

## A TRIO OF DREAMS

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*T. M. Cuijpers-Kessels*

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Dreams have always played a significant role in my life, and I have always felt them to be of great importance. During my life I have worked with dreams in different ways, and finally, I have used Focusing to help me amplify my dreams. Years ago I was confronted with three very penetrating dreams. All three of them woke me up — a signal for me that they required my attention.

The first dream — November 2003 — was about my adult son as a seven-year-old child:

*I'm walking with my son in a well-known village. It's a peaceful and warm summer evening, and people are laughing and friendly, saying 'hello'. My son however starts to become sad and nostalgic. I try to comfort him, but his distress becomes worse. Finally his clothes fall off and all at once he jumps in a ditch, with his head embedded in the mud. He — as an adult now — can't help himself out, and I can't reach him in time to help him. I'm desperate! He will die!*

I'm half awake, but not allowed to wake up before having rescued him. But still the dream eludes me, and I wake up with my stomach, chest and head feeling like a bomb full of tension and tears. I'm restless and feeling big fear. It's early in the morning, and I can't sleep anymore. The following day is a busy day, and the dream remains in the background, but the next morning the dream returns in its full intensity.

About a week before my dream our son told us that he did not feel well. I was worrying about him and worrying even more after my dream. The dream stayed with me during the weeks that followed. I tried to Focus on it, but at that time I didn't yet know how to work specifically with dreams in a Focusing way. I started to realize that the dream had to do with my own life — with my 'raison d'être' — but I wasn't able to satisfactorily understand why it made me feel sad. The dream itself made me feel sad and kept on causing the same physical reactions every time I thought about it. I really wasn't able to understand the real meaning of the dream, and being busy, after awhile the dream was nearly forgotten.

Then two months later — January 2004 — I had a second dream that woke me up:

*I'm in an older house on the first floor in a spacious room - like a factory hall. At one side of that room there is a bright shower room, such as in a big public sauna. In the shower room are people, very near death or dying, hanging from*

*meat hooks, as in a slaughterhouse. I'm about nine years old and sitting on a treatment table, my legs hanging down, on a mattress with a terry fitted sheet — a larger version of the kind used when dressing babies or changing their diapers.*

*A man who turns out to be a doctor pushes my head down on the treatment table and puts a knife to my throat. I had a momentary hope of convincing him that it's not necessary to kill me, but it really seems to be what is about to happen! The only thing I can do is to surrender. I see the knife above the skin of my throat, and then it is inserted into my carotid artery. I don't feel any pain; I feel slightly quiet and passive. Then my blood is gushing out, and with the blood I feel the fading of my life force. My heart gets a bash and then feels like stone. I feel the rest of my body stiffen and become powerless. I'm still huddled and with my last bit of force I stretch out on the mattress. There is no one to help me. Stretching out I see how my blood is immediately absorbed by the foam rubber mattress. The terry fitted sheet only shows some small spots that I now cover with my body. And then, after all he has already done, the doctor places a needle in my leg, and gives me an injection. To help me to die faster?*

*Meanwhile, in a corner of the room is the bathroom of my family home, where one of my sisters is washing my mother's hair. Neither my mother nor my sister looks at me; they simply continue their activities. Their lack of attention pains me. I dare not tell them of my dying, what happened to me, because I know that will make them feel guilty for the rest of their lives. Finally, I ask for a small moment of their attention in the last half a minute of my life. There is no reaction, but a new visitor is arriving on the ground floor and following the doctor upstairs. As he arrives the visitor notices a small hole in the clothes and skin of the doctor's shoulder blade, and he then knows the hole is the mark/trace of an injection. The visitor also catches a glimpse of the shower room slaughterhouse and then sees me on the treatment table. The visitor is also doctor, and understands what is happening, but the doctor who was killing me doesn't realize the insight of the visitor — that the other doctor knows the true identity of the visitor.*

*Meanwhile, I notice that I am not yet dead because minutes have passed. I start to believe that the injection was intended to reduce pain or even to anaesthetize me. Maybe the visitor can save me by administering a blood transfusion or, if necessary, an antibody. There is no time to lose! But the visitor can't do anything, because the doctor might kill him too!*

*Still waiting for my death. I'm surprised not to be dead yet. The bleeding has stopped and not all my blood had flowed away. I actually feel a small bit of force. At the same time I realize the impossibility of continuing to live and the reality that my life seems so unimportant!*

When I wake up, I don't even feel fearful, nasty, or pathetic. I feel passive. Yet the dream has a feeling of great importance!

This dream could hardly wait to be explored! And fortunately, I had learned how to work with dreams in a workshop I'd attended on Focusing and Dreams. In the workshop I had worked with two nightmares I'd had since the age of five — one of them a repetitive one. These nightmares already showed me the choking and constraining impact on me as a child around the rather dogmatic religion I was brought up with — and how religion had taught me to be obedient and thus scared to really listen to myself. Therefore the first link I made with this dream was the religion and religious environment in which I was brought up.

Playing the role of the 'doctor' in my dream (in my head) let me feel his responsibility for the 'right behavior and mental health' of the believers. If they were not humble and obedient, they had to be 'treated' because, in dogmatic systems, critical thinking, liveliness and impulsiveness are considered dangerous; the leaders need their followers to have feelings such as fear and guilt in order to keep their power.

The doctor was not aware of being — 'injected' by the system himself — he was relaxed and convinced of his well-doing by making or keeping people stupid and numb — and therefore good followers of the system. He worked thoroughly and fast. In spite of his conviction, however, his work had to be done secretly, alone, and in a special place!

In the shower room, freshly treated people were hanging upside down. I didn't know if they were still alive or not, or why and how long they were hanging there. My body let me feel that they were hanging there to frighten and intimidate me. The larger version of the 'baby-mattress' showed the attempt to let people feel small and dependent. The room where the doctor performed the treatment looked like a factory hall where assembly line work is done.

Being the child in my dream, sitting on the treatment table, I felt relaxed, at first — I didn't expect that anything bad was going to happen. That innocence came from being the youngest in a big family, protected and loved, living in a small village close to nature. However, while growing up, I was more and more confronted with the values and standards of the religion and the religious community. I often felt a 'holy indignation' about certain questions, an attitude that often wasn't understood or tolerated. Being not understood by 'older and wiser' people was like being surprised by 'the doctor's actions' in my dream. And there was hardly any time to realize that truth/danger, and furthermore, there was no way to escape. So my life force and the passion of my heart were removed, and I couldn't even feel the pain of it.

There was no one to help me. My mother and that specific sister, my family's most fearful believers in the religious system, couldn't see, feel or understand what was going on because they had been treated, too. It was impossible for me to open their eyes and make them aware of my suffering. And now it was too late to help me. Trying to make them more aware would only embarrass them and make them feel guilty for the rest of their lives. My life felt powerless from head to toe. Hardly anything was left of me. The traces of the

treatment had also disappeared. My blood was hidden in the mattress, and the few spots on the sheet were hidden by my own body. In the end no one would ever be able to see what had really happened.

And what did the injection do? In the dream I thought that the injection would help me to die faster, but asking my body, I learned that the goal of the injection was to keep me alive. I would continue my life in numbness and powerlessness, to be a virtuous servant, an obedient carrier-forward of the system, and possibly capable of injecting other people!

The visitor in the dream represented the unexpected arrival of my husband in my life. At that time I was studying physiotherapy and searching for ‘my’ way of living and thinking. He came from a critical and anti-dogmatic family — he wasn’t ‘treated.’ He was the ‘doctor’ with the right diagnosis and injections with the ‘antibody’ for me. He couldn’t instantly help me and give me back my power, independence, and self-esteem, but he had the prudence to give me the space to work it out for myself — and let my blood and force grow. In the beginning, his points of view — his injections — were embarrassing for me, but they became more and more affirmative and supportive around what I dared to think and feel, such as the ‘holy indignation’ about destroying the ‘holy self,’ and the idea of being unimportant!

So, this second dream was about an important thread running through my life, offered to me in a well-ordered summary of insights that I gathered — partly with Focusing — over the years. Every single detail of the dream symbolized a story, making it possible to retell a larger story, briefly and to the point. And what’s more, the context also showed the unmistakable connections between the different and varied details.

After working with the second dream it was easy to understand the first one. The idyllic and romantic scene in the first dream referred to my early childhood, but also to the non-awareness of the ‘treated’ and ‘injected’ people, who were not peaceful, at all. They were not simply friendly, but caught in that friendly-looking system. How misleading! No wonder ‘my son’, a part of me, appeared in such a desperate position!

There are some examples I especially remember, showing my body’s ‘knowledge’ of what wasn’t right for me — from the beginning! There were the nightmares I had at the age of five, and later, many more dreams from about the age of seven, in which I started to fly, to make it impossible to be kept by anyone — *Who?* I didn’t know.

There were two times, at the age of seven, that our school class had to do exercises for the ‘first holy communion’ with the (nasty-feeling) pastor in our church. Once I vomited during the exercise, and once afterwards, at home.

At the age of eleven I was so scared of being called by God to become a nun, like my eldest sister, that I hyperventilated before I finally fell asleep. Preparing to graduate from primary school, the pastor of our church made me feel indignant by advising us to stay as we were — so as not to grow!

Now I knew what my body already knew, and my body knew that my mind knew!

And then after a couple of weeks the third dream came:

*I am standing at a small distance from an older (but not old) house with larger (but not large) windows. I am outside in the darkness. The atmosphere is like one of a warm and peaceful summer night. I feel relaxed, happy and regenerated. I feel so happy I could almost cry. I am looking at that house, a house like a home. The windows have yellow-beige curtains. A soft and warm light from inside is shining through them. In some places through a small chink of the curtains I can still catch a glimpse of what is happening inside. It looks like a party where all manner of dear friends heartwarmingly celebrated something last night. They celebrated having found each other and understanding each other. They were talking together, laughing, drinking, and hugging. All those friends are still there. The house is filled up and the atmosphere is lively inside. The party is not totally finished yet. I can't really remember, but I am very sure that I joined them at the party last night. And just between dreaming and awakening the following words are coming up: 'Dreams are shifts in cellular memory'. (Cellular memory is a term used in Applied Kinesiology, my specialty, to describe memories that we are absolutely not conscious of, but which are stored very deeply, and kept safely in our bodies.)*

The moment I woke up and heard the message that 'dreams are shifts in cellular memory,' I knew that the house in my dream was actually my body. In daily consciousness I used to call my body an instrument of my being, or the house I am living in. It was clear to me that the friends inside the house *were* my 'cellular memories' — the different details, with their very own stories, from my first two dreams. I had been with those previous dream-stories in my third dream. I did not exactly remember what happened in the house, or in my body, but looking through the small chinks of the curtains I was just able to catch a glimpse of the celebration and its atmosphere.

My body felt as though miracles happened inside during the dream — like loving hands had been up and about with certain 'cellular memories,' shaking them up, picking them out of the muddle, and reordering them. The different 'cellular memories' had found each other and were then understanding each other. They had become friends and that was what they were doing — celebrating together! They were moving around and together in a pleasant way now. There was no need for me to know how exactly things came about last night, inside my body, in my dream. However, it was important for me to know that things had changed inside, and I needed to be aware and to know how it was feeling *in there, right at that moment!* An extended shift had taken place, and I really had to wake up to consciously perceive this shift!

The third dream and shift could not take place before the symbolic images, and the bodily reactions belonging to the felt senses of the first two dreams, sufficiently had my attention — and in the right way. The second dream seemed to come in order to help me understand the importance and content of the first dream. The third dream came to say: "It's understood, and all right now!"

In the weeks after the third dream the newly acquired order was still delicate. One moment there was the festive feeling from the last dream in my body, but at other moments

the old bodily feelings came back with all their violence. These feelings however no longer agitated and confused me. In the course of some weeks there gradually arose a quiet balance, a balance that felt much stronger than before the three dreams.

This story shows the different functions, impact, and importance dreams can have — and how dreams can process and arrange the many impressions released from our bodies or ‘cellular memories’. Our dreams will do the same with the many impressions that we catch daily from our environment, yet can’t give enough attention to during the day.

It was in my work as a physiotherapist, but especially as an applied kinesiologist, that I met the words ‘cellular memory’. You might say they ‘cellular memories’ are somatized, unconscious feelings, and determining our appearance and health, when kept for longer times in our bodies. ‘Cellular memories’ can be touched and activated by all kind of live events, as well as by therapy or Focusing. Sometimes unexpected feelings can cause disturbing or confusing sensations, especially if the person’s process is missing a direct and clear relationship between their long-held feelings and what is coming up in the moment.

My experience is that the process of arranging and ordering often happens without our consciousness when we deeply rest in Morpheus’ arms, but that sometimes, and probably when it concerns important questions, dreams wake us up and ask for our conscious attention. And after all my experiences with dreams, both mine and my client’s, I have not found a better way to give attention to — or to better understand dreams — than with Focusing!

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**Trees** (Dutch for Theresa) **Cuijpers-Kessels** is a Dutch physiotherapist who also worked with Applied Kinesiology — a holistic system — for thirty years, and since 2001 with Focusing. She is a one-to-one Focusing Trainer and a Focusing Trainer for groups and — being retired and a grandma now — she still works part-time in both modalities.

Trees can be reached via e-mail at: [treescuijpers@kpnplanet.nl](mailto:treescuijpers@kpnplanet.nl). Phone: +31735993351. Website: [www.treescuijpers.nl](http://www.treescuijpers.nl) (in Dutch).