

**Shrink Rap Radio #90, May 15, 2007, The Language of Dreams**  
**David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka "Dr. Dave" interviews Robert Hoss, M.S.**  
(transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Anna van der Weijst)

**Excerpt:** *A lot of folks talk about dreams speaking a different language, but up until recently when some of the ability to do deep brain scans has been with us -probably now for about 10 years- we're finding out more and more about how you know- what parts of the brain are actually active and how possibly dreams might be formed by the brain. And it turns out that our language centers are offline when we dream. That's the part of the brain that basically identifies things in terms of you know- naming or titling, things of that sort. That's offline, so dreams really communicate in a different language.*

**Introduction:** That was the voice of my guest, Robert Hoss. Robert Hoss, M.S. is author of the book 'Dream Language'. He's also executive officer and past president of the International Association for the Study of Dreams and a faculty member of the Haden Institute for Dream Leadership Training and adjunct faculty of Scottsdale College. A scientist and former researcher in the field of light energy, he was a pioneer with multiple patents in the fields of optical communications, and was corporate vice-president for Global Communications at both American Express and IBM. He now devotes his science and management skills to dream studies, for which he's been a frequent guest on radio and TV, and an internationally acclaimed lecturer and instructor for 30 years. His unique, simple but powerful dream work approach is based on his training in Gestalt therapy and background in Jungian studies, the neurobiology of dreaming, plus his pioneering research on the significance of color in dreams. Here's the interview.

**Dr. Dave:** Robert Hoss, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

**Robert Hoss:** Well thanks, it's fun to be here.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, it's great to have you. I know that you're a long time dream worker and listeners to this show know that I also have a passion about dreams. So it's really exciting to have you here and I know that you're also involved with an upcoming dream conference. We'll save that to the end of our interview and I'll invite you to tell listeners about that. And I've got a copy of your book 'Dream Language' right here beside me. So if I run out of any material here to ask you about I can always refer to that book.

**Hoss:** Ok.

**Dr. Dave:** Now I know you've had some kind of a corporate background before you ever got into this dream stuff. You worked I believe somewhere..

**Hoss:** ..American Express and IBM, yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes exactly. So I'm wondering: how in the world did you get from American Express and IBM into dreams?

**Hoss:** Well actually, I've been doing the dream work for about 30 years. So I got there before I got to American Express and IBM. So I've always had the interest, and it's in fact the early years that I got most of my training in Gestalt therapy and some of the other

humanistic approaches that were coming up at the time. And I started even teaching it at some of the colleges, Richland College for example, in Texas -courses in this field. And I was going to actually pursue this fulltime as a job, but of course the corporate world pays very well. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Right..

**Hoss:** So I ended up living a dual life. And actually, I made it to senior ranks in both American Express and IBM. I was one of the senior executives there, I was the vice president of Global Responsibility. So it was a big job. And finally at some point I just decided "Hey that's it." You know? "I've done enough, I've got enough that I can live on." So, I quit, 5 or 6 years ago. And have been focusing on my true love here, which is the area of researching dreams.

**Dr. Dave:** Well it's great that you're able to do that. That you're able to kind of go out there and stack up a bunch of coins and now follow your passion.

**Hoss:** Yeah, it doesn't always happen the way that you plan it, but it did this time.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, that's great, so you're able to follow your bliss. Well, what was it that got you interested in dreams though?

**Hoss:** Well, I think it was actually the early childhood dreams that were so exciting to me. In fact, Alan Siegel wrote up one of the dreams in his book. It was pretty astounding, where I kept seeing over and over again, this kind of storm occurring in the sky. And it became a storm of colors. Which at first was frightening, I tried to run away. And you know, you can't run in some of the dreams, and then suddenly night after night, the storm would become more beautiful, more colorful. And I would actually look forward to this storm occurring. You know, Alan talked about it in his book that sometimes dreams do this. It's a way of actually maturing and creating interest in our later life. So, he felt that perhaps my interest in dreams, and interest in color in dreams, came from those earlier dreams.

**Dr. Dave:** That's right. There are certainly other instances of that. I was just talking to someone else about how childhood dreams can often be formative and he reflected back on Carl Jung. Some of the dreams he had as a child that seemed to shape his whole career. And you know, we should let people know that the subtitle of your book 'Dream Language' is 'Self-Understanding through Imagery and Color'. So that they can understand that that childhood dream of yours actually seemed to manifest itself in a research interest later in life.

**Hoss:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** That's fascinating. Well, you call your book 'Dream Language'. And so can you tell us why you use that term 'Dream Language'? What is it that we see in our dreams that constitutes a dream language?

**Hoss:** Well, a lot of folks talk about dreams speaking a different language. But up until recently, when some of the ability to do deep brain scans has been with us -probably now for about 10 years- we're finding out more and more about how you know- what

parts of the brain are actually active and how possibly dreams might be formed by the brain. And it turns out that our language centers are offline when we dream. That's the part of the brains that basically identifies things in terms of you know- naming or titling, things of that sort. That's offline, so dreams really communicate in a different language. They turn it into sort of an internal processing language. So the parts of the brain that are actually active, it's sort of like looking into the internal processing, a computer and say it's a machine language, which is what we're dreaming. And the bizarre nature of our dreams really comes from a unique state of our dreaming brain. These brain scans show that when we're dreaming, much of the brain is quite active when you dream. Even more active, some parts, than when waking. But other parts are inactive. So we're not really asleep. A lot of our brain is still processing information. Our cognitive reasoning centers are inactive. Thus anything that's bizarre that occurs in our dreams is really not filtered by this concept of reality. Also as I mentioned our speech centers are inactive, thus the things we see in our dreams are not identified with the words and titles as they would be in waking life. It really –as we will see in a second here- identifies by associations, associated memories and emotions. So that's the identity of these things in the dreams.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. In a way it's "Put the body to sleep so the brain can wake up."

**Hoss:** You got it yeah (laughs). And you know, it sort of explains why things are so bizarre, what's going on in a dream. Among the parts that are very active, is what's known as the limbic system. This whole midbrain seems to become active when we dream. And the limbic system is responsible in waking life for processing emotions and memories. This really leads a lot of researchers to believe that dreams are processing emotions. Perhaps unresolved emotional issues of the day as Jung contended. And the other thing is that a many of the cortical regions of the brain that are active in dreams are associative regions. So they actually form associations, such as the visual associative cortex. It seems to be forming associations with what is being processed in the midbrain. And it's these associations we become aware of as our dreams.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. You know, one of the-... hehehe, I'm stumbling over my words here. We're primarily.. -vision is very dominant for us as a species and I've wondered about dogs and bears for whom smell takes up such a large portion of their cortex, where vision takes up a large portion of our cortex. And it's made me wonder if perhaps dogs and bears dream in smells?

**Hoss:** Dream in smells... Well we know that folks who are blind from birth tend to dream in all their other senses. So we kind of dream the way we live our lives. You know? In fact there's a part of the brain, it's called the inferior right parietal cortex which is responsible for our visual-spatial skills, for creating space out of all the images and things that come to us. It's very active in dreaming, so it's likely the part that also brings together all these associations into an actual dream space. And so, if you're an animal for example, you see your world in terms of very different senses than we do. And if you're blind for example from birth you'd see your world in terms of all these other senses but you would still see the world. And so I would imagine that's exactly what their dreams are. They see their world in their dreams much like they do in waking life.

**Dr. Dave:** Hmm.. interesting, interesting. And so then the way that a dream is formed then is.. how would you describe that?

**Hoss:** Just let me give you an example which might help. This is an example based on extrapolating from some of the research that was done. Not to say this is exactly how they're formed, but it would give you a good idea. So let's take an example of a lady who receives a surprise gift from a man she has admired. She didn't know this guy liked her at all, suddenly he gives her this gift. And she has the following dream: "I was flying high in the air being pulled by a pink butterfly." That was her dream. So how do you relate those two? What's occurring at night is that while this emotional situation is being processed. The fact that this is a surprise situation to her, a new situation, so at night when she dreams the midbrain in the limbic regions starts processing all the emotions around the situation. And while this is being processed the cortical regions that are active, the ones that create associations are creating associations with what's being processed in this midbrain. And again, these associations that created this strange dream. So let's take an example of how it might've happened. The visual associative cortex for example, say, might create a representative picture image of the feeling of having butterflies in her stomach when she received this gift. So let's say that part of the cortex represented this feeling of butterflies in the stomach as an actual butterfly in the dream. And likewise that which creates a sense of our motion in the dreams, we feel we're really moving in the dreams. That may represent the feeling of elation that she felt in waking life by a sense of soaring, flying motion in the dreams. And on and on. The region that's responsible for processing color, which is active in dreams, might represent this loving feeling or emotion as the color pink. And so what happened is that all these different associations being created in a part of the brain might be coming together in this visual-spatial space. This sort of dream space I call it -the inferior right parietal cortex to where it combines all this imagery together to being pulled through the air by a butterfly. So even though the dream seems nonsensical, you can see that each individual association that made up that dream image of being pulled through the air by a butterfly. It made perfect sense, it was totally linked to the emotions surrounding the situation.

**Dr. Dave:** Ok, yeah. So what about the person who wants to understand their dreams. Who talk about dreams speaking in another language. How can we understand that language? What's your take on that?

**Hoss:** There's a few principles. I'll give you-there's three principles that I'll discuss here, if we got a second. 'Cause I think that it's good, before you try to work on a dream, to understand how this language actually works in the brain. The first principle is that dreams are not literal. They really speak a language of metaphor and association. Most people that work with dreams can understand that dreams speak in metaphor, like parables. They speak some sort of picture language you might say, or play on words.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Hoss:** And I'll give you an example. Here was a dream where a woman said "I was in a clinic and a nurse was checking me over. She felt some lumps in my groin area and exclaimed: "She's riddled with cancer!" I'm not afraid to die, but ask the nurse if she can give me something to keep me going through all the pain." Now can you well imagine, what would you do if you had a dream like that? Would you at first say "Oh my god, my dreams are telling me that I have cancer."?"

**Dr. Dave:** Rush off to the doctor!

**Hoss:** Right! So, when you have a dream like that it's always a good idea to go to the doctor too. At least have a checkup. But you know, that was really the first impulse the dreamer had. So "Oh my gosh, I have cancer!" And she actually did go to the doctor to get a checkup. Then luckily, no cancer, no problem. But when we worked on the dream, she was really still concerned about this dream. About her having cancer. Even though the doctor said "No problem." So we started working on the dream more from a psychological standpoint and I discovered that this was a woman who saw all of her relationships in terms of astrological signs. And at that moment when she had a dream, she had a boyfriend she wanted to break up with who was astrologically a cancer.

**Dr. Dave:** Oooh, yeah.

**Hoss:** And she was uncertain how to break up with him. It was the riddle in the dream, she was riddled with cancer. So the dream was speaking about a relationship in metaphors. Ok, so when you look at your dreams, because the speak centers are offline, your dreams are speaking in this different language of metaphor. That's the only way they can talk. They can't talk like in your normal waking speech. So they speak in that way. So that's the first thing about the dream language.

**Dr. Dave:** So the first principle is "Don't take it literal. It's metaphor."

**Hoss:** It's typically metaphor and association. There's been a few cases where dreams speak very literally. But it's kind of rare. So it's best to- you know, if you're dreaming of a plane crash, that doesn't mean "Don't get on the next plane." Take a look at the metaphors and associations in your dreams. That's the first principle. The second principle is "The images and associations you see in your dreams are personal associations." Here's an example we can use with your listening audience as well. Imagine that you dreamed of a door. So at this moment you see a door in front of you. Ok? And envision that door for a moment. Look at its appearance, its color, its size. Now answer this question in one sentence: what is the purpose or function of that door?

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Hoss:** So how about yourself David, what's the function of your door?

**Dr. Dave:** I'd say the function of the door is to let me in.

**Hoss:** "Let me in." Ok.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Hoss:** Ok. The function of my door might be opening a new threshold. Now when you ask this question around, some of your listeners may have different ones. Some will say "To open a new place." like our definition. Some will say "To keep people out." Or "To open and close, let things I want in." And so on and so forth. So what's happening here? What's happening here is that everybody envisioned a door. So the left brain is "Ok, I'm going to create a door." You know, and it knows what a door is and creates an image of a door. But the right brain, the more dreaming part of our mind, the part of the

brain that processes things more like a dream, when it identifies the function it's very different for each one of us. It just shows that basically, when we create an image in our brain, or even see an image, our brain automatically links imagery with a personal associations. So if you want to know that that thing in your dream means, then investigate your personal associations with it.

**Dr. Dave:** Right. For example the door that I saw actually, was a door from Dublin, Ireland. It was red, it had a brass and it was those Georgian doors that you see a lot in Dublin.

**Hoss:** Wow.

**Dr. Dave:** So it was very specific and very personal. And so it had both. The literal image was personal, and then of course my take on it is "Let me in." You know, that's probably very personal and unique to me.

**Hoss:** Even more personal, yes.

**Dr. Dave:** Another person might say "Oh well, keeps you out."

**Hoss:** Yes. So what you see is the natural function of the brain is to take any image, whether you created it or whether you saw it, and subliminally associates it with lots of past memories and things of that sort. And this is just the natural function of the brain, and it happens in your dreams. So your dreams are really these associations. And this is why dream dictionaries can't work for you. Because the dream dictionary is the associations of the author! If you want to find about his dreams, go ahead read his book. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, you still see these little booklets in supermarket checkout lines. 'How to interpret your dreams.' And then they'll list "If you dream of a crow it's death, if you dream of a duck.." ..I don't know what that is.

**Hoss:** Yeah right. I remember, there was one I read. Something like, if you dreamed of a white dove, or something like that, you're going to Washington DC. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** That's a very specific.

**Hoss:** Some of them are bizarre. Some are relatively good metaphors, but they are really the associations of the author or the people he's talked to. Not your own personal associations. So why read a book when it's so easy to define the image and figure out your own associations.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Hoss:** And then there's a third principle which is key to the approach that I use with dreams. And that is that there's a wealth of information in a single dream image. Even though it's good to work with the whole dream and many images, there's an awful lot of information in just one dream image. And the associations that are buried within that image are apparent if we let the dream image speak itself. We did a little simple exercise here with defining the image. But if you let the door talk you're gonna get an awful lot of information. I'll give you an example of that: here's a dream of a fellow

that said “I dreamed I was standing in a sweet potato patch, across a barbed wire fence from my boss. In waking life I just can’t seem to do anything right. My boss is always disapproving of me and my work. And no matter how I try it gets worse.” So this was the guy’s dream and sort of a reflection on his waking life. This was a male dreamer. He had a big ego, a big male ego. He had a hard time not only working for the female boss, but really a terrible time admitting to himself that he needed her to praise him. You know, to do a good job. So his male ego would not allow him, or her, to admit he needed to be praised. So, kind of going on the principle that Fritz Perls, who developed Gestalt Therapy, which is where I derived this approach from, this letting the dream image speak.. He basically said the most minimized or dehumanized parts of your dream can relate to the most rejected or alienated parts of your personality, those things that you can’t deal with. So, looking at the dream I said “Hmm, why is that sweet potato there? It’s got to be here for a purpose.” Because everything in your dream is really an image that you created for a reason. So I said, “Imagine yourself as a sweet potato and tell me about yourself.” And he says “I’m a sweet potato. Butter me up and I’ll be good.”

**Dr. Dave:** Ha!

**Hoss:** So you can see, when you let the sweet potato speak it said everything about the feelings that this guy was afraid to admit to himself or admit to his boss, that he needed to be buttered up in order to be a good worker.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, and the sweet potato, that might’ve seemed like a very peripheral thing. I really want to underscore what you just said, that- I think you said “Everything in your dream is something that you’ve created for a purpose. It has a reason for being there.”

**Hoss:** Yes

**Dr. Dave:** Is that what you said?

**Hoss:** Yes, exactly.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. And you know, in teaching dream classes over the years myself I know so often people are inclined to discard the fragments. The little pieces because they say “Jeez, I can’t remember the whole dream. All I remember is this little piece.” But it’s been my experience, as it has been yours, that if you really work with that fragment no matter how small, just as with the sweet potato example you gave, you can really unpack a lot of meaning from it.

**Hoss:** That’s absolutely right. And in the process I usually don’t suggest to the dreamer what they work on. I ask them “What image in the dream kind of draws you towards it?” There are usually one or two that you’re just drawn to. And some the dreamer might not even talk about in the first narrative of the dream.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. I like the other thing that you said though. In quoting Perls that the part of the dream that’s most despised or seems most evil, or that it’s been particularly alienated..

**Hoss:** Alienated, yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ..that it has particular significance.

**Hoss:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** In relation to that part of you, that you most don't want to look at. That you the most don't want to own.

**Hoss:** Yeah, it tends to be in these little dehumanized images in the dream. So quite often I like to work with the things in your dreams. Not "Jane my next door neighbor was in my dream." That's a little harder. You can work with that, you get a lot of good content. But quite often it's "What was Jane wearing?" Sometimes it's the dehumanized parts that have really interesting stuff to work on.

**Dr. Dave:** Some people are really hard to get into that frame of mind though. They're just resistant to.. "Well doorknobs can't talk. I don't know what a doorknob is going to say."

**Hoss:** Yeah. (laughs) Well you'd be surprised. What I've done, and because it –I learned this with some training in Gestalt therapy many years ago. And you're right, sometimes it's hard to get a person into actually speaking. But so what I've done is: because the Gestalt work- Gestalt therapy is really a clinical approach. And it takes people very deep very fast. That's not necessarily what you need to do when you're doing personal dream work. So what I tried to do over the years is to understand how I could take all the power of this Gestalt role play approach and turn it into something that's easy for people to get into. As well as not take them too deep, to get all the information out. So what I did was, I refined this technique into a really quick six question procedure that just gets enough information deep within the dream image, to determine what emotional issues the dream is dealing with. Without getting in too deep. And by students it's called the 6 magic questions, cause it just kind of seems to target the issues very simply. And what I do is basically: I ask the person to imagine they're this thing in the dream. And if they have a hard time imagining that they're a doorknob, then at least imagine what a doorknob might say. There's only six questions they have to answer. As they go through the process they come up with some answers that are pretty well targeted at what's going on in the dream and what it's dealing with in waking life.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, what are these six magic questions?

**Hoss:** Ok, so let's take an example. Here's the six questions, but then I'd like to, if we have time, put it in the context of an example.

**Dr. Dave:** Sure.

**Hoss:** So people understand how to use this. Is that good?

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, we can do that.

**Hoss:** Ok, great. When you're the doorknob or the door, or something like that, basically we usually go through a little breathing exercise. Take three deep breaths and bring this image to your mind's eye, get closer to it on each breath. Then, either imagine what the image says. Or if you can really become that image, speak as if you're the image. And the first question is: "What are you?" You describe yourself. The second is "What is

your purpose or function?” Third is “What you like about being this thing in the dream?” Fourth is “what do you dislike about being this thing in the dream?” The fifth is “What do you fear most?” and the last is “What do you desire most?” It’s actually designed in triplets to get at certain specific pieces of information. “What are you?” and “What is your purpose or function?” relates the role that this part of you is playing in the dream to a potential role in waking life.

**Dr. Dave:** Ok.

**Hoss:** The second, “What do you like, or dislike about being these things?” brings forth conflicts about playing this role, or this part of yourself that might relate to conflicts in waking life.

**Dr. Dave:** Sure.

**Hoss:** And “What do you fear and desire most?” relates to these emotional pressures that you put on yourself that drives that conflict. In fact, it’s not magic, but it’s actually designed specifically to find out those things.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, great. I could see where those would be very productive.

**Hoss:** Ok, so let me give you an example. If we’ve got time, I’ll take you through an actual dream that uses it, because it will help folks who want to use this procedure to understand how to use it. And by the way, it can be found on my website [www.dreamscience.org](http://www.dreamscience.org). Or of course in the book ‘Dream Language’.

**Dr. Dave:** I’ll put a link to [dreamscience.org](http://dreamscience.org) in the show notes as well.

**Hoss:** Oh ok, great. Here’s a dream: “A friend of mine is painting my newly painted grey walls red and blue. I tried to brush it off with a rag and I woke up screaming.” This was a nightmare this girl had. It didn’t seem like a nightmare, somebody was just painting her walls red and blue. And so I thought, what’s going on in your life now emotionally, at the time. Is there anything happening that disturbs you? And she said “Yes, in waking life I’m very nervous about moving to a new city for a new job. Because on my last two jobs, even though I did really good work I somehow got in conflict with my boss and was told I was no longer needed once the job was done.” So in essence she got laid off, or at least was feeling she was going to get fired. Now oddly, the dream of painting the walls red and blue doesn’t seem to relate much to waking life situations. But when we’ll get in it, you’ll see that it has everything to do with that situation.

**Dr. Dave:** Ok.

**Hoss:** So first thing I do I call ‘dream orientation’. This is what most dream analysis, dream work techniques do: they look for metaphors in the dream story. Was there any word said in the dream narrative that might relate to waking life situation? And the only words we could find was “I tried to brush it off with a rag.” So I asked her, is there anything that you’re trying to brush off.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah that immediately struck me you know, as I heard the dream. The ‘brush off’ just leaped out at me.

**Hoss:** Yeah exactly. So here's a word that says: maybe there's a connection here. So basically you feed it back to the dreamer and say "Is there anything you're trying to brush off in waking life?" She says "Yes, I'm trying to brush off this fear I have of moving to this new job." So here's the first link with waking life situation. Now the problem with just metaphor work on the dream itself is that, that's about as far as it goes. It links the dream with waking life situation, which is very useful to do. But it doesn't tell you anything deeper that's going on. So most dream work approaches begin with this sort of a cognitive dialogue going on at this point, trying to dig deeper and deeper to explore the parts of the dream that were related to deeper emotional situations. The problem with that is, now it's the rational mind discussing the dream. And the rational mind was asleep at the time. (laughs) It wasn't involved in the dream. So what I like to do is use this 'letting the dream speak approach' because it involves the part of the brain that was awake during the dream at the time. That was involved in creating the dream. And I find it's a lot more effective. Let's take it a little further. We start first by asking the dreamer to pick some sort of image in the dream you were drawn to. That you felt some affinity for. Just kind of draws you to it, you're curious about it, it was important to you. And oddly enough she said "The rag." She could've picked the walls, the girl who was painting the walls. But she said "The rag." that she was trying to wipe off the paint with. So I said "Ok, great." The next step is to basically take her into the rag, to try to see how far we can have the dreamer become this dream element, this rag. And so I asked her to take three deep breaths and come closer and closer to becoming this rag. And if she couldn't, try at least to imagine how the rag might answer these questions. So once she said "I'm there, I'm the rag." I asked her "What are you? Describe yourself." She said "I'm a rag in somebody's hands." And the second question was "What is your purpose, your function as this rag?" She said "To be handy and clean things up." The third question: "What do you like about being a rag?" "Being available, needed and used." "What do you dislike about being the rag in the dream?" She said "Being thrown away after the job is done."

**Dr. Dave:** Aha. (laugh)

**Hoss:** So you realize this is not a rag talking. This is the dreamer talking from deep within. The emotions are coming out. And so then I asked the fifth question: "What do you fear most as a rag?" She said "Getting dirty and being thrown away." So now you're getting into the fears that are related to her waking life fears. And then the last question "What do you desire most?" She says "Staying clean and continuing to be used." So it's kind of apparent as I relate this dream to you, this sequence of questions, that there are some things in here that relate to motions surrounding this situation in her waking life

**Dr. Dave:** Definitely.

**Hoss:** And so the next step we do with this dream or any dream, is we feed these answers back to the dreamer. Now if you're just doing the work yourself, you just write these answers down. When you're the rag, doorknob or whatever. You just write the answers to the questions down. And look at them as if they're not a rag talking. But if they are about you talking about how you feel or a situation in your waking life and then they begin to stand out. So I asked her, I said "How does being a rag in somebody's hand relate to your waking life situations?" She says "My life right now, if I take this new job is totally dependent on this new boss." So she felt like she was a rag in this new boss'

hand. And I said “How about “My purpose is to be handy and clean things up”? What’s that all about?” She says “That’s what I consider my purpose. On that job, is to clean things up that need cleaning up.” “Ok.” “Now how about your answer to 3 or 4, which is “I like being available, needed and used, but I dislike getting thrown away after the job?”” She says “Well, I’m pursuing this new job because it makes me feel needed and used. But I don’t like it that, you know, I keep doing this and being told I’m no longer needed to finish what I started to do.” Now you can see her conflict in life relating to her jobs, is she goes from job to job because she feels needed when she’s first hired but then something goes wrong and she feels rejected and thrown away, like the rag.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Hoss:** And then the last or the fifth question, “How about “I fear getting dirty and being thrown away.”?” She says “I fear that I’ll mess up and get thrown out. That’s what happened on my last job. I’m afraid it’ll happen again.” And then the last question was “What does “I desire to stay clean and continue to be used.” have to do with your waking job?” She says “I have to figure out a way not to aggravate my boss but to stay clean, so this won’t happen again.” So you can see -and it takes only about a minute or two to go through these 6 questions- it tells you that the dream is not just about this waking life situation, getting this new job, trying to brush it off. But there’s a real deep conflicts that come out when you just let that rag or that doorknob or the door, or whatever it is in your dream speak.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah and there is a question that arises, and maybe this happened so long ago that you won’t know the answer, but the question that comes to mind is: since she already knew about this situation, what did she learn from the dream that was new for her or gave her a different perspective?

**Hoss:** That’s a good question. And that’s actually the rest of the technique and approach.

**Dr. Dave:** Ah!

**Hoss:** Because once you find out from the dream work what emotions are driving your actions in the situation, you need to find a way of dealing with them. Ok? This dream work is fairly deep, although she was able to pretty well keep her head to the whole thing. Because you just answer these silly little questions. But yet what it showed her was that indeed she was trying to hide from these feelings, these fears. And that’s what was causing all this tension over the job. She hadn’t fully realized before she did the dream work, or at least she had not expressed the true fears that she was feeling. That she was going to screw up again and get fired again on her job and now she’s totally dependent on her new boss, the new location. So all these feelings came out by being this rag that she just didn’t want to look at. When we work on the colors in the dreams in a minute, you’ll see that that’s exactly the case. She was brushing it off. She was trying to shield herself from these feelings.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Now I know you’ve done a lot of research on color, and your work was even featured in Reader’s Digest magazine. So using this dreaming, maybe you can tell us a bit about the role of color in dreams.

**Hoss:** Oh ok. Yeah, why won’t we do that and then we’ll get back to how we work with the dream once we know all this information. Because working with an image in a dream

gives you an awful lot of information. Just like we just illustrated, a tremendous amount of information. But also dreams, when you see dream image in color, as this was- it had red and grey and blue. They are there for a purpose too, they are just as important. Working on a car in dream versus working on a red car, you can well imagine there's going to be a big difference. The red is going to have some modifier in that image that's very important. Basically what I did was, when I taught many years ago dream work, the one thing that was never explained –and of course when you teach course, you pretty well have to figure out what it really is all about. And one thing I couldn't figure all about was color in dreams. Because there's little work done on it. So I actually did my own research into color and basically what I found is: color relates to emotion. Much of the research came from this field called 'color psychology' where a lot of research was done in the 40's and 50's looking at the human response to color. How we as humans, and how our nervous system responds to color. We found out that color, the autonomic nervous system actually subliminally responds to color. For instance red, if you illuminate yourself with red you can perceivably measure an increase in heart rate and measure increase in breathing, increase in appetite and things of that sort.

**Dr. Dave:** Interesting.

**Hoss:** It's all subliminal. Thinking of blue, when you flood yourself with blue light, the nervous system begins to go into a calming mode. Breathing slows, the heart beat slows, almost preparing us for sleep, that sort of thing. And that seems to make sense. But all happens at a subliminal level and all this knowledge is obtained on what colors do to us, how we react to various colors. And it's really, the field is part of what we see now today in our packaging, painting of rooms, things of that sort. So it's come out in the advertising field. It's what really used this, the knowledge of our subliminal response to color. But what I did was, I had all this database now of the emotional responses to colors in waking life. And I used this Gestalt approach to understand what emotions were inside of colored images. And I found that the emotions inside colored images in dreams were very much the same as what color psychologists were saying was our human emotional response to color. So I realized that the same response we have in waking life to color is what is being represented in our dreams. The emotion of being anxious in waking life may be represented in red in dreams, things of that sort. So, by doing these correlations I found that essentially color relates to emotions. And so what I did was, I catalogued a lot of the emotional responses to various colors which you can actually see on my website [dreamscience.org](http://dreamscience.org) by clicking on the color button, or it's in the book. I used these as not the meaning of color in dreams. That can be dangerous, sort of like, you know, dream dictionaries. But I use it as a way of triggering this "Aha." with the dreamer.

**Dr. Dave:** Hmm.

**Hoss:** If you look at the color red for example and the emotional statements that are there one or two may trigger sort of an "Aha." response. Like "Oh gee, that is kind of how I felt that day." So that's how I use it. So please let me give you an example with this particular dream. As you remember, the dreamer was trying to brush off her feelings of fear about going to this new job. So what I do is, I ask the person, I tell them to kind of close their eyes and I'm gonna read a number of statements. And you tell me which one or more of these statements sounds the way you felt in waking life. And then we'll relate that feeling to the dream. So I say, let's start out with grey. So there's like eight

emotional statements in my color database for grey. And I started out, I said: “The first thing: I want to shield myself from the feelings.” Then she sticks her fingers up and says “That one.”

**Dr. Dave:** Haha.

**Hoss:** (laughs) She was trying to shield herself, to brush off these feelings. “Second: I feel emotionally distant and only an observer. Standing aside, watching myself mechanically go through the motions. Fourth: I want to remain uncommitted, not involved, shielded, separated from the situation. And the fifth: I do not want to make a decision that requires my emotional involvement.” And on and on. She said “Four and five.” She said “I don’t want to make a decision that requires my emotional involvement.” And it turns out that she so wanted to distance herself from these feelings and not make a commitment to this new job. Her new job was starting in two weeks. She had not even sold her house. She had not even put it on the market. So she was that disconnected from her emotions around the situation. And that fearful. And it all came out in the dream, the grey wall.

**Dr. Dave:** Interesting.

**Hoss:** By working on color in your dreams this way and using these statements as just a kind of trigger like feelings in your waking life you get a lot more information.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I can see that.

**Hoss:** And we went through the red and blue lines. I won’t read all the statements, they’re on the website or in my book. But in the red, there were 11 statements I read to her and one that popped out was “I want to win, succeed and achieve.” And when I read the statements for blue there were seven of those. The one she said gave her an “Aha.” was “I need a relationship free from contention in which I can trust and be trusted.” So in the dream there was this girl painting were the walls red and blue, which was the thing that shocked her. And quite often when there’s two colors like this, when they’re paired in the dream, it relates to a conflict between those two emotions. And she really was having a conflict between wanting this job, to win and succeed and achieve, versus wanting not to screw up and stand a relationship with her boss free from contention, which could be trusted.

**Dr. Dave:** Definitely, I can see that.

**Hoss:** So here the colors related as much to the conflicts that she was going through as the image in the dream.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow that’s great. I’m sure my audience is going to find this material fascinating and will want to visit your website. And if they really want to get a lot more information they should come to the upcoming 24<sup>th</sup> annual International Association for the Study of Dreams Conference. Which I think you were one of the chief organizers. Maybe you can quickly tell us about that.

**Hoss:** You know the program this year for that conference –and I would like to invite everyone to join myself plus actually a 185 other presenters from all over the world to come to the, it’s the International Association for the Study of Dreams, 24<sup>th</sup>

International Conference. And this year it's at Sonoma State University June 29<sup>th</sup> through July 3<sup>rd</sup> of the year. And it is really the largest international conference on the subject of dreams and dream work. There's never been one this size. And it's a chance for everybody to meet world famous authors, psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, artists, educators and researchers in the field of dream studies.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, and I'll certainly endorse that. Because I've been to some of these conferences. I haven't been to all twenty-four. I think I was at the first one and I was at one two years ago. And now this one is right in my back yard so you know I'm going to be there.

**Hoss:** That's great yeah. That is great. And you know, it sounds like a big scientific conference, but the reality is, this is open to the public. It's multidisciplinary, we've got all sorts of events. Not only on research. We have a huge research track that runs the entire length of the conference. But dreams and the arts. Also we do a lot of special events, like dancing in your dreams, things of that sort. So we kind of touch on those. We have psychic sessions on psi in dreams and psychic research on dreams. We have sessions on spiritual dreams and cultural. So we totally cover the whole field of dreaming, but from a very professional standpoint. These people are the true experts in the field and all of the papers are juried and judged. Also, we provide CE's and these are approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. So psychologists get something out of it more than just the educational part. We have a whole lot of fun. We've got a wine tasting events, dream art expositions, nightly reception, dream telepathy contest "Try out your psychic skills in your dreams." And the most fun is, we end with this dream ball where everybody dresses as your favorite dream character.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah. Well, that really sounded wonderful. What is the website that people should go to?

**Hoss:** Ok. So if you want more information on this go to [www.asdreams.org/2007](http://www.asdreams.org/2007) or just to the IASD website, which is [asdreams.org](http://asdreams.org). And just click on the conference button.

**Dr. Dave:** Ok. Well Bob Hoss, thanks so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

**Hoss:** Well I really appreciate it. This was fun.