China Child Psychotherapy Training Program
Unconscious Communication: Dreams and Play

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May 13, 2021
The Royal Road to the Unconscious

“The Interpretation of Dreams…contains, even according to my present-day judgment, the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make. Insight such as this falls to one’s lot but once in a lifetime.”
Multiple Avenues to the Unconscious

• Dreams
• Transference & Countertransference
• Resistance
• Nonverbal behavior
• Play Narratives
What does a dream represent?

- A childhood wish?
- Fears?
- Conflicts?
- The metabolizing of trauma?
- The Past, Present and the Transference
Uses of Dreams

- Diagnosis
- Prognosis
- Window into Past history
- Vision of the Future
- Current Conflicts
- Tracking Transference
- Shifts in Personality Structure
Two Layers of Dream Content

**Manifest Content**
- The dream’s surface concealing the latent content
- Egyptian hieroglyphics (Freud)

**Latent Content**
- Unconscious wishes, thoughts and core conflicts hidden by specific defence mechanisms
- Unearthed by free association
Dreamer’s Defence Mechanisms

Primary Process
- Condensation
- Displacement

Symbolic Representation
- Secondary Process
- Secondary Revision
Condensation

• The shorthand of the dream
• A concentrated dose of Ucs material
• A wish, feeling or impulse condensed into one image
• The fusion of past life, current life & therapeutic life
• dream image-person looks like A, talks like B & feels like C
Displacement

• Diverting intensity of feeling from one person to a separate person
• Working in the Displacement (therapy & dream work)
Symbolic Representation

• A simple, concrete sensory image w/metaphorical meaning
• Universal Symbols vs. Idiosyncratic symbols
• The essential role of free association to unlock unique meaning
Secondary Revision

- Secondary process cognitive activity
- Converts the irrational into the reasonable
- Produces an edited version of the dream
The Role of Affect

*In the dark mystery of the dream, affect is the beacon that brings the light of reality into the world of fantasy.*
Technique of Dream Interpretation

• Communicate your interest in patient’s dreams
• Day Residue
• Free association
• Let yourself dream and freely associate along with the dreamer
• Tune into affect
• Decoding latent content: be mindful of dreamer’s defences
Fantasy

“We like to think we live in daylight but half the world is always dark; and fantasy, like poetry, speaks the language of the night.”

Ursula Le Guin
Conscious and Unconscious Fantasies

Conscious

- Daydreams
- Reveries

Unconscious: Phantasy

- Dreams
Working With A Dream

Freud

• Dreams interpreted in context
• Attend to coherence or incoherence
• Use of associations
• Patient retells dream
• Revisit Dreams in future

Jill Scharff, M.D. IPI Master Speaker Series, 9/30/2011
Function of Dreams

Greenson

• Protects sleep and allows regression
• Uncovers hidden meanings w/interpretation
• Leads to affect
• Offers access to childhood memories
• Gives access to the most free associations

Jill Scharff, M.D. IPI Master Speaker Series, 9/30/2011
Psychic Structure Revealed

- A compromise between wish and reality (Freud)
- Structure of dream reveals personality (Fairbairn, Segal)
- Working through (Segal)
CASE VIGNETTE
"JONATHAN"

- 11 year-old boy at outset of therapy
- Grief-stricken after grandmother's death
- intense separation anxieties
- compulsive recall of guilt-ridden scenarios
- No prior treatment
INDICATIONS FOR TELEThERAPY

• Unreliability of parents to bring him
• To preserve continuity of work
• To afford Jonathan autonomy
• To secure frame of treatment
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References

