

An analysis of a recurring dream experienced for 20 years in the context of the theory of processing emotions

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Summary. This publication presents an analysis of a recurring dream which had been experienced for 20 years. The platform for understanding the dream consisted of one of the contemporary theories of dreaming, which defines a dream as a function that serves to consolidate and integrate the emotions of dreamers arising from the state of wakefulness. The analysis of the dreams itself did not show a preference for any school of psychotherapy but resulted from research-based assumptions. It consisted of three steps. In the first step of the analysis the dream emotions were defined in accordance with the theory of continuity as the real emotions of dreamers originating in wakefulness. In the second step the dream contents were analysed on the basis of research assumptions as the personal tendencies of dreamers. The third step consisted of a preliminary interpretation which was verified in the therapeutic conversation itself. The dream analysis indicated the validity of the dream theory, which understands dreams as a function of processing emotions.

Keywords: Processing emotions, recurring dream, dream analysis, continuity hypothesis

1. Introduction

Nowadays there are numerous dream theories. One of the most significant ones assumes that the role of dreams is the consolidation and integration of emotions experienced while awake. The researchers at the forefront of this theory of processing emotions include Rosalind Cartwright (2010, 1979), Ernest Hartmann (2010, 2008, 2007, 1996) and Clara Hill (1996), who believe that by dreaming, the new, emotionally coloured material connects with that which is already stored in the memory. However, it is not directly a consolidation of memory, but rather the inclusion of new material guided by emotions into the old (e.g., Hartmann, 2010). As a result of this process, the emotional memory is supported (Baran et al., 2012; Cipolli et al., 2005; Groch et al., 2013; Nielsen and Stentrom, 2005; Nishida et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 2006), emotional regulation is ensured (Deliens et al., 2014; Sándor et al., 2016; Scarpelli et al., 2019; Vandekerckhove & Wang, 2017; Werner et al., 2021) and experiences arising from the state of wakefulness begin to be less stressful (Cartwright, 2010, Hill, 1996, Hartmann, 2010).

According to the theory of processing emotions, recurring dreams represent the emotional state of the dreamer (Cartwright, 2010, Hartmann, 2010). The theory assumes that *recurring dreams mirror serious issues with which a person has to come to terms with. Until the dreamer processes and solves the problems in their waking life, the dreams will*

continue to repeat themselves (Hill, 1996). Ernest Hartmann (e.g., 2010, 1996) who analysed recurring dreams after traumatic experiences presented a plethora of evidence to support the theory of processing emotions. He discovered that following the traumatic event, the emotions arising from the experience, mostly fear, repeatedly show themselves in an intense symbolic dream, e.g., about a tidal wave. Then there are dreams in which memories about trauma and images similar to past trauma get connected. In the end, after a few months, dreams will return to their usual form. Thus, a dream gradually integrates an emotional experience. The theory of processing emotions can also be seen in the example of working with recurring dreams as defined by Hill (1996). The patient was a 46-year-old woman who worked as a nurse on two military missions. The contents of the dream which the patient repeatedly experienced (the dreamer stood by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall) were unmistakably related to the unprocessed emotional events related to the war and unresolved personal problems. The analysis of the dream specifically focused on the war events and experiences from her waking life. It is significant that the patient described working with dreams as the key factor which enabled her to experience her own emotions. Cartwright's research (e.g., 1970) also confirmed that the increase in recurring dreams is related to stressful events and emotional distress. Similar to Hartmann, she added that recurring dreams are a sign that certain emotionally important issues have not been adequately processed in the waking life.

The presence of emotional or personal problems in the context of recurring dreams has been supported not only by the authors of the theory of processing emotions but also by many other studies. Based on a sample of 97 university students, Robbins and Houski (1983) discovered that persons with recurring dreams had more personal problems (e.g., problems at school, conflicts with parents) and physical symptoms, than university students without recurring dreams. Persons with recurring dreams also scored higher on the Beck Depression Inventory, which supported the hypothesis that recurring dreams can be reflective of an

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increase in emotional difficulties and unresolved personal problems. The research of Zadra et al. (1998) also showed that university students with recurring dreams had higher depression scores; at the same time, they also scored higher in neuroticism, anxiety, somatic symptomatology, stress resulting from life circumstances; and vice versa, lower scores were detected in personal adjustment and psychological well-being. Lower scores on the scale of psychological well-being in persons with recurring dreams were also confirmed in the research of Brown and Donderi (1986). Unresolved problems or emotional difficulties connected to recurring dreams were also indicated in the research of Weinstein et al. (2018) which showed that need frustration had a positive correlation with negative dream emotions. At the same time, it has also repeatedly been proven that recurring dreams have a tendency to continue especially during stressful periods in life (Zadra et al., 1998, Duke & Davidson, 2002). An interesting observation is that even research focused on children proved that recurring dreams “are associated with psychological stasis or the presence of continuing emotional concerns” (Gauchat, 2009).

To summarise, one could say that according to the authors of the theory of processing emotions, recurring dreams are a repetitive attempt to consolidate and integrate our own unprocessed emotions from the state of wakefulness (Cartwright, 2010, Hill, 1996, Hartmann, 2010). As has previously been suggested, many research conclusions also favour this perspective. Let us add that this assumption remains in accordance with another important research hypothesis – the continuity hypothesis (e.g., Fábik, 2022a, Kahn, 2019, Komasi et al., 2018, Mikulinger et al., 2011; Schredl & Reinhard, 2010, Seltzman et al., 2014; Serpe & DeCicco, 2020, Sikka et al., 2018, Weinstein et al., 2018). According to this hypothesis, emotions in dreams are a continuum of our own emotions from waking life. A dream does not contain false (Adler, 1995) or simulated (anticipated) emotions (Revonsuo, 2000), but those that are our own, which we experienced while awake. The theory of processing emotions assumes the same position as the hypothesis of continuity, while adding that the said emotions arising from the waking life are processed further in the dream process which supports emotional regulation and the emotional memory.

We could argue that the continuity hypothesis leads to uncertain conclusions (e.g., Hobson & Schredl, 2011), however in-depth analysis shows that the continuity hypothesis can be considered to be a reliable concept in the context of emotions. According to research (e.g., Borowik et al., 2013; Bryant et al., 2011, Delorme, 2002, Fábik, 2022b, Malinowski, 2015) our dreams also contain emotions which were pushed away in waking life or suppressed. Therefore, in a dream the dreamer can experience emotions which they are not able to distinguish in the state of wakefulness. The origin of these emotions is subsequently seen as “unknown” which prompts researchers to consider the discontinuity of emotions. However, in accordance with Hartmann (2011, p.77) we believe that “there are not discontinuities at the level of emotions or emotional concerns”. We assume that continuity is always the case, but the dreamer is not necessarily consciously aware of it. An example of this are many dream analyses (e.g., 2022a, 2022b, 2021), where as a result of dream work, the dreamer gained an in-depth idea about the significance of a dream, even though initially they may have

Current study

This study presents the case of a recurring dream which the dreamer experienced in slight variations for over 20 years. The study captures the exact approach of the dream analysis, the structure of the conversation and the resulting psychodynamic reflections on the origin of the dream. The main aim is to illustrate the theory of processing emotions in the context of recurring dreams (e.g., Cartwright, 2010, Hartmann, 2010, Hill, 1996) on a specific case and show its significance for therapeutic practice.

2. Method

2.1. Participant

The patient is a 31-year-old woman who is divorced and childless. She currently has a new partner, a new job and as she herself says “one could say a great life”. She likes doing sports (e.g., cycling) which she started from a young age. She does not suffer from any mental or physical difficulties. After years of frustration, her goal was to understand a dream which kept repeating itself for decades. From the very start, the session was recorded on a voice recorder thanks to which it was possible to create a precise reconstruction of the session as well as an exact transcript of the dream analysis. The session which is described in this study is the first meeting.

She remembers having recurring dreams with the same content from the age of 10. At that time, they only appeared exceptionally, and the patient did not attribute any great significance to them. Later, approximately at the age of 15, the dreams began to appear more frequently and intensively. 5 years later, i.e., in 2011, the patient began to write them down and she looked for their psychological significance. However, she was unable to find one.

Several elements are repeated in the dreams. In the first case, it is the figure of a PE teacher, whom she had known since the age of 10 (this is the time when the said dreams started to surface). Another recurring element in the dream is doing a sports activity, and the school environment where the story takes place. The final recurring feature of these dreams is that they are exceptionally joyful. We mention several examples from the most recent period for the purpose of illustration:

Dream No. 1: “I went in the direction of “the cross” (note. - a meadow with a cross behind the school). On the way there I met that man - a teacher, coach from my school. He was older than he was back then at school, 70 or more years old, with crutches. I was embarrassed to approach him, because I did not know what I could possibly tell him - at the same time I had a lot on my mind. Finally, we ended up talking and I was incredibly happy.”

Dream No. 2: “I was in a large gym. We were exercising, he was friendly, we were talking. I grabbed the wall bars and began exercising, lifting my legs up. Meanwhile we were talking. I changed my clothes and then we continued talking outside, together with his wife. I invited them for a coffee and went with them. It was a wonderful conversation. It invigorated me so much so, that when I came back home, that very evening when it was already dark, I grabbed the bike and went for a ride.”

Dream No. 3: "I was in a large gym, and we were climbing a pole. I was waiting in a queue until it was my turn. I ran forward and grabbed the pole and immediately I was on the top. I was doing really well. When we finished, we stood in a queue again and he (note. the above-mentioned teacher) graded us. When he approached me, he gave me a letter instead of a grade – an application for a sports school which I was very happy about, although the application itself was not that important to me."

In these examples one can see many recurring elements, including the dream figure, the dream environment, activity and the main emotion. Since the patient has been experiencing the above-mentioned recurring dreams for over 20 years, according to the theory of processing emotions, one can presume that the patient has been trying to deal with certain emotional issues for over 20 years.

2.2. Analytical procedure for working with dreams

After the patient talked about her personal history and the history of the said dreams at the start of the session, what followed was working with the dream. The dream analysis was based on one of the contemporary theories of dreaming, which defines a dream as a function that serves to consolidate and integrate our emotions from the state of wakefulness (e.g., Cartwright, 2010; Hartmann, 2010; Hill, 1996). This theory created a platform in the context of which the information gained from the patient was interpreted. The dream work did not show a preference for any specific psychotherapeutic system (e.g., psychodynamic, Adlerian, etc.), but used contemporary and empirically proven assumptions. The aim was to increase the reliability and objectivity of dream interpretation, which would not result primarily from the worldview of the psychotherapist, but rather from objective research assumptions.

The dream work itself used a three-step system called Personality integrity approach, which was also used in previous studies (e.g. Fábik, 2022a, 2022b, 2021). The name of the above-mentioned system reflects the fact that thanks to dream work, a person is able to discover their unprocessed emotions, impulses or needs, which contributes to the wholeness of their personality. In the first and second phase of dream work, the dream emotions and dream contents were analysed as two of the most important aspects of the dream for its interpretation. By analysing these components, we arrived at provisional interpretations that were finally verified in the third step, which consisted of a continuing conversation. The following is a closer description of all the steps:

2.2.1 Analysis of dream emotions

Dream emotions (emotions experienced by a person during a dream) were considered patient's own emotions originating from their waking life, which are being consolidated and integrated by dreaming. This definition of dream emotions stems from the continuity hypothesis, which suggested that dream emotions are continuous, or parallel waking emotions (e.g., Fábik, 2022a, Kahn, 2019, Komasi et al., 2018, Mikulinger et al., 2011; Schredl & Reinhard, 2010, Selterman et al., 2014; Serpe & DeCicco, 2020, Sikka et al., 2018, Weinstein et al., 2018). For this reason, many authors recommend looking for the same emotional dynamics that take place in both dream and wakefulness (e.g., Totlis, 2011),

which can lead to significant new patient perspectives in a short time (Hartmann, 2010). For instance, if the patient feels content or relaxed in the dream and subsequently begins to experience sadness under the influence of a certain situation, it can be assumed that the same emotions (emotional dynamics) were experienced by the patient even in waking life. These insights were also applied in our analysis. At first, we let the dreamer describe the emotions experienced in the dream in some detail, and in the context of creating an interpretation, we considered that it was related to the personal emotions of the patient arising from waking life.

2.2.2 Analysis of dream contents

In accordance with multiple studies focused on dream contents (e.g., Barrett, 1994; Fábik, 2022a, 2022b, 2021, 2020; Hartmann, 2010; Roesler, 2020, 2018a, 2018b), the dream contents (in this case the figure of the teacher) were defined as symbols of the intrapsychic dynamic of the dreamer. For a closer specification of these symbols, it is possible to use the imagination of patients or short relaxations, the aim of which is to relate to or associate with the dream objects. For example, if the dreamer feels that the animal in their dream is angry or aggressive, it can be assumed that it has to do with a hostility or aggression impulse. Thereafter it is only necessary to assign the specific emotional experience to the given impulse analysed in the previous step.

2.2.3 Determination of dream interpretation

By analysing dream emotions and dream contents, a preliminary interpretation was obtained, formed by an impulse (symbolised by the dream figure) and its associated emotion. We subsequently verified our preliminary interpretation in the same therapeutic conversation. For this purpose, some specific psychotherapeutic questions were used that helped clarify the said dream impulse from a psychodynamic point of view. By being able to clarify the occurrence of impulses and emotions in a dream in accordance with the patient's personality structure and their basic psychodynamic conflict, verification of the reliability of our interpretation is to be considered sufficient.

3. Case study

3.1. Step 1 - Analysis of dream emotions

In this section we are moving towards the analysis of the recurring dream. At the beginning of this, the dreamer was educated about the significance of dreams and appropriately informed about the function of dreams in our lives. The analysis itself began with the first step in which the patient was invited to describe the emotions in the dream and their intensity. Specifically, attention was focused on Dream No. 1 which was the latest dream recalled in the series. The subsequent dialogue followed:

D.F.: Could you please describe all the emotions that you experienced in the dream?

P: In those dreams I feel like I'm being myself. It's very positive, happy, it's very emotional...

D.F.: If you had to describe the intensity on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the least intense emotion and 10 the most...

P: The most, the most...

D.F.: The most, ten... so a very, very intense dream. As you already suggested, the feeling of happiness is the strongest one.... And were there any other emotions present in the dream, whether at the beginning or in the course of it?

P: Happiness, everything was happiness. No other ones were present. Simply happiness, I feel like I'm being myself there... I can't find any other words.

D.F.: Alright... happiness.

Based on this short dialogue, several important facts arise. In the first instance, we already know that it is the emotion of happiness which is consolidated and integrated in the dream process. We also know that the happiness in the dream was exceptionally intense, which in accordance with the theory of processing emotions (Cartwright, 2010, Hartmann, 2010, Hill, 1996) and the continuity hypothesis (e.g., Fábik, 2022a, Kahn, 2019, Komasi et al., 2018, Mikulinger et al., 2011; Schredl & Reinhard, 2010, Selterman et al., 2014; Serpe & DeCicco, 2020, Sikka et al., 2018, Weinstein et al., 2018) suggests that the patient experienced an intense feeling of happiness also during wakefulness. If we want to understand the dream, we have to find out which situations in their waking life generate the emotions of happiness. We tried to establish a link with her waking life...

D.F.: Do you associate your feeling of happiness in the dream with something? Do you sometimes experience the same feeling of happiness also in your waking life?

P: I don't know.... with sport...I don't know... But maybe sport could be it... that feeling of happiness.

D.F.: Uhm, you experience the strong feeling of happiness while doing sport ...

P: Uhm, yes ... because also in that dream, there's the coach. He would always motivate me. His figure was always a ... I respected him. Whatever he said, I did, to the best of my abilities. And in my current life I also "pull out" these dreams. For example, I will go cycling and if I'm at the top of the hill and feel like I can't go on, then I "pull out" that dream and tell myself "I have to, I have to, I have to". I will recall this coach as if he was motivating me and then I'll make it.

D.F.: Uhm...

P: So sometimes I will use that dream as a motivation.

D.F.: The coach is a very significant figure for you, whom you still draw from.

P: Well...

Based on this conversation it seems that the similar feeling of happiness which the dreamer experiences in the dream, she experiences awake and doing sports activities. Therefore, we can rightly assume that the dream is closely related to the patient's interest in sport. We thus continued onto the second step in the analytical approach and explored which impulse symbolised by the coach can be related to such intense happiness.

3.2. Step 2 - Analysis of dream contents

D.F.: Please also tell me about the coach in your dream. If you had to ascribe certain characteristics to him, could you tell me what he was like?

P: I didn't really notice him that much... in this manner, in private life. He was more important to me in PE classes and during performances...and I also had respect... and

I don't know. I honestly considered him only in his capacity of a coach... a strong coach. But he... if I think of him now, he really wasn't a special coach. He was just a regular teacher.

D.F.: Yeah...

P: Nothing special, it's not as if he was something more. Maybe only I considered him to be something more.

D.F.: Feel free to say more on how you perceived him...

P: Just simply, as a coach. I don't know what more to add to that.

D.F.: Strong... he generated respect...motivated others...

P: Yes, exactly...

Based on the conversation and several studies (e.g. Barrett, 1994; Fábik, 2022a, 2022b, 2021, 2020; Roesler, 2020, 2018a, 2018b) one can infer that the figure of the coach mirrors an impulse of strength, determination or will power. When the patient is in contact with this tendency while doing sports, she feels great happiness and joy. In other words, just like the patient is happy in waking life when doing sports, where she is in contact with her own strength, motivation and is overcoming herself, then she is happy in her dream when in contact with a strong, motivating coach.

3.3. Step 3 - Determination of dream interpretation

One more striking fact comes out in the patient's dreams. The dreams in question, which the dreamer had been repeatedly experiencing for the past 20 years are exceptionally intense. According to research (e.g., Hartmann, 2010), we can assume that in such intense dreams, the dream emotion was not sufficiently worked out in waking life and therefore it appears in an intense dream, where there is an attempt to consolidate and integrate. The question therefore remains, what the reasons are which can prevent experiencing this happiness in waking life...

D.F.: I will ask you a question for your imagination. If you had such a strong feeling of happiness in your regular, waking life, just like the one you feel in your dream, what would your day or life look like? What would maybe change? (The aim of the question was to find out whether the experience of happiness and joy creates an intrapsychic or interpersonal conflict).

P: Well, if I had to use my imagination... well, it would definitely not look anything like the way I'm living right now. If I really wanted to be like myself, authentically as in the dream, then I would find a strong motivator like the one in the dream and at least 70% of it would revolve around sports.

D.F.: Uhm...

P: The last time I had that kind of feeling was when we went to Krahule (note. ski centre in Slovakia) with my partner and I stood across the slope and that's when the feeling that I am being myself came to me. Now I am happy. Here in this moment. It was simply like that feeling in the dream.

D.F.: Uhm. So, if you had to be as happy as in the dream or if you were as happy as in that dream then you would be busy with sports, you'd have your coach, a motivator. This would make up 70% of your day...

P: Uhm.

D.F.: Based on your answer it seems as if you weren't able to afford such happiness in your regular life...

P: Yes...yes...that's ...why...Yes, because my mother never really approved of sports and even nowadays, she is very demotivating towards me and sports. Even now, recently, she said it, about two months ago, when I set myself a cycling challenge to do 78km. It really was about overcoming my boundaries and I really love that feeling. Then I come home, and my mother says: "What was that good for?" Apparently, I'm "making myself suffer, I'm torturing myself, and whether I gained anything from that." She can absolutely not comprehend it, she's a great demotivator, and actually my whole family are, when it comes to sports.

D.F.: Hm... I'm sorry. I'm really sorry to hear that...

P: And also...my mother is a tough nut to crack... but I've come to terms with it.

D.F.: Uhm...

P: I have a 10 year-old sister from my father's side, and I can see myself in her. She's just like me, whether in the way she looks, but also in her enthusiasm for sport. I'm a bit jealous of her, that she has such good parents who support her financially and who motivate her in other ways. So, she's currently 10 years old and just like me back then, she does gymnastics. So, she also has a lot of talent and the potential to go far. So, I'm a bit envious that she has the parents she has.

D.F.: Uhm. It's possible that your dream is exactly about this. You like doing sports, you strive for your own happiness, but at some point, you stop your happiness... you don't experience... you're demotivated by your mother. You put it aside and then the happiness starts appearing in your dream. (This presumption is based on the theory of processing emotions which states that our emotions are consolidated and integrated in the processes of dreaming. Since the dreamer suppresses positive emotions whilst being awake due to the influence of her mother, these remain unprocessed and can only be processed within the dream process).

P: Well... it's quite possible, because the demotivation in my environment is unbelievable... all that negativity.

D.F.: I'm sorry about that. That must mean that for many years you were demotivated this way or pushed into doing less sports.

P: Yes, from a young age...

D.F.: That's unusual, most of the time children are supported in sports...

P: To be honest, my childhood wasn't the best... I wasn't the best student, but if my mother had known the real me, then she could definitely have motivated me to study better through sport. Because she... yelled at me and used stupid methods...and actually it doesn't matter anymore. But even now I know that she could have used sport to motivate me to get better grades or other things, but she never understood me in my life or supported me mentally. And... well... it wasn't really a ... I grew up with my grandparents so...

D.F.: Uhm...

Thanks to the above-mentioned dialogue we have discovered that the dreamer experiences an intense feeling of happiness while doing sports. In these situations, she feels like herself and is able to enjoy the present moment. Based on the conversation we assume that while doing sports the patient is in contact with her strength and determination which is symbolised in the dream by the coach from her child-

hood. The conversation also suggested that the dreamer is unable to share her joy about sport with anyone, she cannot experience it, and even her mother induces feelings of guilt. The result is an unexpressed and unexperienced emotion of happiness, which is consequently worked out (consolidated and integrated) in the dream. Since the dreamer does not express and has suppressed her joy for the past 20 years, it is justifiable that the dreams have also been repeating themselves for the past 20 years.

4. Discussion

Thanks to the dream analysis we have reached the conclusion that the dream mirrors a feeling of happiness which the dreamer experiences during sports activities. While doing these, she is in contact with her strength and determination (the strength and determination in the dream is symbolised by the coach), she feels like herself and is filled with happiness. However, most likely she suppresses this joy and positive energy in conscious life (...I really love that feeling. Then I come home, and my mother says: "What was that good for?" Apparently, I'm "making myself suffer, I'm torturing myself, and whether I gained anything from that." She can absolutely not comprehend it, she's a great demotivator...). The barrier is most likely her dominant mother, who has talked the dreamer out of doing sport since her childhood and which demeaned her activities. The patient never had the opportunity to openly experience happiness from herself, her own determination or performance. All the feelings of joy, which she experienced doing sports, therefore had to appear, and be processed in the dream for many years.

The reliability of the above-mentioned interpretation can be confirmed by several statements. In the first case, the final interpretation contains only those facts which the patient herself mentioned and it does not contain any additional information created by the therapist. We are aware that the therapist prompted the answers by asking specific questions, but these were formulated in a very broad way and were not suggestive. Secondly, the interpretation was meaningfully placed into the life history of the dreamer and clarified in the context of her psychodynamic conflict. Thirdly, the recurring dream began to appear at the time when the dreamer began to be more intensely involved in sports, which corresponds to our interpretation that the dreamer had to hide her joy from doing sports. Fourthly, the patient immediately accepted the resulting interpretation ("Yes...yes...that's ...why...Yes, because my mother never really approved of sports and even nowadays she is very demotivating towards me and sports.") and at the end of the meeting she was convinced about its veracity. And fifthly, the entire stated analytical approach in dream work, called the Personal integrity approach, resulted exclusively from research-based assumptions and it was already used in previous studies (e.g. Fábik, 2022a, 2022b).

Based on these reasons we consider our dream work to be relevant and scientifically sound. We therefore hold the opinion that the dream theory focused on processing emotions, which formed the basic platform for understanding the dream, presents one of the most significant theories in clarifying the presence of recurring dreams. It consistently assumes that the aim of the dream is to process our emotions, regardless, if it concerns positive or negative dreams. As a contrast to this stands one of the most popular contemporary theories of dreaming – the threat simulation the-

ory; although it clarifies the occurrence of (negative) recurring dreams, it virtually does not explain the occurrence of positive dreams. According to research however, positive dreams are the most frequent forms of dreams. For example, in the research of Oluwole (2019), in a sample of Nigerian university students, more than half of recurring dreams were positive; in the research of Schredl et al. (2022) one third of all recurring dreams were neutral or positive. Other research has shown that a third of recurring dreams do not contain any threats (Zadra et al., 2006); further research even talks about it being over half of them (Gauchat et al., 2015). At the same time, it has to be said that even in dreams where a threat occurs, that which is missing in many cases are “successful and ecologically adaptive avoidance behaviors” (Gauchat et al., 2015), which prompts the question whether a simulation of threat is really a basic function of dreams. From the perspective of the theory of processing emotions, one can consistently clarify positive and negative recurring dreams, which increases its relevance.

5. Conclusion

The publication illustrated the theory of processing emotions on a recurring dream that had been experienced for 20 years. In working with the dream, we have proven that the patient's recurring dreams resulted from a repeatedly unexpressed and unexperienced happiness which consolidated and integrated in the dream process. We therefore hold the belief that the theory of processing emotions has a significant place not only in psychological research but also in psychotherapeutic practice. In the context of psychological research we can observe that the theory of processing emotions remains in accordance with the continuity hypothesis, which increases its scientific significance. At the same time it reliably clarifies the occurrence of positive and negative dreams and presents important insights about the origin of recurring dreams. From the perspective of psychotherapy, the theory of processing emotions suggests that emotions experienced in a dream are real emotions which find their origin in the life of the dreamer. By analysing these emotions we can significantly broaden the self-understanding and insight of a patient regarding their own life situation.

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