your Life*

“Bambi is a passionate advocate for dreams and their power to heal and transform our lives. Combining her expertise in dreamwork and life coaching, she provides readers a way to access the universal guidance available through dreams so that they may live a more authentic, soul-centered life.” —Christy Whitman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Art of Having It All*

“This book simply radiates wisdom about dreams and the importance of tracking them. The author translates her immense understanding of dreams into clear footprints for all of us to follow on our path forward in life by tracking our dreams.” —Walter Berry, author of *Drawn into the Dream: How Drawing Your Dreams Can Take You to the Land of Awes*

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CHAPTER 1

Why Dreams Matter



Dreams are illustrations . . . from the book your soul is writing about you.

—Marsha Norman, *The Fortune Teller*

Dreamwork as Soulwork

Many of us experience a profound and often unspoken longing for meaningful connection to the Divine. We ask for signs and look for clues about what to do next, knowing our choices will affect our life for better or for worse. We yearn for assistance, perhaps not even aware that there is unlimited guidance waiting for us when we close our eyes to sleep each and every night. Oracle card decks and divination tools are being used more now than ever before because people long to connect to the unseen world, hoping to obtain assistance and direction—to get answers. Some part of us can feel a force pulling at our shirt sleeve, hoping we will engage with it in a deeper way. In the hustle and bustle of everyday existence, we can easily abandon our inner life, but it cannot be ignored for too long before it starts calling out for attention and begging us to turn around and look it in the eye. We might crave the magic we once felt as a child—the mystery of life that kept us enchanted. We want to learn, to experience new things, to feel excited about life again instead of living our day-to-day routines and wondering, *Is this all there is?*

Marion Woodman, when asked why she believes so much in dreams, explains it this way: “I know that to live a rich, full life, one has to be in contact with the inner world, and dreams are the quickest way I

know to get to that inner world.”¹ Understanding this, you can enthusiastically begin to travel through a new frontier—your own inner self.

Dreamwork is *soulwork*. Together, they hold hands and walk side by side with one purpose: to lead you to consciousness—to transform you like the unassuming caterpillar whose inevitable destiny it is to become a butterfly. Just as you may take a morning walk to exercise your body, dreamwork can be a morning ritual to exercise and enrich your spirit. It is not by accident that visions swim through your slumbering self, nor is it coincidence that they continually whisper in your ear, reminding you of who you are when you have forgotten. In the same way that your body informs you through all of your senses, your soul informs you through your dreams, intuition, and instinct. Your dreams are not nonsense; they’re *sensory masters* here to teach and mentor you through the ebbs and flows of life.

No matter who you are or where you are in life, you have the opportunity to receive essential information to guide you throughout your life when you pay attention to your dreams. Dreams come to inform, guide, respond, alert, announce, generate, diagnose, and heal. They are messengers sent to you in the night that hold the answers to the deepest questions in your heart. Whether feel-good dreams or nightmares, something is trying to come to your awareness—something is longing to be heard, truly seen, acknowledged, and acted on in some way.

Every dream is a new page in the storybook of your becoming—a story that has no end. Each night you get to experience a new act in the production of your life. Here, new and old characters make their appearances upon the stage of your subconscious as images wander through the theater of your dreams.

Dreams are also problem-solvers. They can enlighten you on everything from daily life questions and decisions to developing work projects or inventions and finding the missing pieces to make things work. Dreams have contributed to countless famous ideas and creations

¹ Marion Woodman, *Dreams: Language of the Soul* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True Recordings, 1990), CD 1, 1:45.

by inspiring songs, films, stories, business ideas, artwork, mathematical discoveries, chemistry breakthroughs, cosmetics, and so much more. Many people have gone to sleep at night with a perplexing issue needing resolution on their mind, only to wake the following morning with the answer, whether they remembered a dream or not.

Dreams also provide you with experiences that you can learn from. Have you ever noticed that you need to personally experience something for yourself before you can learn from it? Until you do, you don't entirely learn the lesson and you don't assimilate the information. If a friend says to you, "This person is not a good match for you," chances are you won't take any action or pay heed to it. It's a little like a certain piece of parental advice that you hear over the years but continue to ignore, saying to yourself, *That will never happen to me* or *They don't know what they're talking about*. Then you grow older, and suddenly you experience what they were referring to and realize the truth in what your parent was saying. Because it is now your own experience, with your own feelings, reactions and effects, the lesson sinks in.

Your mind and body do not know the difference between something that is actually happening versus something you are observing, remembering, or imagining—they respond in the same way to the real and the imagined or dreamed. I have had experiences in my dreams that I have never had in my waking life. I have flown through the air, met a bear head-on, been pulled up into the galaxy, won the lottery, breathed underwater, and even died. Since your mind does not know the difference between something that happens in the physical world and something that happens in your dreaming world, you feel the experience and gain the knowledge of that experience regardless of where it takes place. In one way or another, you're changed by direct experiences whether they occur in your waking life or your dreams.

To continue the above example, when a dream shows you a story about why someone is not a good match for you, you can actually feel the reason in the dream. It's not just an opinion anymore; it's an experience. You assimilate the information because it hits you at a cellular level, one that you can understand in a sentient way.

Added to this, dreams can save you valuable time. A dream is like a condensing process in which everything gets boiled down to a potent

element, saving you years of personal work. Reading a five-hundred-page book would probably take you weeks or months. But in dreams, stories are communicated as in films or television shows, and what might take a long time to understand through the written word takes only minutes. Dreams are magicians in this way. They consolidate and download material from your life into stories that can bring you immediately to an understanding that might have otherwise taken you weeks, months, or years to reach. Dreams don't have to provide a full narrative of what they're trying to communicate; one image alone can convey immense meaning to the dreamer. Similarly, dreams often present something fresh for your own growth and development, something that, if you were not paying attention to your dreams, you might potentially miss for years. Dreams have within them a pull-of-the-future element that, when honored, can provide you with immediate insights that support your personal growth, and even give clarity to your purpose and calling.

Dreams can save lives, too. One such story is that of Harriet Tubman, who suffered lifelong headaches from a traumatic head injury she received as a teenager. The symptoms gave her powerful visions and vivid dreams that she ascribed to God. They helped her lead an estimated three hundred people from slavery to freedom in the mid-1800s on the Underground Railroad over a series of nineteen trips, never losing a fellow traveler.² Certainly, you can access limitless information by paying attention to your dreams, and this will help not only you but others as well.

Studies show that we spend approximately six to eight hours a night sleeping, during which time we have between four and seven dreams. When you add this up over a lifetime, it's approximately one-third of your life. What a prime opportunity to utilize this precious time to create positive change by benefiting yourself and others. Even if you don't currently remember your dreams, it's good to know that everyone dreams and that you can learn to remember them with just a little practice and tap into this potential.

² "Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom," *PBS*, <https://www.pbs.org/show/harriet-tubman-visions-freedom/>.

The more you work with your dreams, the stronger and more in touch you will be with your own truth and who you truly are. People do dreamwork for many reasons. Perhaps you want to know yourself better or want help solving a problem. Or, you would like to generate a new and creative way to do something or are ready to try a new way to access your inner wisdom and connect to a higher source. Maybe you are going through a health challenge and want guidance on how to best deal with the situation and understand what your body needs to heal itself. Or, you are at a crossroad in your life and realize that you need to change something if you are ever going to manifest the life you desire. Whatever your motivation, dreams have something to say about it—something worth listening to.

People who work with their dreams have a tremendous advantage. They get to walk through life with one foot in the physical world and the other in the nonphysical world. They often embrace the mystery of life with a deep sense of enthusiasm and inquisitiveness. The visible and invisible worlds are not two separate places. One is seen with the eyes, and the other is felt with the heart. Experiencing the visible and invisible worlds at the same time makes life a magnificent production in which all the pieces work together like a beautifully coordinated composition.

As motivational speaker Wayne Dyer put it, “You are not a human being having a spiritual experience. You are a spiritual being having a human experience.”³ This means that you have not been thrown out of the heavens into this physical existence without some ethereal assistance. Think of dreams as an internal guidance system that everyone is born with. Each night you go to sleep, and each night you dream, whether you remember your dreams or not. I’m sure at one time or another you have gone to sleep feeling down or confused and then woken up feeling like everything was going to be all right even though you didn’t remember anything you dreamed. You enter a world of unfamiliar territory where unique and often bizarre stories unfold, visions are shared, and symbolism and metaphor are the common language. Here, you meet people, animals, and monsters and encounter

³ Wayne W. Dyer, *You’ll See It When You Believe It: The Way to Your Personal Transformation* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1989), 16.

an array of images so vast that you have to wonder where they come from and how they manage to show up in your dreams. Though they often don't make any apparent sense, there is a deep intelligence flowing through your dreams that taps into the interconnectedness of everything that makes up who you are—your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual body—and also speaks to your place in the world as part of a collective organism. You already have access to this astonishing world. You are a part of the becoming of life and you are also a product of those that came before. You are part of, as Kahlil Gibran put it, “life’s longing for itself” through the ancestral lineage of those who came before you.

Using Dreams to Connect with the Wise Old Sage

Our ancient ancestors are still alive in the depths of our psyches, and they reach out to us with their ageless wisdom. Carl Jung deeply valued the archaic levels of human consciousness and often encouraged his patients to make contact with the “two-million-year-old” man or woman within. He believed that “most of our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, with the age-old unforgotten wisdom stored up in us.”⁴ He asserted that the way to make contact with the ancient ones is through our dreams.

There is an intelligence inside you that is as old as the stars, the sand, and the Universe. This part knows all things: who you are, why you're here, and what you're here to do. This is the eternal “wise old sage” that lives deep within you—the inner knowing that understands the truth of everything. She knows about the workings of the Universe—things beyond your intellectual comprehension, things that have nothing to do with you and yet everything to do with you. She is the essence of your spirit, your soul, and your heart. She has witnessed the creation of the Earth, the evolution of all life forms, and the changing of the seasons, century after century.

⁴ C. G. Jung, *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*, ed. William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series 97 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 89.

The wise old sage has no age, no race, no gender, no religion, and no political affiliation. She has no fear, no hatred, and no ego. Stripped of all outer-world experiences, at her core she operates in one mode, and that is love. She does, however, have a family—a family that consists of all living things, from the earthworm to the elephant, from the waters to the wastelands. Reaching across time and space, this part of you is always extending her hand out to you through intuition and dreams to remind you of who you are: a unique, magnificent drop of possibility and purpose in the ocean of life.

The wise old sage deep within you knows how to communicate through multiple forms of language. Sometimes, she speaks to you through the sound of the wind rushing through the trees, the crashing of waves upon the shore, or the call of a hawk flying overhead. Other times, she speaks to you through signs, symbols, synchronicities, and dreams. Often, she speaks to you through feelings, instincts, intuition, longings, symptoms, or repeating circumstances. The ways in which this all-knowing part of you communicates are endless. However, unless you train your senses, such information can be lost, misunderstood, or go unattended or completely unnoticed because your mindsets and beliefs only allow you to see certain things, hear only certain voices, and think only certain thoughts. You probably know someone who lives in their own little bubble; not much gets in or out of that bubble, and even if they don't like the bubble, it's familiar, constant, and known. It's not until someone or something comes along and pops that bubble that they're prompted to look outside of it, reassemble the fragments of what is left, and redefine themselves in a new and expanded way. And, their wise old sage will be there to guide them, just as yours is here to guide you.

Learning to listen to the wise old sage, with her multiple languages, teachings, and desires for you, takes an attentive ear, a trained eye, and a sensitivity to how the body and the soul communicate. All your senses work in tandem; they communicate with each other to help you make informed decisions and choices. Yet, they're often overrun with your mind's efforts to demonstrate that it knows more than you do—more than your body, soul, and senses. Learn to trust these communications

from the wise old sage, for they give you access to the extraordinary wisdom available to you.

Where does the wise old sage live? If you go looking for her, you won't find her shackled up in a little house in the woods. Instead, you will find her in the rustle of dancing leaves, the blue flame of the raging fire, the hollowed-out tree trunk, swimming with the whales, and running with the gazelles. You will find her in the rising and setting of the sun and the moon and see her in a mist-formed rainbow. You will find her, too, in the quiet of night, in slow, deep breaths, and everywhere in between. There is no place the wise old sage does not live. She is everywhere and nowhere, all at once. She is in kinship with all of life. Knowing where she lives is not as important as learning to make contact with her and understanding how to invite her in, spend time with her, and listen. She shies away from busy streets and noisy freeways, from deadlines and cubicles. She is not as likely to sit with you where there are bright lights, cell phones, or televisions. Instead, she feels most at home in the solitude of nature, in the peaceful retreats of your mind and the rest stops for your soul where you slow down, breathe, and disappear into the caverns of your innermost self. What lures her out into the open is meditation, contemplation, prayer, chanting, singing, dancing, and journaling. She dances in delight at the sight of love, compassion, empathy, and acts of kindness. She is alive when surrounded with the arts, poetry, and music, with paintings and sculptures. Her heart longs for creativity, for expression, and for authenticity. It is her nature to appear and disappear in the corner of your eye or make you believe you heard something when there is no one physically present.

Though there are many ways in which the wise old sage makes contact, one of her favorites is to appear in your dreams. Here, she visits often, camouflaged as anything from the lost lover to the angry boss, from the healthy baby to the injured animal. She is a master of shape-shifting, for she doesn't care how you see her, only that you *do* see her. She watches to see how you respond to the scent of a spring flower or the morning rain. She listens for the words you use to describe your life, your longings, and your feelings. She looks for times when you stop in the midst of a busy day and run your fingers across the branch of a tree or a rose petal, look at the sky, smile at a stranger, or say thank you to

whomever or whatever will listen. She longs for connection to your life, and when she does not receive it, she makes herself known in other ways—such as nagging symptoms, feelings of unhappiness, depression, or illness, whether physically or spiritually. She resorts to expressing her voice through disturbing and recurring dreams until she finally gets your attention. No matter how much you push her back down below the surface, she will not be ignored for long, for in her ancient fingers she holds a treasure just for you, and it is her mission to make sure you discover it.

Dreams are indigenous to the soul. They are the songs, dances, and stories of everything that has ever been and ever will be. They live in the hidden recesses and catacombs of your being. The symbiotic relationship between you and your dreams shows up as a gut feeling, impulse, calling, or passion—your inner knowing—which tends to matters of the spirit and lives within you at all times yet is often obscured by the distractions and pressures of your waking life and the demands of circumstances. Trusting and following your inner knowing—your wise old sage—can fill your life with more authenticity, confidence, and purpose. Dreams truly are windows to your soul, but sometimes you have the shades pulled down. Open them up, and life presents opportunity and possibility beyond anything you can imagine.

Understanding the Language of Dreams

A picture is worth a thousand words.

—Fred R. Barnard, *Printers' Ink*

Learning the dialect of dreams is like learning a foreign language. It would certainly be easier if dreams weren't so cryptic, relying on image, metaphor and symbolism to communicate. But dreams are storytellers, presenting images that activate the unconscious. They share information through the presentation of rousing imagery and feelings designed to get you thinking, contemplating and reflecting. In native and aboriginal cultures, storytelling was, and often still is, the way lessons were taught and learned. Imagine sitting around a fire and listening to an elder share an age-old story of creation, or of love, or of how all the animals came

to be. You envision the story playing out in your mind's eye as the storyteller verbally paints a picture with their descriptive words, their tone, and their emotional expressions. Dream images present themselves in a similar way. They tell you a story through images, a story designed just for you.

Dreams Communicate through the Power of Images

Images command your attention because human beings are image-driven by nature. This is in part because sight is our dominant sense and a large part of our brain is dedicated to visual processing. Images are everywhere, and our day-to-day life is filled with them because everything we see is an image. Whether it's the decorations in our home, the tree outside our window, a cathedral, a photo album, or a tattoo, images are all around us. Marketers have understood the power of imagery for years. The most effective way to motivate people to become customers is to show them an image of what they're lacking but can be made to think they need. This can be done successfully just by showing people an image that promises to make them more beautiful, thinner, sexier, happier, or healthier. Images communicate, and every image, whether a waking or a dreaming image, evokes some kind of emotional response. That emotional response in turn gives us information by showing us how we feel about something, showing us what we really care about by our reactions to it. In other words, images connect us to our authentic self by inviting us to *feel* in response to them. The soul, the subconscious, and the unconscious use symbols like marketers use imagery—to communicate an idea, to make a powerful impact, to motivate, to transmit information. Your dream images will inform you through your physical body as well as through your subtle or energy body, also known as the auric field, that surrounds your physical body. It is in these invisible layers of energy that you sense and feel things intuitively. Start noticing how dream images evoke an energetic response and teach yourself to pay attention to those reactions.

Another way images communicate is through their ability to induce *associations*. Your response to seeing an image will generally bring to mind all of your personal associations with that image. As humans, viewing an image reminds us of something, and then something else,

and then something else. Making associations with an image is a way of tracking the image, especially for things that have happened in the last twenty-four to forty-eight hours.

Images are truly much more powerful than words. Your body can't tell the difference between an actual event and one that you vividly imagine. Images evoke responses within you; they communicate information without using words because they're experiential, felt—they tell a story, engage your heart and mind, and activate your emotions and imagination. In a way, they even encourage you to think past what you're looking at. You become curious and wonder what came before the image and what will happen afterward. In this imaginative interaction, you become engaged in a relationship with the image, whether it's one you have a personal history with or one you have never seen before. Think about the potent effect of photographs, whether a *National Geographic* magazine relaying a story through real-life images or pictures you have taken with your cell phone to post on social media. Pictures are communications, announcements, and proclamations. They are calls to awaken and activate people to do something, to help, to connect, to care. They are storytellers in and of themselves and often don't even require words to be understood. Even people who were born blind still dream by using all their other senses combined. Their dream elements communicate through sound, touch, taste, smell, feelings, emotions, intuition, and instinct just as their nonvisual senses do in waking life. Images do not need to be physically seen in order to be effective; they just need to be felt and experienced.

Behind your reactions to and associations with images lie your personal history, upbringing, patterns, behaviors, values, and thoughts. You give meaning to what you see as the images are filtered through your life experiences. The way you see things reflects how you relate to life itself. For example, a picture that brings joy to one person might make another person feel sad. A spider in one person's dream might cause them great distress, whereas someone who loves spiders might be fascinated and intrigued by the spider and its ability to masterfully weave a spider web. Either way, the image itself is the same. Knowing this, you can see that your dream images are very personal. Someone else cannot tell you what the images in your dreams mean because what

matters in your dreamwork is how *you* feel about them and what *you* see in them; their meanings are unique to you.

In dreams, information is communicated through visual representations designed to get your attention. In some mysterious way, the universal “director” of your life captures important information on invisible “film” and relays it back to you on the big screen of your dreams. Sometimes, you may see an image in a dream that you have never seen in waking life. Regardless of whether an image is known or something out of the ordinary, your dream images are inspirited, living energies that come to you with their own intelligence and wisdom.

Your memories also give power to your images. You remember events throughout your life and file away the mental pictures you saw in those moments. At the same time, you attach the emotion you felt at the time to those memories. When a memory resurfaces, which often happens in dreams, the images corresponding to that memory are retrieved as well as the emotions you experienced at that time and have associated with that memory. When you look at a photograph from your past, you’re affected because the emotions around what was happening in the picture are activated each time you look at it. Your mind, body, and heart engage in a dance of memory reruns that transport you emotionally right back to that time and place. When such images appear in your dreams, it’s possible that something from that time in your life is being communicated by the images coming up again at this time in your life. I will address this in more detail in chapter 5 in the section Emotional Memory Markers.

Whether you have personal experience with a particular dream image or not, consider how it makes you feel, what it stirs up within you, the tone in which it communicates, and the emotion you’re left with. You might get chills, or it might bring forth a rush of concern, fear, or fascination. Ask yourself what information the image or dream may be relaying based on your body’s reaction to it. Images ignite feelings; they ask for your attention; and they desire understanding, relationship, and often action.

It’s common to hear people say, “I saw that image on TV last night so that’s probably why I dreamed of it.” Although that might be true on some level, you still should ask, Why did my dreaming consciousness,

out of the hundreds of thousands of images I saw yesterday, choose this particular one? What is it about this one that stayed with me? And why might this be important to me right now? The images are probably not as random as they might appear.

Dreams Speak in Symbols and Metaphors

Symbols are . . . the language of an invisible reality becoming articulate in the realm of the visible.

—Gertrud von Le Fort, *The Eternal Woman*

Human beings communicate through language which has been developed over hundreds of thousands of years. Your body comes equipped with a voice box that allows you to speak and communicate with others using sound, tone, and emotional emphasis as well as body parts that help you express yourself through gestures and movements. Animals communicate similarly—howling, growling, roaring, trumpeting, barking, meowing, chirping, and singing their songs. We don't know exactly what they are saying, but we can feel into their sounds by allowing ourselves to experience what we hear. Their body language tells us whether we can safely approach them or need to keep our distance.

Soul, however, is formless and has a very different way of communicating. Its language is that of symbol and metaphor—our original language. In his book *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming*, Robert Bosnak defines a symbol as follows: “A symbol points to a reality beyond its mere appearance.”⁵ Like hieroglyphs, drawings, and paintings on cave walls, symbols stand for and represent something. Often, it's a material object that represents something abstract, implying that there is something more than its apparent meaning.

Symbols, like images, are much more powerful than words. Unlike words, they provoke more meaning and emotion because we respond

⁵ Robert Bosnak, *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming: Exploring Interior Landscape through Practical Dreamwork* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1996), 58.

viscerally to their visual representations, which are imbued with multiple, and sometimes contradictory, meanings. Symbols evoke reactions and associations that are specific to you. They pull you deep into the unconscious because in the land of symbolism there is always so much more than meets the eye. As Marion Woodman notes, “This whole realm of symbol connects consciousness and unconsciousness.”⁶ You can view dream images as bringing something to your waking attention that you are not consciously aware of or have not yet acknowledged. Just like a fine piece of artwork, something gets stirred within you, and your soul urges you to pull it into awareness.

Metaphors, on the other hand, communicate by comparing one thing to another. They show you how to better understand something by applying a concept, attribute, or quality to it that you understand clearly in order to make sense of it. For instance, one famous metaphor from Berthold Auerbach is, “Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”⁷ Another from Khalil Gibran, “All our words are but crumbs that fall down from the feast of the mind.”⁸

Together, symbols and metaphors are the voice of the unconscious and the soul. They help you to realize the truth of things, to broaden your perspective, and to understand that which is unknown or which you may not yet comprehend.

Symbols are also evident in your waking life and can be read similarly by acknowledging that the people you surround yourself with and the kinds of choices and decisions you make are expressions and symbols of your personal power—for instance, money, authority figures, job titles, physical appearances, and security. In her book *Anatomy of the Spirit*, Caroline Myss talks about developing “symbolic sight,” which she describes as “the ability to use your intuition to interpret the power symbols in your life.”⁹ The way you structure your

⁶ Woodman, *Dreams: Language of the Soul*, CD 1, 11:00.

⁷ Berthold Auerbach, *On the Heights*, vol. 2, trans. F. E. Bunnett (Leipzig, Germany: Bernhard Taubnitz, 1867), 64.

⁸ Khalil Gibran, *A Tear and a Smile & Sand and Foam* (e-artnow, 2015), “Sand and Foam.”

⁹ Caroline Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing* (New York: Harmony Books, 1996), 57–58.

life around these power symbols either increases or decreases your personal power. She therefore suggests learning to interpret your life challenges symbolically to find the meaning in them. Symbolic sight is an incredible tool that can be practiced and applied to your waking life as well as in dreamwork to help you understand and interpret the images and symbols that appear in your dreams. Once you learn to see the symbolism in your waking circumstances as well as your dream imagery, you will have a whole new skillset for seeing things with different eyes.

Dreams, Too, Are Energy

When working with your dreams, another way to view them is through the lens that dreams are energy. They are manifestations of energy represented as images and experiences in your dreams. I will be discussing this in greater length in chapter 5, *Explore Your Emotions*, but I mention it here to get you considering the ways dreams communicate.

If you think of feelings, instincts, and intuition as energy, you can see how dreams and images are created from that energy. They appear as an embodiment of the feeling of that energy. For example, if you are feeling moody, turbulent, or upset, you may be presented with a dream image of a storm. The storm is the embodied image of your feelings—your energy. Look at your underlying emotions and watch for the way in which the dream image is mirroring that energy and representing that energy in your dreams. Try this with any type of dream image. Feel into the different energies that present themselves. Notice how you feel when experiencing, for example, new baby energy versus aging parent energy. Notice how different types of settings and landscapes feel energetically. Dreams are expressions as well as impressions of energy. You can feel the different frequencies or vibrations of energy in your body as you respond to the different images. Learning to track the energy of your dreams will also help you to understand your own imagery.

Sometimes, you may express emotions in dreams that you cannot, or will not, express in waking life, and this helps you move the energy of that emotion out of the body. Other times, the dream will show you

that the energy is stuck and that something is being called upon to express it.

If you need something for your own development and growth, dreams can provide a situation or circumstance that allows you to have the experience prior to living it out in waking life. This is like a practice run because, again, the mind doesn't know the difference between an actual event versus an imagined one, and therefore you can learn from both. So, pay attention to the energy in your dreams as part of the language they communicate with.

Ultimately, there is no end to the ways in which dreams communicate, and there are as many ways of working with dreams as there are dreamers. What is most important is that you *do* work with your dreams, knowing that somehow, somewhere, there is an intelligence that is the Dream Maker that is always at work in your life. An imaginative way of viewing this intelligence is the way Clarissa Pinkola Estés describes it, which is that the Dream Maker is the Riddle Mother, named after a childhood rhyme. "The Riddle Mother responds to anything that is asked of her and that she does it by giving answers in riddles and then charging us to unravel those cryptic puzzles. In this way the Riddle Mother provides answers and every dream is a riddle, and every riddle is an answer to the questions we are asking."¹⁰

¹⁰ Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *In the House of the Riddle Mother: The Most Common Archetypal Motifs in Women's Dreams* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 1991), CD 1, track 2, 1:59–2:24.

About the Author



Photo by Audrey Wilson

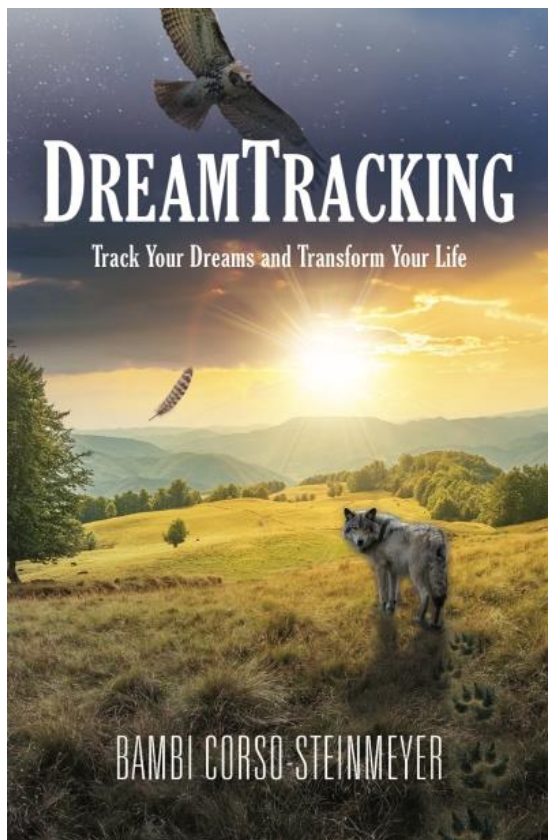
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Bambi's passion and exploration of dreamwork spans more than forty years, and she has journaled over eight thousand of her own dreams. Working with her dreams for so many years has given her tremendous insight into every aspect of her life: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Knowing the immense guidance and wisdom available through dreamwork, she is committed to teaching others how to work with and understand their dreams for personal transformation and growth. By bringing conscious awareness to their dreams, people can live more passionate, purposeful, and authentic lives.

Bambi serves on the Southern California Regional Committee of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. She was a review editor for the *Dream Network Journal* for nine years and is certified as a Law of Attraction coach through the Quantum Success Coaching Academy. In addition, she is a contributing author to the book *101 Great Ways to Enhance Your Career*. She is an avid lover of animals and nature and advocates for their well-being, survival, and conservation. Bambi lives in southern California with her husband, Bill.

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