

# INTEGRATIVE LEADERSHIP INTERNATIONAL

*“Helping individuals and organizations become integrated.”*

## Lessons on the Path

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### “Working with Your Dreams”

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#### OBSERVATION:

A few weeks ago, Elizabeth, Lillas and my mutual acquaintance, called unexpectedly and said she was coming to Calgary for a few days of business and would like to see us. She felt she needed a deep conversation since she was feeling ‘stuck’ in her life, love and leadership journey. The only time that worked for us all was Friday evening. So we invited Liz for Friday night supper, conversation, and a sleepover, offering to drive her to the airport late Saturday afternoon in time for her flight back to Regina. She happily accepted.

After supper, we shared aspects of our life and love story and deeply listened to hers. We have found that everyone has a story that can break your heart and Liz was no exception. Her story included the loss of her husband seven years before; frequent battles with depression; a variety of physical health issues; having to work two jobs to support her three children; feeling sad, alone and lonely inside while secretly yearning for authentic intimate relationship outside; all the while putting on a brave happy face for the world. Recent life events had come together in a difficult way that exaggerated her feeling of being ‘stuck’ with no obvious way out.

Near the end of the evening I asked Liz, “Do you remember your dreams?” She said she did. However, her attitude towards dreams was that they were a diversion from reality much like going to a movie. Sometimes she was the observer and other times the actress in her nightly dramas, but had never made the effort to seriously examine or unravel them for their possible purpose, meaning and application to her waking life.

“Like Rabbi Hiyya stated in the Babylonian Talmud,” I said, “An uninterpreted dream is like an unopened letter from heaven through your soul to you. Many of the world’s wisdom, philosophical and psychological traditions feel that dreams are an important part of living a good life. In my 35 years of working with dreams for myself and for others, I have found that they can give suggestions and new perspectives on our physical (health and financial), psychological (attitudes and beliefs), emotional (feelings and motivations) and spiritual (meaning and purpose) situations and circumstances that need to be re-examined and changed to allow us to become more integrated. Dreams can aid you in solving your problems, making decisions and showing you your possible future. I have found dreams can help align our conscious and unconscious with our superconscious that can make us more whole. Why not work with them? They are free. You have dreams every night. And no one knows you, cares more for you, nor can guide you better than your superconscious or Higher Self.

“One of the techniques the Egyptians used over 4000 years ago was dream incubation. They believed that by sleeping on a question in the temples of Asklepion they would dream an answer to their question in the night.

“Why don’t you try it tonight?” I suggested. “Simply write down a question that is troubling you about your life—it can only be one question at a time—and repeat it to yourself, not just from the head, but from the heart, three times as you are falling asleep. Be sure to write the question down at the top of your journal or paper beside your bed. If you awaken during the night with a dream, or first thing in the morning, do not move too quickly, but replay the dream in your head. Once remembered, then move to write it down. If you are successful in remembering one or more of your dreams, and they are written down, then tomorrow I will share with you several methods for helping interpret your own dreams.”

Liz was excited about the opportunity to actively work with her dream nature. In the morning, as we were making breakfast, she had four dreams and dream segments written down, waiting for our session to begin.

I asked her the question she was incubating, and then asked her to describe the four dreams, what was going on in them, how she felt now reviewing them, and how she felt as an observer or actress within the dream utilizing various approaches to dream interpretation. We picked one dream where there was manipulation and control by men at her work that had the highest emotional charge of anger and frustration and asked when she had felt this way before? She moved back through time from her current co-workers, through her former husband, brothers, and father, to an incident when she was 11 years old on a school outing. When she related the very traumatic incident involving a group of male class mates that grabbed, controlled and while hidden in another room, molested her, she had a strong emotional reaction. She began crying and shaking visibly, expressing a deep visceral reaction as she related the story she had not shared with anyone for 35 years. We all wept and honoured this radical awareness. Afterwards, we worked through the other three dreams, each one having a similar theme, but different perspectives on the key issue that was conspiring to keep her 'stuck' in her life.

Afterwards, we went for a walk by the river and lightened up, finally dropping her off at the airport late in the afternoon to catch her flight. Elizabeth thanked us for our time and hospitality and shared that she already was feeling lighter and freer than she had felt in a very long time. She was grateful that she now saw a way out.

In the following weeks, we observed that Liz was changing, self converting many of her former problems to opportunities. Last week we received a thank you card (yes through snail mail) where she shared she had found a new intimate relationship in her life and was bathing in the wonder of experiencing the many facets of love once again. In the card she thanked us '...for your inspiration and encouragement to work with my dreams.'

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**APPLICATION:** Incubate a dream by asking yourself a question before going to sleep. Remember your dreams. If you don't remember the first time, try again. Write them down. Then use one of the methods of dream analysis listed under INFORMATION below to help interpret and apply their message in your life.

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**INSPIRATION:** *"It will come about after this. That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions."* **Joel 2:28 (NASB).** *"Dreams have a marvelous way of showing us the dirt that is in our water pipes," she writes, "how to identify it, and how to remove it." Eventually, she says, working with dreams can "open the doors to the Divine within."* **Swami Sivananda Radha.** *"The dream shows the inner truth and reality of the patient as it really is: not as I conjecture it to be, and not as he would like it to be, but as it is."* **Carl Jung:** from "The Practical Use of Dream Analysis". *'All important events are dreamt at least one day before they occur.'* **Tibetan Dream Yoga**

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**INFORMATION:** (1) Hatala & Hatala. (2005). "Integrative Leadership": Appendix D-Awakening the Dreamer. (2) Todeschi, Kevin. (2000). "Dream Interpretation (and more!) Made Easy". (3) Sparrow, Scott: 5 Star Method for Dream Interpretation: <http://dreamanalysisitraining.com/page16/page16.html>. (4) Also search Jungian Dream Analysis for sources and approaches to working with your dreams.

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