Leadership Guide

*Dream Interpretation and Counseling:*

*Live Demonstrations*

John F. Marszalek III, Ph.D.

Xavier University of Louisiana

John F. Marszalek III, Ph.D., LPC, NCC is Assistant Professor in the Counseling Program in the Division of Education at Xavier University of Louisiana and in private practice in New Orleans.

Microtraining Associates, Inc.

www.emicrotraining.com

info@emicrotraining.com

888-505-5576
Outline of Video

I. Introduction (approximately 5 minutes)
II. Part One – Developmental Counseling Therapy (approximately 15 minutes)
III. Part Two – Dream Interpretation (approximately 48 minutes)
IV. Part Three – Dream Session (approximately 35 minutes)
V. Conclusion (approximately 3 minutes)

Learning Objectives

After watching this video, the viewers will be able to:

1. Describe the levels of the Developmental Counseling Therapy (DCT) model.
2. Apply the levels of DCT to dream interpretation.
3. List the steps of dream interpretation outlined in the video.
4. Identify the DCT levels from which clients and counselors operate when analyzing dreams.
5. Apply the steps of dream interpretation to their work with clients and/or with their own dreams.
Dream Interpretation and Counseling

Most clients enter counseling because they do not feel fulfilled in their lives or simply because they do not feel okay. For example, many clients seek counseling because they are depressed. They do not know why they are depressed or what to do to overcome the depression. Often the depression is a signal that there are inconsistencies among behaviors, cognitions, and affects. These inconsistencies may be perpetuated by clients’ inaccurate perceptions of their inner and/or outer worlds.

A major goal of counselors is to help clients overcome the blocks that prevent them from feeling better. By helping clients develop greater insight into how they make meaning of their inner and outer worlds, counselors can help clients understand the meaning of their blocks and how to overcome them (Ivey, 1993). Clients are usually unable to describe their worlds accurately because they do not understand themselves. The task of the counselor is to help them understand.

Ivey (1993) described how his Developmental Counseling Therapy (DCT) approach can be used to facilitate client insight. Using client generated images, thoughts, or feelings, counselors can use Ivey’s Standard Cognitive-Development Interview to lead clients through as many cognitive-developmental levels as possible; thus, promoting greater client insight into themselves. Myers (1998) demonstrated how counselors can use bibliotherapy and DCT to generate client metaphors and promote client insight. Similar to Myers’ approach, clients’ dreams can be used as a tool to help clients develop insights into themselves and their worlds.

Dreams leave residue that the counselor and client can use to understand the meaning of them. Sometimes the residue is a vague feeling, sometimes it is a brief image, or sometimes it is a whole story. DCT can be used to facilitate the analysis of this dream residue. My approach is an integrative approach that draws heavily from Gestalt, Jungian, Object Relations, and Person-Centered. I integrate the dream analysis techniques from these theories using Ivey's DCT model.

During my initial meeting with clients, one of the questions I ask is if they have had any dreams recently. Some clients do recall recent dreams, and like Adler's use of clients’ earliest childhood recollections, I use these dreams as metaphors to better understand where a client is in their development of processing various issues. Most clients do not recall any specific dreams, but I have found that asking this question demonstrates to them that we can talk about their dreams and indirectly suggests that they can remember their dreams. Even clients who state they never remember their dreams, later recall a dream they want to discuss during a counseling session.

When a client presents a dream to me, I explore the meaning of the dream by integrating Ivey's (1993, 2005) Standard Cognitive-Developmental Interview into the flow of the session. I begin by asking the client to discuss the strongest residue from a dream: a feeling, image, or thought. Sometimes the most powerful residue is a combination of several feelings, images, and/or thoughts. Once I have a bit of dream
In exploring clients’ dreams, I draw from Jungian theory in encouraging clients to free associate, in stressing that dream symbols are usually unique to the individual, and in theorizing that dream can reveal powerful messages about one’s self. I draw from Object Relations theory by looking at the ways in which figures in dreams can represent different parts of the self rather than the actual figures. I also am aware of countertransferential feelings to use them to help me better understand clients’ inner worlds (once I have distinguished my own feelings from those I have picked up from a client). I use Gestalt techniques to help clients experience feelings and sensations from dreams in the present and to help clients engage in a dialogue between different parts of a dream. Finally, I like Faraday’s (1974) integration of Jungian and Gestalt theories in analyzing dreams; I agree with her that figures in dreams can represent parts of the self or the actual figures and that it is helpful to explore both possibilities.

In drawing from these theories, I use Ivey's DCT model as the glue that holds it all together. I use DCT to help me understand the cognitive-development level of the client in presenting the dream and to help me facilitate exploration of the dream through the DCT levels. If you would like to learn more about the DCT model, see the following:


If you would like to learn more about specific counseling theories and dream interpretation, see the following:


History of Dream Interpretation

Dream interpretation is not a new phenomenon. Ancient civilizations, including the Mesopotamians, Hebrews, Babylonians, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans interpreted dreams (Van De Castle, 1994). Early psychologists, including Freud (1900), Adler (1927), and Jung (1945), viewed dreams as a source of personal knowledge, guidance, and insight. Freud called dreams the “royal road to the unconscious.” To read more about the history of dream interpretation, see the following:


Research

Articles on dreams appear in journals ranging from the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, Psychoanalytic Inquiry, Journal of Counseling Psychology, and Dreaming*, a multidisciplinary professional journal devoted specifically to dreaming. However, there have been no articles published in the *Journal of Counseling and Development* on dream interpretation. Most articles are based on clinical examples and support the use of dream interpretation in counseling as leading to positive counseling outcomes. Empirical research on dream analysis as a therapeutic tool is somewhat sparse. Much of the existing clinical research has been influenced by Hill’s (1996) model of dream interpretation. If you would like to learn more about counseling research and dream interpretation, see the following:


Activities
Activity #1

What is your Predominant DCT Level?

In Part One of the video, the viewers are led through an activity to help them assess their predominant DCT levels at this moment in time. *(The activity begins at just over two minutes into Part One).* Stop the video just prior to the activity to provide participants with instructions.

Instruct participants to participate in the activity individually. It is important for participants not to talk so that they do not disrupt the stream of thought for other participants. Tell the group to listen for a question that is asked during the activity. Each participant should reflect on the question individually and quietly. Participants may choose to write down their thoughts/feelings or sit quietly with them.

At the end of the activity, stop the video and ask participants to share what happened for them when they focused on the picture.

Show participants the remainder of Part One that describes each of the DCT levels. Tell them to think about their experiences with the picture as they watch the rest of the Part One to see if they can determine from which DCT levels they were operating.

At the conclusion of Part One, distribute or display Handout One, *What is Your Predominant DCT Level?* Ask participants if they were able to identify their predominant DCT levels. If participants had trouble identifying their DCT levels, you could divide them into groups and instruct them to help each other identify the appropriate levels.

Activity #2

Dream Interpretation and DCT Styles

Show approximately two minutes of Part Two and stop at the section entitled *Dream Interpretation and DCT Styles*. Distribute or display Handout Two, *What is Your DCT Level of Functioning for a Particular Dream?*

This section of the video includes four parts: sensorimotor, concrete-operational, formal operational, and dialectic. Show participants one part at a time and ask them to identify evidence for the client operating from a particular DCT level. For example, in the sensorimotor part, what is the client saying or doing that indicates to you that she is processing her dream from a sensorimotor level?
Activity #3

Steps to Dream Interpretation

Show the section of Part Two entitled *Steps of Dream Interpretation*. After showing this section, distribute or display Handout Three, *Steps to Dream Interpretation*.

Divide participants into groups and ask each group to role-play a dream interpretation session using the following “train dream” fragment from the *Introduction* in the video:

_I’m sitting with my family outside of our farmhouse and I see train tracks leading from the backyard and out into the woods behind the house. In the woods I notice that the train tracks cross a bridge. Somehow I know that if I take a train over the bridge, I will be heading to New York City and away from my family._

If there are more than two participants in a group, two participants can role-play and the other participants can observe. The participants role-playing the client should imagine they are the client telling this dream and imagine how the client might respond to questions regarding the dream during a session. The participants role-playing the counselor should attempt to lead the “client” through the steps of dream interpretation, especially trying to lead the client through as many DCT levels as possible.

After the role-plays are complete, ask any observers to provide feedback to the role-players. Ask the “clients” and “counselors” to discuss what the experience was like for them. Ask participants to discuss how they feel this approach would work for them as a counselor helping a client interpret a dream.

Activity #4

Identifying the Steps to Dream Interpretation

Prior to showing Part III of the video, distribute or display Handout Three, *Steps to Dream Interpretation*. Tell participants that they are going to view an entire dream interpretation session. Ask them to see if they can identify the steps of dream interpretation as they occur in the session. Instruct them to jot down when they notice a particular step, so that the group can discuss the session afterward.

After viewing the session, ask participants to discuss the session and to discuss if they were able to identify individual steps.

Encourage participants to critique the session, including what they would have done differently. Ask them to discuss on what other aspects of the client’s dream they would have focused. Ask them to discuss what they learned from watching the session.
Activity #5

Analyzing Your Dream: Written Exercise

Distribute Handout Four, *Analyzing Your Dream: Written Exercise*. Tell participants they can use this handout to help them interpret their own dreams.

Discuss the following admonition that is at the bottom of the handout:

*Please note: The steps presented above are general guidelines. If you experience painful feelings or memories, do not force yourself to continue processing the dream. Talk to a licensed professional counselor to help you process your experience. This activity is not a substitute for counseling but an activity for self exploration; in fact, based on my clinical experience clients develop deeper and more thorough interpretations of their dreams when working with a clinician. (Also see research study by Heaton, Hill, Petersen, Rochlen, & Zack, 1998).*
Handouts
What is Your Predominant DCT Level?
Handout 1

Sensorimotor Style

- You focused on your senses when viewing the picture. You may have experienced feelings or sensations in your body but were not able to label them.

- You had jumbled, unorganized thoughts as you viewed the picture. Or the picture triggered irrational or magical thoughts for you.

Concrete-operational Style

- You focused on the details of the picture and described it to yourself in concrete, detailed language.

- You labeled your feelings or sensations and understood that they occurred in response to your viewing the picture.

Formal-operational Style

- You reflected on the concrete details of the picture or reflected on your feelings/thoughts. You recognized patterns between the details/feelings/thoughts and other experiences you have had. For example, “that mountain reminds me of my trip last summer” “or the feeling of peacefulness I experience as I look at the picture reminds me of how I feel when I go hiking.”

- You operated from a late formal-operational level by recognizing “patterns of patterns.” You were able to comprehend that your patterns of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions can be intertwined. For example, “my pattern of feeling peaceful is related to my pattern of enjoying nature.”

Dialectic/Systemic Style

- You reached new levels of comprehension by understanding that your view of the world is influenced by your dialectic with the environment; in other words, you understand that you do not live in a vacuum and cannot avoid being influenced by the environment in which you exist. For example, you realized that the relationship of the patterns of feeling peaceful and enjoying nature came from positive experiences you had with your family on family vacations.

- You experienced a dialectic deconstruction when your new levels of comprehension or insight led you to begin processing your new knowledge at sensorimotor and/or concrete-operational styles.
What is Your DCT Level of Functioning for a Particular Dream?
Handout 2

*Sensorimotor Style*

- You can identify vague feelings or sensations in your body from the dream.
- You have difficulty remembering the concrete details or labeling them.
- You have a vague sense of having had a dream but cannot “catch” the details.

*Concrete-operational Style*

- You can describe at least some details of dream.
- You can describe how certain details made you feel (sensations or emotions).
- You do not have an understanding of the deeper meaning of the dream.

*Formal-operational Style*

- You can recall something from your waking world that is similar to an aspect of the dream.
- You see a pattern between an occurrence in your waking world and something that happened in the dream, something you felt in the dream, or something you thought in the dream.

*Dialectic Style*

- You understand how parts of yourself are represented by various figures in the dream.
- You develop an “analysis” of the dream, understanding what the dream means for you and how the dream has lead to deeper insight into yourself.
- Dialectical deconstruction occurs when you begin to process your insight at a sensorimotor or concrete level.
Steps to Dream Interpretation
Handout 3

1. Begin with a client generated dream fragment and use active listening techniques to help the client talk about the dream.

2. Focus on the most powerful images, feelings, or sensations of the client.

3. Integrate the SCDI into the flow of the session or use an unstructured approach to help the client process the dream component through as many DCT styles as possible, especially leading to an understanding of the meaning of the dream component for the client.

4. Ask questions at either the concrete or formal level to promote linkages between dreams and waking situations.

5. Identify and focus on other segments of the dream by repeating steps one through four.

6. Develop hypotheses concerning an overall interpretation of the dream by connecting the previously explored dream components’ meanings.

7. Process the feelings and sensations experienced as a result of the cognitive shift.
Analyzing Your Dream: Written Exercise
Handout 4

Try this activity to help you begin making meaning of a dream that you have had.

1. If you remember a dream or a fragment from a dream, write down everything about the dream that you remember, including the concrete details of the dream, anything that you felt in the dream, or anything that you thought in the dream.

2. Ask yourself the following questions: *What occurs for you when you focus on the dream?* or *What really stands out in the dream for you?*

3. Focus on a specific image, feeling, or sensation that occurs for you.

4. Process the dream component through as many DCT styles as possible, especially leading to an understanding of the meaning of the dream component. The following questions and interventions are some but not all of the many possibilities for each DCT level (see the SCDI in Ivey, 1993, Appendix A; Ivey, 2004):

   **Sensorimotor**

   Tell the dream in the present tense.  
   What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? What sensations do you experience in your body? What goes through your mind?

   **Concrete-operational**

   Focus on the specific details of the dream. For example, what were figures in the dream wearing? Who were the people in the dream? What did they look like? What were you doing? What were other people doing? What happened when you….? What happened after she/he….? What happened before….? How did you feel when….? What went through your mind when …. happened in the dream?

   **Formal-operational**

   When have you felt this way in past situations? When have you experienced those sensations in your body? What comes to mind when you focus on ….. (specific image in dream)? Do you see a pattern between the image in the dream and something in your waking world? Can you think of a time when that has gone through your mind before?
5. Identify and focus on other segments of the dream by repeating steps one through four. Try to keep the focus on one set of images and feelings at a time, in order to illuminate clear patterns associated with each feeling.

6. Develop hypotheses concerning the overall interpretation of the dream by connecting the previously explored dream components’ meanings. Watch for a cognitive shift experience (i.e., an a-ha moment) in yourself when a hypothesis feels meaningful to you. Ask yourself the following questions to encourage dialectic/systemic thinking:

   *What do you think this all means?  What have you learned from talking about your dream? What are you going to do with what you have learned? What would somebody else say about your dream?*

7. Allow yourself to process the feelings and sensations experienced as a result of the cognitive shift.

*Please note: The steps presented above are general guidelines. Following the steps is less important than following the natural flow of the session. If you experience painful feelings or memories, do not force yourself to continue processing the dream. Talk to a licensed professional counselor to help you process your experience. This activity is not a substitute for counseling but an activity for self exploration; in fact, based on my clinical experience clients develop deeper and more thorough interpretations of their dreams when working with a clinician. (Also see research study by Heaton, Hill, Petersen, Rochlen, & Zack, 1998).*
References


