Dreamwork Canada

How to Start a Dream Group[[1]](#footnote-1)

Dream groups are a modern offspring of the twentieth century approach to engaging with our dreams as a way of understanding ourselves and as ways in which God speaks to us. Following the ground breaking understanding of dreams developed by Freud, Carl Jung, and others, dreams began to be recognized as more than just a physiological process which had no meaning beyond the way for the brain to clear the detritus of the day’s activities. Dream groups moved from the analysts’ couch and the exploration of the individual’s psychology to a process in which a group of people can explore the possibilities of a dream presented by one of the members of the group.

The dream group method has been categorized in some circles as the ‘projective method’ of dream work. In this process, members of the group project on a dream presented to them by the dreamer. Projection sometimes has a rather ‘bad rep’ in psychological work as projection can be unhelpful if a person does this unconsciously. However, the projective method addresses this by making the projections on the dream, by group members, conscious to the dreamer and other group members. This is accomplished by treating the dream as if it is a dream of the group members giving their associations on the dream content. This is made conscious by using the phrase, ‘in my dream’ or ‘if it were my dream’ when as association of the dream content is offered to the group.

The strength of this process is that the dreamer has the benefit of the associations provided by many different people i.e. the other group members, which they can consider in aiding them to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the dream.

The dream group process has been developed through the work of various organizations and individuals especially the Robert Haden, founder of the Haden Institute in North Carolina, as well as notable groups such as the Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Athens, Georgia. Dream groups in this context were initially promoted as a part of a church congregation and as such could be grounded in the life of a religious community which supported the ongoing work of the group. However, the venue for dream groups has expanded to other community groups as venues for hosting the activity.

This document is intended as assistance and encouragement for people who would like to explore establishing a dream group in your church or other groups. Here are steps that are recommended to undertake this.

1. Attend a number of dream groups offered through Dreamwork Canada, the Haden Institute or an established dream group using this or a similar process.
2. Prepare yourself through reading as many of the books listed below or similar books on Jungian psychology, working with dreams and the dream group process.
3. Present an introductory workshop at your organization. Dreamwork Canada can offer assistance and support on this activity.
4. Start a dream group with interested people i.e. those who attend the introductory workshop Follow the “Dream Group Method” carefully, particularly as the group gets acquainted with one another and the process.

Basic books on Jungian dream work:

* *Memories Dreams and Reflections* by C.G. Jung,
* *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* by C.G. Jung,
* *The Portable Jung edited by* Joseph Campbell
* *Inner Work* by Robert Johnson,
* *Natural Spirituality* by Joyce Rockwood Hudson,
* *Where People Fly and Water Runs Uphill* by Jeremy Taylor,
* *Shadow and Evil* in Fairy Tales by Marie Louise von Franz
* *Our Dreaming Mind* by Robert Van de castle

Books on dream work and Christianity

* *Dreams: God’s Forgotten Language* by John Sanford
* *The Bible and the Psyche* by Edward Edinger
* *The Inner Story* by Helen Luke
* *The Man Who Wrestled with God* by John Sanford
* *The Ego and the Bible* by Greg Little

Other Resources

* The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols
* Podcast: www.thisjungianlife.com

1. Adapted from material by Agnes Parker [↑](#footnote-ref-1)