

Shrink Rap Radio #381
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“Dreams as Guide to the Soul”

Dr. David Van Nuys Ph.D., aka ‘Dr. Dave’ interviews Steven G. Fox PhD
(Transcribed from <http://www.shrinkrapradio.com> by Gloria Oelman)

Introduction:

On Today’s show I’ll be speaking with Dr. Steven Fox about his use of dreams in his private psychotherapy practice. Dr. Steven Fox is a private-practice licensed psychologist with over 25 years experience. He recently authored the book *Dreams: Guide to the Soul*. This book formulates forty rules to describe a method of dream interpretation he acquired from Jungian analysts and his own clinical practice as a dream interpretation therapist. He says ‘having this book at the beginning of my practice would have reduced the amount of time it took me to get to where I am now as a dream interpretation therapist by at least ten years.’ It was his intention to develop a system of dream interpretation that was teachable and relied on Jungian concepts.

It was while recovering from complications from an experimental treatment for multiple sclerosis (MS), which was ultimately successful, that Fox had a recurring dream that facilitated his recovery and led to his fascination with dreams and their meanings. Dr. Fox and his wife Deborah Brogan, a board certified psychiatrist, currently share a private practice office in Mesa, Arizona and his blog can be found at <http://drfoxblog.com>

Now here’s the interview.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Steven Fox, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Steven Fox: Hi Dr. Dave I’m honored to be here.

Dr. Dave: Well, Steven, I’m so glad to have you on the show both because I’m interested in the topic of dreaming as you know and because you’ve been a long time listener to Shrink Rap Radio and also a financial supporter. So I thank you for that.

Steven Fox: Oh, I’m happy to do it. I think you provide such a valuable service.

Dr. Dave: Well, just out of curiosity do you recall how you first discovered Shrink Rap Radio?

Steven Fox: I think I was taking Continuing Education (CE Units) through the Zur Institute that come through you also.

Dr. Dave: Oh, okay.

Steven Fox: And I find those just immensely helpful. They’re interesting and they’re not boring and you listen to them and you can do things you know.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well that's great. Now I discovered that you and I have something in common that I wasn't aware of and I wonder if you were. Which is, you did your doctoral work in clinical psychology at the University of Montana in Missoula and that's where I got my Master's degree. At the time they didn't have a doctoral program in clinical psychology since I was there maybe ten years before you were. I was there from 1962 to 1964. Did you know we had that in common?

Steven Fox: I had seen in your background that the University of Montana was in your background but I didn't know you went to school there. I thought maybe you taught there.

Dr. Dave: Ah, yeah, so I don't even know if any of the same faculty were still around. Well some time after you graduated from Montana State University and became licensed and were actually in private practice, you were diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. How did that diagnosis come about and what was the impact on you psychologically and professionally?

Steven Fox: First word is 'devastating.' The second word is talking about the symptoms... this was January of 1991, I started dropping things, I'd be holding drinks and they'd drop spontaneously from my hands. I started having numbness but the most distressing symptom, especially as a therapist, was my voice was slurred. My voice has never been great but it was intelligible, my balance was poor, that was during the attack. The attack... they treated it and it is relapsing and remitting and so it went away and I've never really had a great attack like that since probably because the medications I was taking which prevent attacks.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well that's wonderful. Well one of the things that made me want to interview you is that you've said that your dreams played an important role in your remission from multiple sclerosis. Do I have that right?

Steven Fox: Yeah and basically MS is how I came to Jungian therapy. I'd always been interested in dreams and did a type of interpretation but following the Jungian analysis has been of course a great enriching experience. What I found in personal therapy with the Jungian analyst is that frequently dreams would give opinions about medications or exercises or alternative means.

Dr. Dave: Oh, yeah, that's great. Are there any specific dreams that you recall as helping you recover from multiple sclerosis that you could share with us here?

Steven Fox: Oh, for sure. I think this one is described in the book. This is probably the most dramatic one.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Steven Fox: I was in karate and I'd been in karate several years and I was a red belt and I was getting ready to test for the brown belt and I was in the studio and I was losing my balance and they said there's something wrong. This was before the attack, so basically it started out with physical symptoms and of course those were very bothersome, particularly when you're to the point where you really can't walk

decently. And I used to be a long distance runner.

Dr. Dave: Oh, wow.

Steven Fox: I asked my dreams... I was getting a little bit better and I thought maybe I could chance running but I was afraid to do it because I was going to go crashing in the gravel and I didn't particularly want to do that.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Steven Fox: So I asked my dreams, I said 'when I am ready to run, I want a physical indication that this is so.' And I had a dream that I did a flying roundhouse kick, which is probably the hardest kick to do in karate and I went out and ran and it went well.

Dr. Dave: Wow! That's great. I actually have a story of my own that's very similar to that that I think I related in some past episode and in mine – and it wasn't due to dream incubation – but I'd wanted to ride a century on my bike, a hundred miles but I had kind of chronic aches and pains in my neck... and I hope I'm remembering this correctly, I could be confounding things here but I know that at some point I had a, what I would consider a really big dream, in which I had a bowl in my hand and there was a kind of rainbow thing going up into the sky and I could rotate it around and it was very magical.

Steven Fox: Yeah, dreams are just amazing. I mean, they will signal when you're healing too. I was in the hospital with an infection. Part of my cure was they turned my immune system off essentially since multiple sclerosis is an autoimmune disease but I got an infection because they turned it off too much. And I was in pretty bad shape and I had a dream one night that native American medicine men were dancing around my bed and I could hear the rattles shaking and when I woke up in the morning I felt better and I was discharged fairly shortly after that.

Dr. Dave: Oh, that's wonderful, that's wonderful. And by the way the coda to my dream was that there was this female figure, kind of a chiropractor and I heard a voice saying something like 'accept your healing.' So it was shortly after that I decided 'okay I'm going to go on this hundred mile bike ride.'

Steven Fox: Yeah, you know when you hear a voice in a dream like that your subconscious is more or less saying 'you know what, I'm going to give you the message direct.'

Dr. Dave: Yeah. It's powerful when that happens. Now your book is quite different from other books written by psychologists on dreams I think, inasmuch as you seem to say you can go directly to the heart of understanding the dream without it requiring a lot of time or associations from your client. For example you say you can often work four to six dreams within a single therapy session. Do I have that right?

Steven Fox: That's correct. I think my professors would die to hear me say that. We used to spend an hour or two on one dream. In private practice people want to use time efficiently of course. I actually have people who bring lists. They collect

dreams for a period of time and they bring lists to me and I interpret. Now I'm not getting all the fine detail of the dream but my contention is that if you give a person the gender and the age of the dreamer, there's some basic things from Jungian psychology that you should be able to say.

Dr. Dave: Well, I agree with you about that and I don't know quite how to say this... it's sort of the popular cant in the therapeutic world that you must have the person's associations but like you, I've been listening to dreams for a long time and there's somewhere I at least can get into the general ballpark, I would say very quickly, just based on hearing the dream.

Steven Fox: Exactly. You want to get the associations of course but sometimes there's a symbol that's so strikingly common to the culture that you're going to come fairly close to the meaning I think.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and also I realized as I went further in your book that most of these were people that you were seeing in therapy and as a result perhaps you had a lot of background already in terms of knowing their history and the issues that they were working.

Steven Fox: For sure and that helps a lot. In graduate school the way they taught us dream interpretation was, they had us in a classroom with a professor who was good at dream interpretation and I don't think a method was really taught to us, there was a method of sorts and I think Jungian analysts have a method but it is very complicated and it takes ten years to learn it and basically I don't think a method was ever taught. I'm not trying to list each symbol and say this means this, this means that, for the most part. I'm trying to list the forty principles I would say about how to approach a dream.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and boy you were lucky to have a class like that in graduate school. I certainly didn't have that. I don't know how many programs actually offer that sort of thing so I think you were lucky in that respect and that it set you off on this journey. Now one of the subtitles on the cover of your book is *Forty Ancient Secret Keys to Healing, Renewal and Power* and I don't know that we'll make it through all forty keys in this interview. Besides we don't want to give listeners an excuse not to buy the book but do I understand you to say that if a person has really understood these keys they'll be able to understand their own dreams and those of others.

Steven Fox: I think so. I've had people who've read the book, who're meeting me for the first time and they've read my book and they tell me a dream and they say 'this is my dream' and this is what you're going to say (both laugh) and what they say is pretty close to what I would say and I'm so pleased with that.

Dr. Dave: Yeah I can imagine that would be very gratifying. Well, before we get into some of the keys, why is it you call them ancient and why secret?

Steven Fox: They're secret in the sense of just being unknown.

Dr. Dave: You mean not widely known?

Steven Fox: Not widely known. It's known by the Jungian analysts. I think I'm saying ancient in the sense that these aren't things that aren't known, people do acquire this knowledge, it just takes a long time to do it. My hope with the book is that I can cut five years off the process of learning this.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, you say that it took you ten years or more to really develop any confidence.

Steven Fox: I thought I was okay, I've always thought I was okay but I didn't feel really good about dreams until I'd been doing it for ten years and I didn't really feel that I was delivering more than commonsense until I'd been doing it for twenty, you know.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, wow!

Steven Fox: I think to cut five years off that, you know... like I say we had a class but the problem was it was too much of a fishing expedition and that's really what a lot of the books are right now, is they give you a method to help the client interpret the dream and you take the client as the authority and the sole authority often and basically you throw out an intuitive hypothesis and you judge as to whether you hit the mark as to how the client reacts. Now you can interpret dreams that way of course but it takes a long time.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. One of the things I like about your book is that it is so richly illustrated with the dreams of others and your own, so please feel free to throw in any dreams or stories that seem relevant here as we move along. Now the first key you mention is what Freud referred to as day residue and it's so easy to just stop there with the recognition that 'oh, yes I see how this relates to something that happened yesterday' but what's your advice for getting beyond the obvious and going deeper with the day residue?

Steven Fox: You know basically during the day there's a million things you could think about, okay? Dreams are always current simply because they do use the day residue. There's something that happened recently that reminded you of an earlier time and the important thing is finding the thread that connects those two events. There is a thread and it's finding that thread.

Dr. Dave: Yeah because in looking at my own dream life and working with students in teaching a dreams class, I've never failed to find that there was something in the previous day that's in that dream but it's usually something rather small and that would seem to be off the main message of the dream and that's why I think it's kind of easy to just ignore that thread and not search for it.

Steven Fox: Well one of the forty keys is everything means something. If I make a mistake it's because I've under interpreted a dream. Any given symbol can mean at least three or four different things. I tell people I really don't have to be that good in some ways because I only have to hit one of them and if I miss it and if I'm doing this with a client that I'm seeing on an ongoing basis your subconscious will return to it and will give it to us again, usually in a different form until we do get it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah that's a good point. I really believe that's the case. Now one of your keys has to do with paying attention to the gender of the figures that appear in our dreams and you write that for both males and females, dreams use men as a code to represent an action part of a dreamer's psyche, while women usually represent an emotional portion of the dreamer's mind. I must say I've never thought about it in quite that way though it certainly seems plausible to me. May I ask where you got that idea?

Steven Fox: I think... I figured those differ from the classic Jungians that um... I basically am taking a more equal opportunity approach if you will simply because I find that dreams use men and women as code, okay and what we call masculinity and femininity is related to biology of course in many ways but in some ways it's not. For instance we all know what people mean when they say there's an effeminate man or a masculine woman, okay. These are qualities, okay, so within any dreamer there's different mixtures of femininity and masculinity and the dream is using masculine and feminine... I mean we could call it yin and yang but masculine and feminine is simply what's before your subconscious, that's easy to use.

Dr. Dave: Yeah as I read through many of the dreams that you gave from your therapeutic experience and you would put this principle into action because it wasn't clear to me, okay, well, just how would I work if the male is the action part of the dreamer and the female is the emotional portion, how would that work but you illustrated that amply in the dreams that you worked with.

Steven Fox: I want to say, that I call this the first level of dream interpretation where each part is a different part of the person's psyche and that is easily the most difficult part, to think of each character as being an action, or primarily an emotion and this is intra-psyche within the person. It's not common sense and you come up with things and frequently I will come up with a question based on what's occurring in that way, simply because you answer an endless hall of mirrors in some ways. And no matter how long I've done this, there is such a temptation to jump to the interpersonal and I can sometimes do that when I've known a client a long time but it's usually a mistake to do it without at least considering the first one.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I agree with you and I found that people who haven't been trained in dream work or have no experience with it, they always go to the interpersonal, you know – 'I had this dream about my cousin and why did I dream that I was angry at my cousin, I feel like we have a good relationship. So instead of looking at it as two parts of their inner world they really go straight to 'it's about me and my cousin.'

Steven Fox: What it would amount to in that case is she's angry with the part of herself that is like her cousin, probably.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, now beyond gender, I found your ideas about the sex act itself, in dreams, very interesting. I'm thinking of the dream that you relate in chapter one which concludes with a massive orgy. Do you remember what you made of that? Can you share that with us?

Steven Fox: Yes, well, again it's related to the masculine and feminine principle and it's related to going to the first level and considering each character a part of a

person's psyche, if men are your actions and women are your emotions and there's a massive orgy taking place and sex is a symbol of integration, what it means is your emotions and actions are happily integrating.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Yesh I thought that was a very interesting take on that, a very interesting take. Now you also emphasize the importance of recognizing parental introjects, that is the parts of our parents that we almost swallow whole in terms of their behaviors and attitudes, so you emphasize the importance of recognizing those parental introjects in the dream. Maybe you could tell us a bit more about that and how can one know when that's the key thing that's going on.

Steven Fox: It's primarily Freudian but if you look at any theory in mental health eventually it gets back to parents. We say the child interjects images of the father and mother into the subconscious. I think that becomes a starting point or a basis for actions or emotions and I want to say, of course it doesn't always have to be the biological parents, whoever cared for you in that way. If you didn't have an appropriate parent the person can even create their introject and they will create their introject. They will have models of action in their world and they will construct an action introject from that. They will have emotionally supportive relatives or friends and they will make that their emotional introject and I think this is a process that continues throughout life. It's Freudian in the sense that probably the basis of it is early influences but I believe it can change over time too.

Dr. Dave: Okay. You know I find a lot of what you bring to this work in your book is very creative and kind of unique. You have your own unique spin on ideas that I thought I was familiar with but you bring something unique to it. For example I've always associated large bodies of water in dreams with the unconscious but you make some finer distinctions saying the ocean typically is the unconscious, the land is conscious events and the beach is the semi conscious or where the unconscious meets the conscious. You go on to say that a person strolling along an ocean beach in the dream is typically trying to sort out his or her conscious and unconscious issues. So I love that differentiation and specificity of your ideas. How is it that you arrive at these? You probably don't know (laughs).

Steven Fox: Listening to your podcast! (both laugh)

Dr. Dave: Thank you.

Steven Fox: But you think about, I mean, when you're walking along the beach, isn't that the kind of perfect time to put things together too?

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Steven Fox: I think it's symbolic and I think it's practical too and that's a condensation of both those things and you run into that with dreams and that's why I love dreams.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, it certainly makes metaphorical sense but as I say you kind of bring of specificity to it that I think is kind of unique in your presentation and gives this book a unique status I think.

Steven Fox: Well, thank you.

Dr. Dave: Now paying attention to animals in your dreams is another key to understanding the dreams. What's your understanding of the significance of animals? And maybe in that connection too, I'm going to ask you to read dream 4B and your interpretation of it.

Steven Fox: Okay. This goes back to the basic Freudian idea that animals are usually your basic instincts. I go on at some length about how the different animals tend to represent different kinds of instinct. The dream you mention, I call it *Taking the Venom out of Emotion*.

A forty six year old man dreamt he was in his backyard. He netted a fish like poisonous creature from the swimming pool. The creature was half fish and half snake. He eventually herded the creature out of his backyard and into an alley.

And the interpretation starts out with recognizing that water is almost always emotion, with a swimming pool indicating that the emotion is in response to other people, that it is man made and that it is close to home. Aquatic creatures such as fish represent subconscious energy and resources. The snake in this dream was poisonous. Snakes often represent change and transformation because snakes are one of the few animals that completely shed their skin. The dream indicated that he was using his emotional energy to change by directing his venom, his poisonous emotions and anger, away from home, where it would not hurt anyone.

You know, the swimming pool, I mean that's another example, you want to think about how the water is being handled.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, so it's not the ocean but it's a body of water that's attached to the home.

Steven Fox: Yeah. You know I present at a community college here locally every so often and I like to start out with the simplest dream I can think of and the dream is:

A man's in a bar and he drinks a very satisfying glass of water and he's just so pleased with drinking that glass of water.

And then I ask the students what do you think that could mean if water is emotions? And they look at me (laughs) and then I say, 'well the setting often tells you what the dream is going to be talking about. It occurred in a bar, what do you make of that?' And then they get it and they say, the issue is alcoholism probably, or drinking too much, water is emotion, drinking it out of a container is contained emotion that you're controlling that you're taking in at an appropriate rate and your very satisfied with it. It turned out the person had just complete forty five days of being sober.

Dr. Dave: Hm, hmm. Yeah, it certainly helps to know what's going on in the person's life because I guess my main take on dreams is that they are definitely are a metaphorical way of commenting on what is going on in a person's life. Now speaking of snakes and animals, you go on to make some specific distinctions about

the significance of pets in our dreams. What can you tell us about that?

Steven Fox: Ah, pets, they are, of course nowadays, like members of the family. What I like to say – cats and dogs, are the most common – and cats and dogs usually represent affection, okay? It's not great love but it's affection. Pets, they listen well, they don't talk back and their furry besides, what more do you want, okay? Cats tend to go more with women, being feline, dogs tend to go more with men. Cats are independent, they're sensuous. The dogs are loyal, they can be protectors, they're frequently guardians, that kind of thing. They're complicated animals but when you hear a story about a pet, there's something about the affections, probably at home, that are being affected.

Dr. Dave: Okay, that's a really interesting key, as you say. Now I was shocked, surprised and pleased to come across a reference on page thirty seven of your book to my interview with Tom Elsner on *Fairy Tales and Dreams* so thank you very much for that attribution to Shrink Rap Radio and me and providing the URL for the show.

Steven Fox: Yeah, I loved that podcast.

Dr. Dave: Me too.

Steven Fox: It was a very complex fairy tale and I wanted the opportunity and as he well showed and you well showed how a dream could be looked at from a Jungian perspective and be taken apart and really be beneficial to people.

Dr. Dave: Yeah I think I really need to have him on again. So many great ideas for interviews and interviewees and so little time (laughs). Now there are certain dream motifs that are regarded as universal and very common and one of those is the flying dream. How do you approach flying dreams?

Steven Fox: Flying dreams are always significant and again the types of flight makes such a difference. There's everything from jumping high to flying like Superman which is sort of like the ultimate and I had noticed fairly early on simply because flying dreams are so dramatic, that often I would have a client who, if they suddenly had a dream like they were Superman, usually their life is going to change significantly within a year and a half, that it was a sign that they were feeling personally powerful. Now the only caveat that I would add to that is the exception would be if somebody's bipolar and they're having a manic episode, they're overestimating their power.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, good point.

Steven Fox: But I listen to lots of different things of course to get different ideas and I was listening to this person and they were describing out of body experiences and I've never had an out of body experience, I mainly focus on trying to have in body experiences.

Dr. Dave: Right (laughs).

Steven Fox: Someone asked him after he'd presented 'what's the most similar thing

in a dream that you can experience that's similar to an out of body experience?' He said, 'oh, that's easy – flying.' And his contention was, these experiences do have an effect on the outside world and I just thought it was interesting that there was a convergence that I wasn't imagining but that was taking place, it didn't surprise me.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Let's hear you read another dream how about 6C and its interpretation for us. And it's so nice that you have labeled all of these.

Steven Fox: This one's kind of humorous, it's called *Shock the Monkey*. I think there was a song called that, wasn't there?

Dr. Dave: I don't know.

Steven Fox: (reads dream)

A forty three year old man dreamt that he was trying to soar with a hang glider that allowed him to literally take flight by hanging on to a steel bare while the kite-like apparatus propelled him through the air. He dreamt that there were numerous monkeys having sex all around him, interfering with the flight. A huge sexual orgy of monkeys surrounded his attempts to fly.

Makes it difficult to fly doesn't it? The interpretation – animals in dreams, of course, always represent basic instincts. Monkeys are the animal that most closely resemble human beings. The dream was saying, in very graphic terms, and dreams will say things to shock us, to get our attention, that his sexual impulses were interfering with his making progress and 'soaring' in life. This man was promiscuous without involving his emotions, which was harmful to the relationships and to his own psyche. In no uncertain terms, the dream was telling him to 'quit monkeying around.' I almost feel guilty about the pun there.

Dr. Dave: That's great. Now lucid dreams often involve flying and it's sometimes the first thing a person wants to do when they realize that they have become lucid in a dream. I was interested to read that you're not a fan of lucid dreaming.

Steven Fox: Well, I should probably qualify that a little bit. I mean it is the fad, not the fad but... of course people are interested when you have the effect of you suddenly realize in your dream that your dreaming and you can do things. I think unfortunately too much of the time and too much of the motivation for doing that frequently is to use the subconscious as a playground and it can be an invasion of the subconscious by the conscious and typically the two things people want to do is either fly or have...

Dr. Dave: Yeah, right. Just like in real life (laughs).

Steven Fox: I was interested to learn that Buddhist monks, they very much want to have lucid dreams but their goal is very different. They are actually trying to talk to the archetypes. It's very serious. There's dreams that I call vision dreams and I think those come closest to what I would call serious lucid dreams. It feels like the person is actually there talking to you. I feel like I'm actually there talking to them and this often occurs after someone dies, where you actually feel that the person is there and

you can deal with this. The Buddhists would talk to archetypal figures, usually sacred figures about the meaning of life and so forth and it's a much different thing than 'gee I think I'll see if I can fly.'

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. Now your book is full of examples that come from your patients in therapy, what do you see as the role and value of dream work in therapy? I think some therapists look on it as a waste of time, or they don't trust themselves, feeling that their education hasn't prepared them for this type of work. What's the value, why should therapists maybe reconsider?

Steven Fox: I use it all the time. I have people come to me, you meet them for one session, they're in crisis. They don't know what to, they want you to give an opinion, which you could do I guess but you really don't know enough most of the time to be able to do that. What I like to do is to get the person into dreaming, talk about the dream incubation process, have them ask their subconscious a question and let's see what kind of answer we get. And you know if you do that incubation procedure and you do that night after night for a week, we're going to get some kind of answer. I've ever not gotten an answer.

Dr. Dave: Well dream incubation is a topic that you take up toward the end of the book and again you've got kind of your own specific approach to it. Tell us what are the instructions that you give to your clients.

Steven Fox: Yes, basically just before you go to sleep, within a half hour of going to sleep, I want you to formulate the question in your mind and I might suggest what the question would be but I want them to put it in their own words. I more or less suggest the area they might want to question and they have to formulate their own question and then I want them to write the question down, three times and the purpose for that is not to keep a record of it, the purpose of that is to register it in their subconscious but the most important thing and I emphasize this, is that in the morning when you wake up and I don't care if you dreamt about Daffy Duck, I want to hear it. Because if your subconscious did a really good job it's not recognizable what it's talking about usually.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, now you shared with us one instance of dream incubation in your own life when you wanted to go on a run and you were looking for a sign that it would be okay. Is there another instance that you can recall where dream incubation worked in your own personal life?

Steven Fox: With my MS again, there was a controversial medication. I was getting quite bad, quite serious with the symptoms and basically they wanted to try a medication called Naltrexone and there were a lot of red flags on it. It was thought that it would be helpful for serious cases but it could affect your heart. Now I used to be a long distance runner and tell me anything but that you're going to affect my heart and I could accept that if the effect were temporary but this affect on your heart could be permanent. But things were getting serious enough and they thought it might be helpful so I did try to incubate a dream and I got a dream of taking cough medicine and throwing up. There's not much interpretation needed for that dream.

Dr. Dave: Right (both laugh). Perhaps you can read another dream for us, 34A,

which you have titled *Save the Kitty* and also share the interpretation if you will.

Steven Fox: Okay. *Save the Kitty*:

A forty three year old woman dreamt she went into a public ethnic market place that was empty. She could hear the squealing cries of a mother cat for her kittens. She somehow found a bowl, which she filled with milk. She never saw the mother cat. After she scrubbed the bowl, a beautiful kitten emerged from the liquid milk. As she reached to remove the kitten from the milk, a green serpent, with a snake face like hers, ominously crouched in the milk, getting ready to strike.

Dr. Dave: Wow, that's very dramatic. What was the interpretation?

Steven Fox: Well her situation was that she had to pass a test in order to leave her current job for a more financially rewarding employment. She inexplicably had failed the test twice although she knew the material very well. This dream was the result of her incubating a dream by writing the question 'Why am I having trouble passing this test?' three times before going to sleep. Again there's something very subconscious about writing, we do it quickly and we do it without forethought. The purpose of writing it down again is to ingrain it in the subconscious and it makes it more likely the dreamer would have a dream that addresses the issue. In the dream the commercial public market place indicated that the dream was about her work life. That's in reference to it occurring in a market place. The mother cat, that she never saw, represented her thought that she should give birth to a new aspect of her instincts. Kittens frequently represent affectionate feelings and frequently refer to female affections, again not necessarily so but frequently so. She was having difficulty leaving her current job because of her many good friends there – the affection amongst them. The most important part is for the dreamer to write down whatever they remember, whatever it is, upon awakening. Even if the dream is about something silly like Porky Pig, it's likely to be related to the incubation question. The subconscious uses its own logic. That became clearly discernible to me after attempting to interpret dreams for about twenty five years. My thought is that this book will help you lessen the time to your own inner dream interpreter epiphanies.

She liked her current work place and felt nurtured within it. Cleaning the bowl and putting milk in it was her preparing herself for a new work place. The beautiful kitten was the dream trying to reassure her that she could find a new and fond place with nurturing and affectionate feelings. Snakes, for me, typically represent change as they're one of the few animals to completely shed their skin. Green is the color of growth. The dream was saying that she was afraid that if she reached out for a job change, that the change and growth might destroy the support and nurture that she desired from her work place.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, that really puts it very succinctly. Well, as we begin to wind down here maybe we can finish up by going through one of the things in one of the last chapters in your book where you say that there are five different kinds of dreams, so perhaps you can take us through each of those, just briefly and kind of what their implications are.

Steven Fox: Okay, the first type of dream, I'll try to list them in order, of course the

symbolic dreams which is the type of dreams we've been discussing, where things stand for certain things and they relate to current conflicts and are like the dreams that I've been reading.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Steven Fox: The second type of dream is the Post Traumatic Stress Dream and this is really just a vivid memory that's stamped in the person's subconscious. It's usually a nightmare and in fact having nightmares is diagnostic of having PTSD usually. There's dreams of desire and I guess I could illustrate this best by, children have dreams of desire, they frequently would just have an image of the object that they want and it's fairly direct.

Dr. Dave: So they might have a dream about an ice cream cone.

Steven Fox: Exactly. And then there's dream visions that I mentioned that basically you feel like the person that has passed away is standing there in front of you giving you the message. And maybe one of the most interesting type of dreams is the predictive dreams and this is, I think, many times your subconscious is making its best estimate of what's likely to happen in the future and I've actually had psychics in therapy who would have quite stunning predictions of world wide events, you know in the news.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, so that raises the question of where are you in terms of these dream visions in which, on the surface of it, there seems like there's contact with somebody who's died, that there's some kind of contact with, quotes, 'the other world,' or the predictive dream? I get the impression that you're a bit agnostic on that as to whether there really is something else out there or not?

Steven Fox: Yeah, I could give a dramatic example of that if you like.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, do.

Steven Fox: Early in my career I had a man who was having panic attacks every day. The situation was that his family was going to go to a family reunion and there was his sister, his mother, his children, a sibling of his and they were all loaded into this van and he said 'oh, I forgot something at the house, why don't you go ahead and I will meet you there. I will take the other car.' And the van that his entire family was in was hit head on by a semi and everybody was killed.

Dr. Dave: Wow, how awful.

Steven Fox: And I want to say he, understandably, was having panic attacks every day. We tried this and that, we tried behavioral things, this is very early in my career, I finally said to him, 'well, why don't you start keeping track of your dreams, sometimes dreams will tell us what's going on in the back of your mind. So he came in next session and said 'well, I no longer have panic attacks.' I said 'what happened?' He said 'well, I will tell you that this was a dream but I want to tell you it did not feel like a dream.' He was very close to the sister, the sister was only one year difference in age from him, he was very close to her and he had a vision that she

appeared to him and she explained to him that they were all doing well in another place. That he should not be worried, that their deaths were instant, they did not suffer and she emphasized that their wish for him expressly was for him just to go on and to live a good life.

Dr. Dave: And so that experience reassured him to such an extent that his panic symptoms disappeared?

Steven Fox: He never had another panic attack.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Steven Fox: He asked me ‘what do you think? Do you think it was a dream, or do you think it was real?’ I mostly avoided the question (both laugh) and I said ‘you know what, I don’t really care. The main thing is that you don’t have that anymore.’ But I do want to say, I was quite amazed, I read a book by a Jungian analyst and I actually got CEUs for this book that was about how loved ones that have died, tend to appear in people’s dreams for up to two years after their death and was talking about what to expect and they were talking about the problem is sometimes the person here is holding on too much and sometimes the problem’s the person that died is holding on too much. But it was very interesting to me of course. We don’t know everything do we?

Dr. Dave: No, we don’t and so for me that’s kind of an open question too, although you know I’ve had experiences of what feel to me like precognitive dreams. Nothing major like a world disaster or anything like that but precognitive dreams and synchronicities – those two things are within my body of experience that keep reminding me that there may be more going on than meets the eye.

Steven Fox: You know, Carl Jung, of course he emphasized that so much and I think you know he kept emphasizing when you see that happening, something significant is occurring and in your life, in my life, in many people’s lives, you know that seems to be the case. It’s uncanny, it strikes you, how could this... what are the odds of that happening in that way?

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. Well, we should probably wrap it up here so do you have any last thought that you’d like to share?

Steven Fox: Just emphasizing the value of dreams and how they can be used practically. I’m hoping to give people a method in my book *Dreams: Guide to the Soul*. I think it’s been helpful to other people I’m hoping other people can benefit from it as well.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, great. Well Dr. Steven Fox, it’s really been a pleasure speaking with you and I want to thank you for being a guest on Shrink Rap Radio.

Steven Fox: And I want to thank you for this podcast and the wonderful work you do and I think it’s great.

WRAP UP:

I'm glad I thought to ask Steven how he first heard about Shrink Rap Radio. I wish I remembered to do that more often because I do often wonder how it is that people are finding the show. Are they using a Google search? Are they hearing about it from friends or colleagues? It really had not occurred to me that the CE courses I've been offering through the Zur Institute might also be a conduit to discovering the show. And as you heard that I was surprised and delighted that both Steven and I had come through the graduate program at the University of Montana in Missoula. I think this is the first time that I've encountered anyone else in the world that had gone through that program. And the other surprising and delightful thing was discovering his reference to my interview with Tom Elsner as I was reading through his book.

I think his book is a very interesting contribution to the literature on dream interpretation. His forty keys cover the familiar bases of a Jungian approach to understanding the meaning of dreams but he goes beyond these to add his own very creative and insightful elaborations. Also the book is chock full of patient dreams and his interpretations. Just reading through those will be very instructive to all, whether amateur or professional. As always you can use the Amazon widget on our site to order *Dreams: Guide to the Soul* by Steven Fox.

Thanks to today's guest Dr. Steven Fox for sharing his creative approach to dream interpretation.