



# Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth

*Robert A. Johnson*

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**Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth** Robert A. Johnson  
A noted author and Jungian analyst teaches how to use dreams and inner exercises to achieve personal wholeness and a more satisfying life.

## Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth Details

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### Sonya says

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### Ashwini Murthy says

I'm a big fan of Carl Jung. I've read other books on Jungian psychology. But loved this book because it's so easy to understand. The nice thing about this book is that it provides practical methods for working with dreams and imagination. I've been maintaining a dream journal for 2 years now. Reading this book gave me better clarity. But the methods outlined in the book are rather difficult and tedious to follow and don't work for me every time. The unconscious doesn't seem to co-operate so easily. especially active imagination. What seems to help me is the urge to understand or sometimes a flash of insight. Not so much a step by step method. Or, maybe I'm doing something wrong! Nevertheless, it's a great read

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### Frahmani110 says

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### Gail says

I am not an analyst, although I've been fortunate to have an analyst guide me through some rough times. She recommended this book to me, and so I dutifully read it twice--and didn't quite "get it."

Recently I read a reference to this book, and returned to it. Now I "get it." This book goes beyond trying to just document dreams to a four-step approach to Active Imagination--but with a warning that this activity shouldn't be entered into lightly, and preferably, at least at first, not alone; one should have a guide or companion. I've begun to realize that where before, with help, I may have encountered some cues to the unconscious and tried to understand them and incorporate the messages into my consciousness--now, I find that I do this alone, and comfortably. I wonder if some of what I thought I didn't get earlier from this guide somehow seeped into my psyche after all.

There are some beautiful things in this book. I was intrigued with the emphasis Mr. Johnson gave to the

benefit of rituals, the subjectivity of interpreting one's own experiences, and the whole, well, 'cosmos' of concepts relating to just that: relating. Being aware and having the patience and courage to pay attention and devote time and effort to find your way into and through what you can't directly experience and understand--but for the aids of symbolic imagery and interpretation.

I view Inner Work--the desire and ability to engage with symbolic messages that occur in dreams or imagination--as a means to dialog with parts of myself that heretofore I might have just waved away as irrelevant. But one's unconscious harbors huge reservoirs of information that is critically relevant to your life; casually dismiss it at your peril.

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### **Robin says**

2012 rating: Wow, what a year in therapy with a Jungian will do. This book sings to me now and I'm at a place where I am open minded enough to do work that I once was highly skeptical of. Putting the Active Imagination exercise to work has proved to be eye-opening and helping me dig further into the layers of my unconscious and my depression.

2011 rating: 3 stars: I wish they had an star rating that meant "unsure". This book was both easy to read and hard to grasp at the same time. The concepts of dream work and shadow/unconscious/ego made sense to me and further fleshed out the Jungian books I have read. The new idea of Active Imagination work left me wondering and confused a little. It helped explain exactly what Jung was up to when he was writing "weird" things in his autobiography but left me lost as if it was a practice I could put in place myself or the merits of doing so. All in all further food for thought.

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### **culley says**

DIY Jungian dream work and active imagination. Working on dreams in therapy is wonderful and indulgent, but nine times out of ten when doing dream work you are on your own. This book provides a practical approach for working with dreams, and it also details the process of active imagination. This book is about as practical as a book on dreams can be. There are many ways to work on yourself, many styles and different approaches, something for everyone. Dream work is just another technique, but it is, in my opinion, a pretty classy option. I intend to stay with it. This book is now one of my trusted resources. I really took the highlighter to it, poor thing.

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### **Amé says**

Excellent introductory book to (unsupervised) Jungian dream analysis and active imagination for beginners. The author gives an approachable overview of such necessary jungian terms as unconscious, archetypes, symbols, ego, consciousness and individuation and how their interplay in dream and active imagination images, when properly understood and directly related to our everyday life through ritual (the translating of spirit into matter or of intellectual understanding into physical reality), they contribute to a deepening and widening of our consciousness and goad us steadily on the journey to individuation. This does not claim to be the ultimate book on dream analysis because there simply cannot be such a book. When it comes to inner work one can only get so much from books the most valuable contribution being one's lifelong commitment to the painstaking journey itself.

I heartily recommend this book.

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### **Andrea Paterson says**

I have often wondered why we dream, and where the stuff of dreams comes from. This book answers those questions from a Jungian perspective and shows the reader how to interpret dream material and other things that emerge from the unconscious aspects of our minds. I certainly have a new perspective on dreams as symbolic communication, but I expect that many people would need help to interpret their dreams using the deceptively simple method outlined.

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### **Chiraz Ben a says**

I have only read 1/3 of the book but I feel like I have opened a Pandora's Box. It has been one "aha" moment after another ever since I started reading this book a couple days ago. Just blew my mind away!! It opened my eyes to, what to me is, the Greatest SECRET of the Universe: the essence of the total self, relationship between the conscious and subconscious, the subconscious as the source of all creativity and language, the symbolic language that the subconscious uses to communicate with the conscious mind through dream images and imagination, the notion of the collective subconscious of all of humankind, and how fairytales and myths are an expression of it.

Being a scientist who has always prided herself in her superior rational thinking abilities, another major epiphany for me has been about the major disconnect in modern culture between science and the spiritual/religious. I guess with all the great scientific and technological feats of the past century, a lot of us have gotten a little too cocky, over confident about the capabilities of the rational mind, and have degraded or dismissed the spiritual and religious to the realm of pure personal belief.

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### **Travis Boren says**

I found this book to be very instructive as far as an actual way to increase awareness of our subconscious--a practical guide, one isn't a virtually useless dream-dictionary or full of stereotypical analysis platitudes. I guess that's what I was predisposed to believe; that this would be stereotypically Jungian book and prove to be too mystical or unusable for me. I found this was a prejudice that I had, and that I was judging the book literally by its cover. Although there are still small instances of what I would consider mysticism, (and therefore not really logical/provable/reliable theories), the overall value of the book is not harmed by this.

There is a concise introduction about the general characteristics of the unconscious--the conflicts, the parts, (or different subselves), the archetypes.

The dream section is made in steps, and when I use the steps methodologically, analyzing/getting value from my dreams does not feel overwhelming as it always has been. It has many examples to concretize what the steps mean, and lots of common questions answered--most all that popped up in my head were answered shortly after they came up. I've personally made some progress with recognizing what conflicts dreams are illustrating as well.

The Active Imagination section was something that I thought sounded very cooky at first glance, but it turns

out to be very sound in what it actually meant; its similar to the inner dialogue process that is done in Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy. This is where we participate in an active dialogue with different parts, or "selves," that are in our subconscious. It merges our conscious questions with our subconscious parts that all have needs, desires, and personalities of their own. The "active" in Active Imagination is to denote the conscious participation of our interaction with the subconscious, as contrasted with passive fantasy. As someone who's done IFS for about 6 months and has seen its value, I really took a lot of useful information from this part of the book. It was a strength to have this Active Imagination section written from a Jungian perspective, and it addresses some things that IFS, to my knowledge, doesn't.

If you've ever wanted to understand the practical ways in which you can change your relationship with your unconscious, of which that have had a long history of being effective, then this book is for you. It is a very well laid out guide to understanding the mechanisms of inner work and why they are effective.

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### Ugn? says

Esu šališka C.G. Jungo ir ko pasek?j? vertintoja - (dažniausiai) man ten viskas aišku, ?domu ir atrodo, kad visiems reikalinga. Bet ?ia tikrai aišku :D ir suprantamai parašyta, kaip analizuoti savo sapnus ir dirbti su savo vaizduote, tik perskaityti ir pritaikyti belieka.

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### Elizabeth Andrew says

Just excellent. Why did it take me so long to find this book? I've always admired Robert Johnson's memoir, BALANCING HEAVEN AND EARTH. This text should be required reading for anyone working with dreams or the imagination as part of their spiritual journey.

"In fact, no one "makes up" anything in the imagination. The material that appears in the imagination has to originate in the unconscious. .... Imagination is a TRANSFORMER that converts the invisible material into images the conscious mind can perceive."

"Our isolation from the unconscious is synonymous with our isolation from our souls, from the life of the spirit. It results in the loss of our religious life, for it is in the unconscious that we find our individual conception of God and experience our deities. The religious function—this inborn demand for meaning and inner experience—is cut off with the rest of the inner life. ... If we don't go to the spirit, the spirit comes to us as neurosis."

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### Sogand Rmz says

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### Author says

This book was really useful for breaking down the process of dream analysis. It had a lot of examples and broke the process into steps that made it easy. I'd definitely recommend it for anyone interested in Jung's

method of dream analysis. It makes a good starter point, though it is technical at time. With all the examples of each step that are given, it makes it easy to translate reading about it into doing it yourself.

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### **Tara says**

This book is well written and provides tools for interpreting our dreams and understanding what is hidden/going on in the unconscious. Being interested in dreamwork and wanting to know more, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this. I loved the last section on Active Imagination (dialoguing with the unconscious while in the conscious/awake state) and am excited by its potential!

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