

DIM CUE CARD

**QUESTIONS THAT EXECUTE THE
STEPS OF DIM**

This list of essential Dream Interview Method questions is the result of fifty years of refinement, as I and my Dream Center colleague, Loma K. Flowers, MD worked with the dreams of thousands of dreamers. These questions are framed as if they come from someone who has only recently arrived from another planet and knows little about how things work on Earth. The effect of this device is to liberate the dreamer from seeking externally derived interpretations and help the dreamer focus on her own perceptions, feelings, and opinions. Equally importantly, they prevent the Interpreter from playing the distracting and intrusive role of "The Wise One" who knows what YOUR unique dream images mean. Here you have the key steps of the Dream Interview Method and the initial essential questions to ask (verbatim or close to it) about each dream element, as well as the step-by-step procedure to use to interview another dreamer, or yourself, when playing both roles of Interviewer and Dreamer.

Setting up the Dream Interview“

“Let’s pretend I come from another planet.”

This deceptively simple device that came to me in a college course which I led in 1971 has been the invaluable keystone of the Dream Interview Method. Pretending that the interviewer comes from another planet and therefore asks for descriptions from the POV of someone who does not already have fixed notions about the dream images. Regularly remind yourself, or the dreamer if you are working with another person, that you come from another planet and have never heard of such a thing, person, or activity before. The result is lightning access to the most relevant thoughts and feelings of the dreamer without any contamination from you or what you or the dreamer think such an image should mean! And this device helps both the dreamer and interviewer avoid long, meandering associations that drove even Sigmund Freud to drop his “free association method.”

We have kept this list of elements as simple as possible for clarity's sake. When in doubt, use the questions for any of the 6 elements that seem most promising to elicit rich descriptions from yourself or your dream partner. For example, things said or heard in a dream work well with action questions. Grandmother's house requires something like, “What was grandmother was like?” (People questions) and therefore, how she colors the experience of the house, and what was her house (or Being in her house like e)etting questions).

With experience, you will get a feel for the curious, naively curious spirit of the interviewer and be able to create, on the spot, the sorts of questions that a curious alien who seeks to see the world and the dream through the dreamer's eyes might ask. This is a lot of fun. But remember that the beginning dreamer will need you to remind her how clueless you are. Who is Abe Lincon? What is a hammer? Remember, I come from another Planet!"

THE FOLLOWING "CUE CARD" QUESTIONS are crafted to be efficient and easy for the dreamer to answer. The interviewer is patient, and asks for more description by increments from various angles, impressions, facts, feelings, judgments, or relevant memories. "What kinds of people ride motorcycles?" "What is the personality of a zebra, or a dog, or a generic cat?" How did you feel when he said...?" "So that man was a stranger? How would you describe a man who looked like him and did what he did in the dream? What would you think of such a person? Soon, all sorts of questions will pop into your mind. All my books are chock-full of interview questions for hundreds of my clients' dreams. As you practice interviewing yourself or a dreamer, you will become more creative in finding the right questions solidly anchored by the alien POV. It really is fun. And you, as Interviewer never have to make any interpretations! Yours is the task to be curious and to ask the best questions so that the dreamer figures out his own dream. Too many therapists take "pride" in "knowing" what their client's unique dream means! Don't be that person!

I suggest using the CUE CARD questions verbatim or nearly so, because you will learn the power of using words such as, "LIKE" and that how you phrase the questions is crucial. If you take too much time you're your question, using to many unnecessary words, you will break the spell of the dream story and distract the dreamer, AND the interview will last too long!

When you ask for a Bridge, if you don't end your question using only the dreamer's words, you will get a lot of blank stares from a confused dreamer. You'll see.

These questions are the best I have found to elicit the dreamer's relevant descriptions for each element. FOLDED into each element's questions are the DESCRIPTION, RECAPITULATION, BRIDGE, AND TEST-THE BRIDGE questions. A flexible use of these guidelines works best, and you will soon get a feel for the appropriate follow-up questions that are often necessary for eliciting rich descriptions for a particular image or theme or plot.

Most of my students, including psychologists and psychiatrists, print out this list to keep beside them as they interview themselves or another dreamer. It gives you direction and confidence right from the start. It usually works best to take each element/image/feeling, etc. in order of appearance. Hopping to a sensational image before you build its contextual structure and place in the dream story usually confuses things and fails to take advantage of contextual clues that build up to the striking image of dream event.

SETTINGS:

- Describe the opening (or the next) setting of the dream as if I come from another planet and need to know it is like. How do you feel about such place? (DESCRIPTION)
- What is this place like in your dream? (DESCRIPTION)
- Is it different from such a place in waking life? How? (DESCRIPTION)
- How does it feel to be in this setting? (DESCRIPTION)
- So, this setting is (RECAPITULATE THE DESCRIPTION)
- Does the setting which you describe as (RECAPITULATE THE DESCRIPTION again), remind you of any situation or any area in your life? (BRIDGE)
- How so? (TEST THE BRIDGE)

PEOPLE:

- Who is X? Pretend I (come from another planet and) have never heard of her before. (DESC)
- What is X like in waking life? Describe X with 3-4 adjectives. (DESC)
- What is X like in your dream and what is she doing? (DESC)
- Do you like X or not? Elaborate. (DESC)
- So, X is (RECAPITULATE THE DESCRIPTION). Right?
- Does X, who is (RECAPITULATE THE DESCRIPTION again) remind you of anything, any part of yourself, or someone in your life? (BRIDGE)
- How so? (TEST)

ANIMALS:

- What is a Z like? (Generic DESC First)
- What is the Z like in your dream, and what is it doing? (DESC)
- How would you describe the personality of a Z? (Specific DESC)
- So, this Z is (RECAPITULATE THE DESCRIPTION). Have I got that right?
- Does the Z that is (RECAPITULATE THE DESCRIPTION again) remind you of anything, anyone, or of any part of yourself? (BRIDGE)
- How so? (TEST)

OBJECTS:

- What is a Y like? (Generic DESC) Pretend...
- Why do humans have or use Ys and how do they work? (DESC of Function)
- How do you feel about Ys in general? (a rich DESC always includes feeling or judgment)
- What is the Y in your dream like? (Specific DESC) May bee just like the generic description or might be surprisingly different!)
- How do you feel about the Y in your dream? Like or dislike it? (DESC can shift from generic)
- So, the Y in your dream is_____. Right? (RECAP)
- Is there anything, anyone, or any part of yourself that is like the Y which is (RECAP again)

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- How so? (TEST)

FEELINGS:

- What are/were you feeling at that moment in the dream? (DESC)
- Yes, it can be difficult to find words subtle feelings. Take your time.
- (If the dreamer is stuck, and you have run out of ideas, you could, as a last resort, guess in very general terms. Were you pleased, displeased? Anxious, relieved, frustrated, perplexed, certain? (Always give opposites or alternatives so you don't seem to express a preference.) If the dreamer accepts your word for a feeling, ask for elaboration. Or you could playfully guess a naively absurd possible descriptive word to trigger the dreamer to correct you!)
- In what way were you (pleased, anxious, frustrated)? (DESC) ("Frustrated" can mean a thousand things, but it is a start. Try, "What is it like for a human like you to feel frustrated?"
- If the dreamer is fending off tears or sadness, try "What is the saddest part of this feeling in the dream?" If the tears come, reassure the dreamer that it is good to have the courage to face the feeling, and that the tears often unlock the reasons for the sadness.
- Let me see if I have this right; you were feeling (RECAP). Is that it?
- Does this feeling of (RECAP again) remind you of anything or

any time in your life? When you felt like this?

- How so? (TEST)

ACTIONS/PLOTS:

- Describe the action in this part of the dream. Pretend I come from another planet and tell me if humans usually do this (Play tennis with a baseball bat, swim in a mountain lake, if cars actually fly, etc.) and why they do it. (DESC)
- How do you feel about this action? (Like or dislike, approve, disapprove, would you wear, drive, do this?) (DESC)
- So, the action here is (RECAP). Right?
- Is there any situation in your life that is like (RECAP again)? (BRIDGE)
- How so? (BRIDGE)
- Describe the major theme or plot of your dream. (DESC)
- Is this normal on Earth? Tell me why or why not. (DESC)
- How does it feel for a human to be in such a situation? (DESC)
- So, in your dream, you (or someone) (RECAP theme or plot). Right?
- Is there any situation in your life that is analogous to this theme of (RECAP again)?

LINKING & SUMMARY:

When you have bridged to a few, or all the major images in the dream, link the bridges together and narrate the dream story including the images as dreamt connected to their bridges. For example, "The dream opens in Disney Land which I DESCRIBED as _____ which reminded me of how I used to feel when my children used to cry for joy and really wanted to do things with me. "Then... (continue with each key image and link the story together using your Descriptions, and Bridges that you were able to make. If you could not bridge certain images, you can try now to enrich your description, and see if you can bridge using the new descriptions and noting the context as the dream proceeds. Don't force the connections, they should pop into mind if you have a rich description and remain curious! Sometimes it takes a few days to see the connections to your waking life.

Then ask your dreamer how he or she now understands the dream and what parts remain unclear. Valiantly resist with all your might the temptation to suggest your own hypotheses about the meaning of the dream. Let the dreamer puzzle on it for a few days and encourage him to re-read the dream and his summary of the linked parts once a day for the next three days.

With Practice, a flexible, but careful and orderly use of these questions and your addition of appropriate, non-leading follow-up questions tailored to a given dream will become second nature. When the dreamer can make strong bridges and link them together, you will feel an exhilaration and great satisfaction in discovering the meaning of the dream. And, if you have followed the steps of the interview, you will know that the meaning came from the dreamer, the only one on earth who can be sure of the meaning of his or her dream.

In the BLOGS section you will see a few examples of the Dream Interview in action. Read my books for a rich number of interview dialogues, a good starter would be In Your Dreams.

Let me know in the comments section below each blog what topics you would like me to cover!

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