

Shrink Rap Radio #301, April 20, 2012

The Hero's Journey and Dreams

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka "Dr. Dave"

Interviews Kelly Sullivan Walden

(Transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Renata Sielecki)

My guest today is Kelly Sullivan Walden, author, dreamworker and hypnotherapist, and we'll be discussing Joseph Campbell's model of *The Hero's Journey* as it applies to dreams. According to her website, dream therapist Kelly Sullivan Walden is a certified clinical hypnotherapist and the author of the number one amazon.com best selling dream book, *I Had the Strangest Dream: the Dreamers Dictionary for the 21st Century*, as well as *Discover Your Inner Goddess Queen: An Inspirational Journey From Drama Queen to Goddess Queen and Zone Golf*.

Kelly is the host of the *D-Spot*, a weekly web radio show on the Awakening Zone where she explores the nexus of nighttime dreams, daytime desires and destiny. Kelly is featured regularly on Fox, NBC, CBS and ABC News and magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Bride*, *Seventeen*, *Women's World* and *US Weekly*. She goes on to say you can read her weekly dream blog on AOL's mydaily.com. Kelly is the creator/founder of the Dream Project, a non-profit organization that bridges inspired young people to solve the issues facing the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goals.

Now, here's the interview.

Dr. Dave: Kelly Sullivan Walden, welcome to *Shrink Rap Radio*.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Thank you, David. It's a pleasure to be with you.

Dr. Dave: Well, it's a pleasure for me to have this opportunity to meet you here because you're going to be a presenter at the upcoming *29th Annual International Association for the Study of Dreams Conference*. That's a mouthful

Kelly Sullivan Walden: I know. Very good. I'm impressed.

Dr. Dave: [laughs] Yeah.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Well done.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, as I was looking through the huge set of offerings over the four and a half days, I was particularly drawn to your workshop on *The Hero's Journey* as it relates to dreams.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Mmm.

Dr. Dave: And so I'm really looking forward to that. But before we get into that, I'd like to get more on your background because I've been on your website, I've listened to your interview podcast, I've watched one of your dream drama sessions on YouTube...

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Wow.

Dr. Dave: ...and it all left me wondering if you have a background in theater.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs]

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Hah, that's so funny. I don't think anyone's ever asked me that. So bravo to you. [laughs] Yeah. Actually, throughout my 20s I was acting. I acted [overlapping speech]

Dr. Dave: Uh-huh.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: I acted. I was in some movies and in some television shows like E.R. and Star Trek.

Dr. Dave: Oh wow.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Chalk one up for my intuition. Yay!

Kelly Sullivan Walden: I know! I'm so impressed. It seems like a thousand ago but yeah, I do have sort of a theatrical background. I did a little bit of theater, mostly in high school, but more film and television throughout my 20s.

Dr. Dave: Well, I'm not surprised to hear that just because you come across... I figured either theater or college major in communications or something like that because you come across so polished.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, wow, thank you.

Dr. Dave: Both beautiful, if I may say so, and polished

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Well, I just love you, David. [laughs] You sure know how to get a girl smiling.

Dr. Dave: [laughs] Good. Good.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Thank you. Yeah, I thought that acting was the only thing I could ever find a passion for 'cause it felt like the opportunity to never have a dull moment. the opportunity to explore so many different aspects of life and the opportunity to feel so many different things. And then, one day while I was pursuing acting, I kind of overlapped and developed... I was taking classes in hypnotherapy and I started seeing clients. And I had an "Aha!" moment while I was in the midst of a session that everything that I loved about, that I thought was so alive about making films and being in the theatrical world, all the juice was present in a session. I was on the edge of my seat. It was intuitive. There was a magic that was present and I realized it's possible to have an exciting, deep, juicy, magical life and I don't have to wait for somebody to yell, "Action." Or wait for them to call and be the actress damsels in distress that was always kind of a victim in some sense, waiting for somebody to give me the cue when to begin. And I realized, "Wow," I can have this juicy life and explore different realities with people and I can call the shots.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Boy, I can really relate to that. Actually, there's some similarities with my own path.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Really.

Dr. Dave: The other thing I wanted to ask you is, do you have a background in marketing? Because having been on your website, it's clear that you're very entrepreneurial and it doesn't come across as a beginner's effort.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, thank you. Well, when my book, *I Had the Strangest Dream: the Dreamer's Dictionary for the 21st Century*, when that came out...there's so much... The strangest thing was I had give up acting years before because it just felt like it was the Dark Ages. It felt like it wasn't going to work. In fact, I had so many dreams that told me, "Kelly, you're done. You're done. Stop it. Switch gears." And then I said, okay. I'm letting up, have to go and I fully went a hundred percent into doing therapy, hypnosis and hypnotherapy, with people. Really a much more insular kind of world but really satisfying to me.

Then this book comes out and, all of a sudden, there's all these opportunities to be in the media once again. But this time not as somebody else but as myself. And soon after the book came out, I met somebody named Steve Allen--not the deceased comedian but a guy who was a publicist who became a dear friend of mine and my husband--and he actually kind of took me under his wing. And he was the one that put Doreen Virtue on the map and said, "Honey, I'm going to make you a star." [laughs] So he's really helped me. He's really gotten me in front of a lot of media just because he's been inspired. And he's since become a really dear friend. So, I didn't have a marketing background myself per se but I kind of have learned as I have gone along and done probably over 500 interviews at this point.

Dr. Dave: Oh my goodness.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [indecipherable] Sometimes if you give something up, it comes back if it's meant to be yours. It doesn't if it wasn't.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Now, you mentioned hypnotherapy. What was it that drew you in that direction?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Well, I was always the Dear Abby type growing up. I was always the person that I would hear people tell me, "Wow. I've never told anybody that before."

Dr. Dave: Um-hmm. Yes.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And I prided myself on that. I loved... My mother was that kind of person. As a little girl I would see my mom sitting at the kitchen table with strangers, with

neighbors, with people coming over crying in her lap and her soothing them and giving them advice. And I looked up to her, I looked up to her ability to do that. And I kind of emulated that and became a "mini-me" version of her growing up.

So I thought at some point that I would want to be a therapist. I took psychology classes and I was studying to become a psychotherapist. And somewhere along the lines I learned about hypnotherapy. All of a sudden that felt like--not to put psychotherapy or traditional therapy down in any way because I think there's tremendous value in it --but it seemed like hypnotherapy and hypnosis was a way of bypassing the morass and the gridlock of the mind and going straight to the issues. And being able to... If you can go straight to a person's issues, you can go straight into offering a solutions and see much quicker results.

And I'm of the microwave generation. I like results. I like to see people shift in a quick period of time. So hypnosis was really kind of perfect for myself and my own healing process. And I loved, and I still love, doing sessions with people. Seeing the lights turn on and having them call me in a few days or even a week later and tell me about what profound changes occur as a result of one, or two, or three hypnosis sessions. It's pretty incredible dealing straight with the subconscious mind directly. So that's one of the reasons why I loved it so much. And that kind of lead me into the realm of dreams.

Dr. Dave: Okay. Now, do you ever find that, as a hypnotherapist, you're in deeper water than you want to be and end up referring somebody out to traditional therapy?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Hmm. No... No. [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Okay. Well, it's just something I wondered.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: No. I'm sure that anything's possible. Anything could happen. I think that we, I really believe in the Law of Attraction and the people that find me are really the people that I'm here to help.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And vice versa. I learn a lot from every session that I do and from the people that come to me. I feel like we're mirrors of each other. So, I haven't had... Actually, I did refer one person out because he was a stalker and he wasn't really coming to see me for sessions.

[laughs] He just wanted to be alone with me. And I thought, "Um, I'm going to refer you to someone else."

Dr. Dave: [laughs] Yeah, really. Really. You mentioned a book earlier--you've written a number of books and among them was the one you mentioned, a dream dictionary titled, *I Had the Strangest Dream: the Dreamer's Dictionary for the 21st Century*. Now, not to be overly provocative here but most of the dream workers I know try to steer people away from dream dictionaries, feeling that the dream symbols are going to have unique associations and meanings for each individual. So, what leads you to fly in the face of that wisdom, which I assume you've been exposed to?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, absolutely. And I, strange as it might sound, I tell people the same thing. And that was my school of thought as well that you can't put a blanket label on top of what these associations mean. And the goal is to empower the individual to find their own sense of meaning for what their dream symbols are telling them. In the beginning of the book, I make reference to that. It's a pretty good disclaimer and I say it more often than not. And my husband tells me, "Kelly, you've got to stop making that disclaimer 'cause you [indecipherable]. Enough. Enough." [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Uh huh.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: But what happened was, I didn't know I was going to write a dream book. I was doing my hypnotherapy sessions happily and as it kind of organically happened, clients would, after a session or two, people's dreams started to become really vivid. And it seemed that half of the time I would work with people would be spent looking into their dreams. And without meaning to, I would start to have intuitive messages--kind of in the way some people might get intuitive messages when they look at tarot cards--I would start to get a sense of what was really going on with the person based n their dreams. I would start to see things, almost the way a detective does when they see certain clues or triggers, everything starts to become clear. So I would, of course, ask people as many questions as possible to get them to reveal to themselves what their symbols were telling them. But I would often kind of wrap and put their words to it but also give it a bit of my spin, which tends to be a very life affirming spin.

And I tend to... I think one thing that really distinguishes my point of view is that I'm a Pollyanna at heart and not in an airy-fairy way. I tend to truly believe that the universe is on our side and that there's no such thing really as a bad dream, that everything--even the most gory, horrific-

seeming dream--there's something positive that could come of it if we work with it and stick with it. So with this point of view, and I would wrap this around my interpretations or my sharings, so many people would tell me, "Kelly, you've got to write a book with your point of view about these symbols 'cause there isn't anything out there like this."

I mean I heard it so many times and I just started keeping track of some of the main symbols and my point of view of them. Eventually, I started to write this book and it was really organic. And I still say if what I say in the book doesn't resonate then toss it out and consider that you're one step closer to what the symbol does mean for you.

Dr. Dave: How many symbols are in the book?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: There's over...there's 3000 symbols.

Dr. Dave: Okay. Wow. That's a lot.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: In the pdf, in my unedited, unabridged version there's 5000. They could only...They told me... My publisher said that to do 5000 words and I did. And then they realized it couldn't fit into a book that was the trade paperback size so I had to almost cut it in half. So I have practically another book in pdf version.

Dr. Dave: So, in coming up with meanings, were they all derived sort of internally and intuitively or did you refer to outside sources as well?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: My first pass at the book was all internal. It was my book, I could write whatever I wanted.

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: So I gave myself permission. And, literally, I would roll out of bed in the morning, wouldn't even put any water on my face, I would stay sleepy for as long as I could and write for hours in that half asleep, half awake state of mind. And write my first associations with all of the different words. And then when I was done with that process--and I spent a lot of time writing in my bathrobe [laughs], not a pretty sight---when I was done with my first draft... I always think when it comes to writing anything I like to empower people to not be logical, just be intuitive. Just get your first draft out as messy as it might be from your gut. From your deepest

instinct.

That's what I did and afterwards I polished it. And there were a few people who's work I really learned to admire and I discovered them as I went along. I love Robert Moss, love Tony Chris and Betty Bethards. And I would notice some of their work and I would notice that there's was naturally some similarities and then there were some things that were new and different and caused me to recreate a few of the symbols. But that was the second draft of it. So the final draft does reference a few different sources.

And it's a hybrid, a hybrid of all the things that I have learned over the years. I've studied with some shamans, I've done lots of goddess work, I'm a practitioner of religious science so I've studied most of the major religions. And so my book is really, kind of, you see pieces of all of those things in a swirl [indecipherable] each symbol.

Dr. Dave: Yes. You mentioned Betty Bethards, and there wouldn't be time here now but at some point down the line, give me a chance to--when we're not on this interview--I'll share a story with you about Betty Bethards and a string of incidents that came to pass in my life as a result of just one brief contact with her. But that's a whole other story.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Okay, well, I would love to hear it. I would love to, so I'll make a note of that.

Dr. Dave: Okay. How would you describe your approach to working with dreams individually and in groups, if those two are different.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Mmm. Well, I'm sure there's a thousand ways that they overlap. I think when it's working with an individual, there's an opportunity to drill deeply inside of a person's dreams and have a history of where they've been and what they're doing. Probably very, very related. One thing we get to do in a group that you can't do with an individual is dream theater where you get to re-enact a dream in psychodrama kind of a way.

Dr. Dave: Um hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Where each person gets to play a significant aspect of the dream and then you get to recreate and recreate it until the dreamer has a tremendous "Aha!" and feels ten feet tall and elated. So that's something that's an opportunity to get to do in a group that you don't

get to do individually. Also, I love in a group environment, one metaphor that I use is that I believe dreams are like a diamond. Each dream is a diamond and when a dream is being discussed, it's like we're placing the diamond in the center of the circle. And based on the position of where each person sits, you are able to perceive a different facet of the dream than the person sitting across the room from your or next to [indecipherable].

Dr. Dave: Wow. I thought I was the one who came up with the diamond metaphor.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Maybe I got it somewhere else and I use it slightly differently. I like the way that you did it as each person representing a facet. And the way that I've used it in my teaching is to talk about if you hold the dream up to different theories....

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes, yes.

Dr. Dave: ...you see something different and they're all true.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes, yes, very true. And I love the fact--oh, this is great--I love that we have this in common, that a dream is a diamond in our world and our collective consciousness. We believe that diamonds are so valuable and dreams are that valuable. They're like big beautiful diamonds that you don't want to discard just because they don't necessarily make sense or because they're a little rough around the edges. You don't just throw them out.

Dr. Dave: Ooh, I like that part, too. That's going to expand my repertoire. [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs]

Dr. Dave: And I'll probably think I invented it. [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs] I love it. Please.

Dr. Dave: I like that. Okay, I mentioned earlier that I was particularly drawn to the workshop you'll be doing at the upcoming IASD Conference because you're correlating Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey* with dream work. And the reason I'm so interested is that I've used Campbell's book in a university class that I taught for about 20 years or so. My old seminar on

myth, dream and symbol. And I went to a 2005 IASD Conference by David Gordon--I don't know if you've run across him...

Kelly Sullivan Walden: No.

Dr. Dave: ...in which he presented on *The Hero's Journey* and dreams.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, wow.

Dr. Dave: In fact, that was...my interview with David Gordon was... Yeah, I interviewed him back in 2005. It was the second podcast interview that I did. Now I'm doing this one with you on the same topic. This is going to be number 301.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, wow. Oh, wow.

Dr. Dave: So this is a longwinded way of saying I'm really interested in this topic and would love to have you lead us through Campbell's stages of the journey and your take on how our dreams might relate to each of those stages.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, wow. I thought I was so original. [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Yeah, we keep...

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [indecipherable]

Dr. Dave: Right, I know.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: This is great, though. I can't wait to listen to that. I hope the podcast is still available.

Dr. Dave: It is still available. The audio quality's not terribly good. I was still getting my chops down at that point. [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, I don't care. I can't wait to listen to it.

Dr. Dave: He's got a book as well and the title escapes me. But maybe at the end of the

interview... Well, you can go to Amazon and you'll find a book by him, David Gordon.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Sure. So, the question is, how does this work in my world or how do I...?

Dr. Dave: Well, yeah, in terms of Joseph Campbell and the stages that he talks about and what that might represent in terms of our dreams.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Well, the first time I heard about *The Hero's Journey*, in fact the first time I was introduced to Joseph Campbell, I was on an airplane and I broke into tears. There was something about the words that he was using, the quality of... It was the Power of Myth that I was reading and literally, the lady sitting next to me was like, "Honey, are you okay?" She was giving me tissue and I was like [pretends to sob]. It's like a dam broke in me and all I could do was cry. And it wasn't out of sadness, it was out of "Eureka, I've found gold. Oh my god. Everything makes sense." I felt like I was being healed by his words and by his ability to frame our journey and see ourselves as these noble beings.

Dr. Dave: Um hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: That was, what, maybe 20 years ago. Maybe more, probably more like 25--god, whoa, I have no idea how old I am. [laughs] Okay, it was over 25 years ago. And so that was way before I was doing dream work quote unquote, officially. I was doing my own personal dream work but not professionally at all. And then, so that planted that seed. And then a couple of years ago, I was living in Santa Fe, New Mexico at a place called Garden of the Goddess and there's a medicine wheel on the top of a hill that I would often walk up to and do a ceremony on, about every day. And it was always the case that every time I would go up to this medicine wheel, there would always be an "Aha!" waiting for me up there.

I had just finished writing my book and I was working on my next book and I was looking... So dreams were on my mind in a big way. And as I walked up to the medicine wheel and did my ceremony up there, I started getting a download about *The Hero's Journey* as it overlapped with dreams and I saw the whole thing. So I came down from the medicine wheel that day feeling like I could barely walk. My feet were barely touching the ground, I felt so high because I felt like... I'm a synthesizer by nature. I love it when two seemingly disparate systems overlap and come together to create like "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." So these two things that I loved so much and love so much felt like they just got bigger and more relevant and more powerful. And it created this kind of, in some ways, what to do with and how to contextualize

dreams as well as the journey of becoming a masterful dreamer or an awakened being.

Dr. Dave: What a wonderful gift you received.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes. Yeah, I highly recommend it. If you ever go to Santa Fe, New Mexico, look up Ginny Gentry and Garden of the Goddess and go up to that medicine wheel. I guarantee some beautiful "Aha!" will be there waiting for you. [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Mmm. Okay, so back to your story.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yeah. So I'll walk through the stages, if you'd like, to kind of talk about how I see them weaving together with dreams.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Well, the first thing I'll just say as a larger context, and I know this is not news for you and probably for your listeners but I'll say it as if people don't know what *The Hero's Journey* is. Twelve stages that map the predictable ups and downs, highs and lows, and journey of somebody who's on a noble quest. And I see *The Hero's Journey* as many others do, as a map of the terrain of our lives...

Dr. Dave: Um hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: ...just the fact that we're born, that we incarnated here. By virtue of that, we're all heroes on a hero's journey, regardless of what we're doing in this moment that may or may not appear to be heroic. It's a hero's journey just to be alive. So *The Hero's Journey* maps our entire life from beginning to end and everything in between. And on a more micro level, in some ways it maps out each day of our lives. And in a larger point of view, it maps out these major cycles that we go through in our lives. And on another level, it maps out each night, each dream. So you can look, just like a diamond, you can look at so many different ways that this manifests.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: So in general, I say that the first stage is the ordinary world. So, in that stage I like for people in my dream group, for example, to acknowledge the ordinary aspect of

preparing themselves to learn about dreams and to become more mindful and masterful as an awakened being and as a masterful dreamer. And the ordinary things that can be done are to set up your ordinary sleep space into a dream sanctuary by acknowledging your five senses. Your sense of sight, making sure that what's in your space where you're going to sleep, making sure that it's orderly, that you don't have mountains of books that are falling over each other on the bedside table. Making sure that you don't have piles of laundry all over the place, that you've got your closet doors closed and that there's a sense of order. One of my dear friends is Marie Diamond, she's the... Diamond, here that comes up again. Isn't that interesting?

Dr. Dave: Yeah. [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: She's the Feng Shui expert that was featured in the movie, the Secret and her and I have spoken at length about our dream zone, our sleep zone, the physical nature of it having so much to do with the quality of our dreams and the quality of our sleep. And we have so much that we can... There's so many things that we feel powerless about, that we can't really do anything about, and then there's the stuff that we can absolutely do something about. So clearing the decks, making sure that your sense of sight--that what you do see around you is affirming, that you don't have images of water in your sleep zone 'cause the subconscious mind can't discern between what is actually there and what is imagined. And she says if you have water in your sleep, most people will have dreams of drowning or of being overwhelmed. If you have images of huge game, like lions or tigers or bears that your subconscious mind might feel like you're being threatened while you're asleep.

So there's different points of view on that but basically making sure that your sense of smell, that there's some kind of lovely aromatherapy in the room. There's been research that was done in Mannheim, Germany a couple of years ago about sweet smells elicit sweet dreams, foul smells elicit foul dreams. so we can control, to some degree, what we smell in our sleep state. What we taste, make sure that you've got some kind of mouthwash before you go to sleep, that you don't drink fruit juice. So these are all ordinary things that relate to the ordinary world stage of *The Hero's Journey*. And that includes putting your dream journal right by the bed so that ordinary thing is right there. That you can get when you wake up or a recorder. However you record your dreams.

Dr. Dave: Right. And sunk in Campbell's template, the hero is in the ordinary world and then something unusual happens that he characterizes as a call to adventure. So tell us about that.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: So the call to adventure is when we get sleepy. When we fall asleep, we're being called in and we're being lured in to sleep. So every time we get drowsy, we're being called, we're being pulled in. Joseph Campbell makes the distinction between the ordinary world and the special world. When we fall asleep, when we get sleepy, we're being called into the extraordinary world or the special world.

And the stage three is about resistance or refusal to the call and often, let's say in the afternoon, if we start getting drowsy, our knee jerk reaction is to resist sleepiness. Like little kids when it's bedtime they scream, "No, I don't want to go to sleep! Ahhh!"

Dr. Dave: Right. [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: We tend to, most of us in this Western world, we tend to value our awake time and we completely diss, devalue, disown in some ways, what happens when we're asleep. It's almost like it's a zero. It means nothing because the awake part of us doesn't recognize that there's anything special going on. It's more like dead time, might as well be dead during that.

Dr. Dave: Mmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: So there's resistance and a refusal to the call often. Until we're absolutely asleep and we can't fight it anymore. So that's kind of where the resistance-refusal to the call comes in. And, if you look at it from another point of view, when it comes to being called to an interesting or magical adventure, usually we'll get excited about the opportunity to learn, to grow and all of that, but there's some part of us that's like our inner critic or our inner censor that says, "Oh, no, no, no, no. I can't possibly be...I'm not good enough. There's nothing extraordinary happening with me because I'm just an ordinary person." There's an inner fight that we have to even thing that we're a hero on a hero's journey.

Dr. Dave: Or there might be fear. Fear might be an aspect, too. Right?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh, yes. Oh, absolutely. Especially if somebody's been having nightmares, recurring nightmares or, and I kind of go back and forth between the awake version of *The Hero's Journey* and the dream nocturnal version of *The Hero's Journey*. But, yes, there's resistance all over the place.

Dr. Dave: Um hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Because change, the survival aspect of ourselves just wants to keep things status quo whether we like it or not, whether we're fulfilled or not, it doesn't matter. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Keep things the same. Do not rock the boat. So any bit of rocking the boat is met with resistance to some degree. Some of us are more adventurous than others but there tends to be a lot of resistance to change, to growth, and even to sleep and even to paying attention to the realm of dreams. So in *The Hero's Journey*, there's a mentor. You meet a mentor or a guide and this being helps you along your journey. So, in some ways, as it relates to dreams, I often tell people--especially if they're having any kind of recurring nightmares or issues or any kind of fear of their dreams... And usually, for somebody like me who's a dream therapist, most of the people that seek me out are not the ones that are having the happiest dreams in the world. They tend to be the people that are having issues or having dreams that are upsetting to them.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, that makes sense.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yeah. Most of the people that are having flying dreams all the time kind of keeps those to themselves. [laughs]

Dr. Dave: [laughs] Yeah, right. They don't need help.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Eee no. I mean sometimes I'll hear about them but most of the time it's the scary dreams that find me first.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. So does the mentor or the guide that you're talking about? Does this need to be like a figure that appears, that is explicitly saying, "I am here to guide you?" Or does it manifest in subtler ways?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: It's all of the above, all of the above. So sometimes I tell people if they don't automatically...some people have a dream guide that they connect with regularly. I just was interviewing my dear friend Cathy Canadidis that has a recurring dream guide that comes to her in her dreams and he's always wearing...like a Franciscan monk outfit. She was raised Christian though she wasn't raised Catholic and had no association with Franciscan monks. But yet this Franciscan monk appears and every time he appears she knows that something extraordinary is about to happen.

So some people have the gift of having a recurrent character that shows up that they know for

sure is a trusted guide. Not everybody has that but if you don't already have that kind of being, I tell people sometimes to just think about somebody in their waking, with their waking mind in a meditation before going to sleep of somebody they would like to be their guide. It could be Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, their grandmother, their pet. Somebody that gives them a sense of strength and wisdom. And a sense of, "I've got your back." And I have them meditate on that person or on several people. I create like a knight of the round table that has these higher beings that you know when you think of them, you sort of entrain to them and it connects you with that level of seeing and being.

Dr. Dave: Fascinating. These would be your allies.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Those would be your allies. There's a bit of a distinction between the allies and the mentor.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Even though there's a place where they overlap, for sure. The mentor, to me, is clearly somebody that is higher and wiser than you. I think that from the Carl Jung perspective it's all within us. So even if I think of the Dalai Lama, there's that part of me that is connected to him. But in my human, waking, ordinary state, I put him above me.

Dr. Dave: Hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Like way, way, way above me. So I would think of him as a mentor. So that's the way I play with that. But the Dalai Lama could also be an ally as well. But the mentors, I put them in sort of a special category where these are beings that seem to be way, way, way higher than the thoughts that you could possibly conceive of for yourself.

Dr. Dave: I like the way you just said, "That's the way that I play with that," which suggests a kind of playful attitude, kind of a willingness to try things on, to be experimental and to not take it too seriously.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes, exactly. I mean there's a place where I'm sure I get really serious and attached but I try to remember, keep it loose and keep in the flow with it. Because thing, you know, one day something might seem so solid and then two days later it starts to get flimsy and it falls apart and something else takes its place.

Dr. Dave: Um hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: But for now, as much as I wholeheartedly believe this, I'm always open for there being.... I guess I'm an opportunist at heart. I'm always looking for the next best thing that really resonates. And this has resonated for quite a while so whatever does replace this model will have to be phenomenal.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I agree. {laughs} I agree. Let's keep this moving because I know you have an appointment coming up.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes, yes.

Dr. Dave: So now we come to the stage called "crossing the threshold." Tell us about that.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Well, one point of view about crossing the threshold is that there's a threshold guardian and there's always a riddle that you can't cross the threshold into the special world unless you solve the riddle. One point of view is that our dreams are riddles. Our dreams are word play. And I get the chills as I'm saying because I feel like we can talk about a dream, somebody can come to me and say, "I had the strangest dream. What does this mean?"

Oh, actually, my husband shared a dream with me this morning, "I was in a pen with a bull and he pinned me down. And I started singing to him and this goat came over and then it turns out that these two are in love. And it's so weird. What does that mean?" So from the ordinary mind's perspective, it's nonsensical. It's completely ridiculous. I've heard the word ridiculous used so often to describe people's dreams, when they're describing their own dreams.

But when you take the time to break down the symbols and to really get familiar with what it means to you and you have that "Aha!" you cross the threshold. You have been permitted into the special world where you're out of the ordinary, linear, mundane experience of life and you're all of a sudden catapulted into a realm where everything becomes magical. Where everything takes on a sparkle to it. Where all of a sudden things that seem difficult, or hard, or out of reach, all of a sudden magically feel like you're connected to it all. So crossing the threshold is to me, the dream itself is that riddle that gives you access into the special world of what we're capable of being.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Wonderful.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Then we've got the belly of the whale. And in the belly of the whale, I look at those... I look at dreams that are belly of the whalesque as dark night of the soul dreams.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And that can mean... And also, any dreams that relate to water. Water is such a big symbol. So many people have dreams that take place somewhere in water or there's something happening with water--whether it be a positive, like an enjoyable dream or a dream that's a nightmare overwhelming them. So I put water dreams in the belly of the whale category, as well as dreams that represent...in some ways, even though we get to the ordeal stage later, in some ways the belly of the whale is everything that we're most afraid of. We're either afraid of being cast out and being all alone, or we're afraid, on the other side of the scale, of being overwhelmed and taken over by something. The belly of the whale, to me, represents both of those extreme fears that we humans have and those two fears manifest in our dreams as either being chased by something or cornered by something or enveloped by something. Or being completely disowned, having people turn their backs on you and not talk to you or cut you off.

Dr. Dave: Wow. Yeah. That makes a lot of sense to me.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yeah. And so embracing those dreams and holding those really scary dreams in that's the belly of the whale stage then, to me, it gives it a nobler context. It's like, oh, it's part of the journey. It's important to come to terms with both of those extremes.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: So we get spit out of the belly of the whale and then we're connecting with the test allies and enemies, which you expressed a moment before. And in this stage, this is kind of the typical dreams, the average, ordinary dream tends to be about test allies and enemies. We're either... mostly our dreams in some way, shape or form are testing us. We're having to scale a wall, we're having to figure out how to get past something or often our--I wouldn't call them nightmares per se, but even just the annoying low-level difficult dreams would be put into the test and enemy category. I like to say that the enemies are the allies in disguise, whether in our waking life or in our dreams, our nighttime dreams. Because they're always prompting us, they're always testing our mettle, they're always making us have to reveal a resource that we

didn't know we had.

Dr. Dave: I love that, the enemies are our allies in disguise. That's great.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: It's helpful. [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: I have to remind myself of that sometimes when I'm going through a difficult stage in my life...

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: ...like, okay, these people are allies in disguise. They're helping me learn a new resource that I have but I don't know I have.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Some new part of myself is going to be revealed because of this person and the way they're testing me. So often this stage, one really strong recurring dream theme that I hear so often are dreams about being in school.

Dr. Dave: Oh, yes. [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs]

Dr. Dave: I've had plenty of those.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yeah, so those dreams show up in this category, where you're literally being tested. You're having to take an exam, you're being examined. You're having to look at these points of view that you've developed that came from your school-aged days. Perhaps the first time you were ever tested or the first time you ever fell in love. The first cut is the deepest. And often the first cut for most of us, some of us it came from our mom or our dads, but a lot of the typical cuts that we deal with came from school days, either elementary or junior high or high school When we were finding our sense of self and being cut and tested, tested, tested.

Dr. Dave: That's an interesting point. I've not heard that point articulated that way before and it brings to mind all the attention right now on bullying....

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: Which so many of us experienced at some point.

Kelly. Oooh. Oh my god. Yeah. I was the victim of unbelievable bullying. My life was threatened on almost a regular basis. And this was before text messaging. [laughs] Way before.

Dr. Dave: [laughs] Yeah.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: I'm grateful I grew up when I did. I can't imagine that coming into my cell phone on a regular basis. I would have notes in a locker from girls saying, "We're going to kill you. We're going to beat you up."

Dr. Dave: Oh, my goodness.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yeah, so I know I've had more than my share of school dreams. [laughs] that relate to...

Dr. Dave: I'll bet.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yeah. And many of us do. It's one of the more common dreams that I hear about.

Dr. Dave: Now, the next step you've called Ordeal. And how does that differ from tests, allies and enemies. That all sounds kind of like an ordeal.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes, as well as the belly of the whale. So there's overlap in places.

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: But I distinguish the ordeal as--I like to think of the movie *Star Wars* where Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker are having their big showdown and Luke Skywalker realizes that his big enemy is his father. I wouldn't say it's the most common theme but it's often

enough that I'll have share with me their most gruesome--and this, I just put on the scale of the hierarchy of gruesome dreams--these are the most gruesome dreams. These are nightmares. These are dreams that truly traumatize people if they're left untended to. And I had one recently myself, actually and it related to my father, actually. So I'll just reveal a little piece of myself here.

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: I have a great relationship in real life with my father. I love him. My dad was a police chief. Really strong, alpha male type, who was very dominating and I was scared of him growing up but I've since just grown to absolutely love him. But in my dream not that long ago. I was trying to kill him in a thousand different ways as he was trying to kill me. And in my dream I finally ripped up the carpet, dug a hole, had him walk in. I tricked him and made him fall in the hole. Fastened the carpet, put furniture on top of it. He was buried and I knew I had overcome him.

Dr. Dave: Boy, you're really creative in your dreams. [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs] You gotta do what you gotta do. [laughs] So I was traumatized by this dream and then I realized, "Wait a second. This is an ordeal dream." And I had just had a client a couple weeks before who dreamt that she ate her father. [laughs] And if that happened in real life, obviously she'd be arrested and put into a cell next to Hannibal Lector. But in the dream, it's actually such an amazing thing to dream that you're overcoming your father. You're overcoming the patriarchy. You're overcoming the glass ceiling that's been put over. And we all have some form of a glass ceiling. We're busting out of these belief systems that have kept us locked in and something is breaking through. And it tends to be gory; it tends to be dramatic with a capital "D." But it doesn't have to be literally a dream that relates to your father but it can be dealing with...

Here's another one, where somebody was dreaming about King Kong. It was a man that I know, a TV producer who's so strong. Powerful. And he has this recurring dream that King Kong is coming to stomp on him.

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And I had him really connect with the dream, had him eventually find

that King Kong was an aspect of himself and his own ally. And King Kong put him on his shoulder and he got to ride on King Kong's shoulder and have a view of the world that was so much higher than he had. And he got to feel more powerful in the places where he had been feeling weak.

So when you work with these ordeal dreams, these are perfect for dream theater or dream alchemy.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: That's when the most beautiful transformation, life changing transformation can really, really happen.

Dr. Dave: Okay, well, we need to keep moving right along. And so, now we come to the Reward.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes. So the Reward is kind of what I was just saying, it really comes from having dealt with it. If you, like many other people say, I believe that a nightmare is an unfinished dream. When you've finished the dream, whether in your nocturnal dreaming state or when you wake up and do a meditation that puts you back in the dream and has you redirect it as a lucid dreamer in your dream, even though you're slightly awake, you bring the dream to a place of fulfillment. Like the guy did with his King Kong dream.

Dr. Dave: Oh, yeah. That's a perfect illustration of it. It had to feel so rewarding to experience himself on King Kong's shoulder.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Unbelievable. He had been having this dream since he was a kid and he was in his late forties, probably early fifties. So that's a long time to be tortured by a dream like that.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And it was done, once and for all. So he was not only able to stop having the fear of having this recurring dream or even having the recurring dream but he was able to get this infusion of power that nothing in his waking world could have ever given him, no amount of money, no reassurance from his wife. Nothing was able to give him what his dream was able to give him once he worked with it. So that's the gift. That's really the gift. It's an internal gift that

eventually yields to--it can't help but yield to--external evidence that what happens within us has to affect our outer world. And vice versa. So there's always something really, really, for all this work that a person's done, there's something sweet on the other side of it.

And I believe in this. I was telling someone, a couple of days ago, who had a dream of this dream lover that gave her the most delicious kisses. Nobody in real life has ever kissed her this way. And I told her, "Do not leave that dream on the pillow." That is a dream you should carry with you everywhere you go. Do not waste your time being disappointed that it was quote-unquote "only a dream." This is the kind of dream that you want to integrate and infuse into your body, into your body of affairs, carry it with you like a meditation.

I'll tell you one thing, really quick, because it ties into the next stage. There was...are you okay with me just rambling here?

Dr. Dave: No, no, you're not rambling. This is all very relevant.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Great.

Dr. Dave: And the instruction for her to carry it with her sounds like it does tie into the next stage of the journey back.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Yes, yes, exactly. So you're integrating it into your real life. You're not leaving the dream in the dream world. It really must become a part of our waking world.

So here's an even better example than that. A woman named Diane, who sent me a random dream question about a year ago. And she said that--really she didn't tell me anything about herself, she just told me about this very pleasurable dream where she was floating in billowing clouds of...it felt like fabric, and it felt like she was receiving the most amazing hug from the Universe. And while she was floating in this energy, she heard the words, "Smile. Smile big. Smile as big as you can."

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: So she woke up from that dream with the biggest smile on her face that she wasn't able to take off all day.

Dr. Dave: Wonderful.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And she felt so good. And she sent me the dream. And really my response was, "This dream requires no...We don't have to decipher this dream and interpret it. Really this is a dream for meditation. This is a dream to carry with you into your waking life. " So here's your prescription, as if it was medicine: focus on this dream and the way that it made you feel for five minutes a day. And see what opens up for you. And see what that brings about.

Literally six months later, I get a message from her, an email, saying, "This is Diane. I don't know if you remember me. I'm the 'Smile Big' lady who sent you that..."

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: How could I forget? I've never heard a dream like that before. "What I didn't tell you was that, at the time that I had this dream, I had nothing to smile about in my life. I had just been diagnosed with brain cancer, terminal brain cancer."

Dr. Dave: Oh my goodness.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: "My life was absolutely in shambles. The relationship I was in had just disintegrated. Everything was wrong and I did nothing different. But I did what you said." She said, "Really, my life for the next six months was the way it had been. But I focused on that feeling tone for five minutes a day." And she said, "I am happy to tell you that I just got a clean bill of health from my doctor. They don't know how, they don't know what but the cancer is gone."

Dr. Dave: Wow. Does that tie in to the next stage? We've got two stages: Resurrection and Return with Elixir. And that sounds like maybe it's got all of that in there.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: So, exactly. So the Resurrection is actually where you're on the road back and you start coming back into the waking world. And this is where the caterpillar becomes the butterfly. This is exactly...and I'm covered in chills, once again, talking to you...

Dr. Dave: [laughs]

Kelly Sullivan Walden: ...David. But this woman, Diane, actually did that. She took the dream

that was, let's call it a caterpillar, it connected her with her in a special way. But she activated it. She brought it into her waking life by meditating on it everyday for just a few minutes. And it changed her. She became a different person. She became a different version of herself. Or we could say she became, she was able to drop all the stuff that wasn't her and she became the true being that she was underneath it all, all along. So that's what happens in the Resurrection. We wake up. And there's an altering of perception of who we are.

Dr. Dave: And the Return with Elixir, does that involve somehow sharing that gift with others?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: You're so intuitive, David! Yes, exactly! This is, this is...many, many dream tribes believe that a dream isn't just the property of the dreamer, that the dream comes for the benefit of the dreamer but that it's for the benefit and upliftment and edification and enlightenment of the tribe. So, especially these kinds of dreams, they must be shared. They come with a great responsibility that, sure, you can keep it to yourself if you want but they're medicinal. Everybody I know that's heard that "Diane dream," they take a deep breath and there's something that transmits beyond just Diane. I mean, I feel it, I think about it on a regular basis.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmm.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And there's other dreams that were not my dreams, but somebody else's dream that they shared with me--even my husband sharing with me about the bull singing a song to this lamb--it's like there's something that touches my soul about that.

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And it benefits me. And it benefits...everyone who has the ears to hear the dream is uplifted. And the goal...the idea as one is lifted, all our lifted. But it helps if you share it, if you share that elixir, that medicinal story, that alchemical experience so that we can exponentially grow from glory to greater glory.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Well, Kelly, you've been so generous in sharing this all with us. Do I understand that you're working on a book about this very thing?

Kelly Sullivan Walden: I have a curriculum, a home study course that is just now, it's on my website. So that's...I wouldn't call it a book....

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: ...so much as a curriculum. That's what I'm basing the dream workshops that I'm teaching now on. And this home study course.

Dr. Dave: Oh, that's...

Kelly Sullivan Walden: And the new book that I'm writing incorporates some of this philosophy but it's called--and I just got a book deal, actually, with Redwheel/Weiser--so it'll be coming out this time next year, called *It's All in Your Dreams: Five Portals to an Awakened Life*. And maybe that's something we can talk about on another show. [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well, that sounds great. And I will put a link to your website in our show notes. And I know that you do have to run along. So Kelly Sullivan Walden, thanks so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: David Van Nuys, you are amazing. I really appreciate your space, you listening. And I feel like you and I just went around the medicine wheel together. We went around *The Hero's Journey* together. Your listening just helps to make it, this process, that more magical. I love what you're doing. And I love...I've listened to several of the podcasts and they're all so, so juicy. I hope I get to meet you at the dream conference, the IASD Conference this June. Will you be there?

Dr. Dave: Likewise and we will meet. And I imagine I'll be in your workshop so...

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Oh! That would be great! That would be great!

Dr. Dave: ...we'll have a chance to meet there.

Kelly Sullivan Walden: Fantastic. Well, thank you so much for having me on your show. This has been an absolute pleasure.

Dr. Dave: Well, thank you.

[end of interview]