



## **Active Dreaming: The Essential Training™**

### **Active Dreaming Toolkit - Lightning Process**

[0:00:00]

Robert:

I want to introduce you to a fast, fun and fabulous way of sharing dreams and stories, personal stories that you can play any day with just about anyone. We need a way to talk to each other about dreams. We need a way to share safely, personal stories and adventures that will enable us to be heard, to get some helpful feedback and maybe to be guided towards appropriate action. Dreams require action. If you don't do something with your dream, you're probably not going to dream all that well. We need to do something more than analyze dreams, assuming we're paying attention to them. We need to do something in the world to embody the energy, the juice, maybe the specific guidance and clarity a dream gives us. What I want to give you now is what I call the Lightning Dreamwork Game or the Lightning Dreamwork Process. I invented this about 15 years ago, and it's now being taught and practiced all over the world. It is a new technique in our culture which makes, as I say, it fast and fun to share dreams and stories just about anywhere. I called it "lightning" thinking about a lightning bolt, something that is quick and that focuses energy. But I notice as I go along, that lots of people turn it into lightening, with an E, sometimes because they simply can't spell lightning and sometimes because they're engaging in wordplay, and I like that second version. Lightening is lightening up. It's receiving enlightenment and the game can do that too.

I want to explain and then demonstrate, with the help of a wonderful friend in The Shift family who likes dreaming and likes this process, I want to explain the four key steps. These are simple steps in the Lightning Dreamwork Game so that you can go out and talk to anybody this way. You'll find that when you do that, people are delighted. They're sometimes amazed there's such a simple, easy way to keep things safe. They are thrilled when they discover that they can be heard and can be encouraged to tell their stories better. And they love it when you give them some feedback without presuming to interpret their dreams or their lives and that it all leads to action. So here are the four steps in the Game, the Lightning Dreamwork Game, the Lightning Story-Sharing Game if you like because you can use this technique with actually any material, a life experience, maybe an experience of synchronicity, maybe a memory, maybe a symptom or maybe a personal image, but let's focus on the dream aspect for now.

All right, you're talking to someone, maybe that intimate stranger who shares your bed or maybe someone you're standing in line with at the checkout in the supermarket, and they're ready to tell you a dream. Now what you want to do is you want to encourage them to tell the dream simply and clearly like a story. So, Step One is get the story. Stories need titles. If you are helping someone to express a dream, ask them for a title for the dream. They might be unused to the idea, so you could say, "Well, think of it like a painting or a picture, think of it like a movie, think of it like a story and give it a name, give it a title." It's interesting how much can jump out immediately when we encourage each other to give a title to a story or experience in this way. Some feature of the story or the dream that may not have been altogether clear or prominent now leaps out and you see that's the direction to take. And it's good to get into the practice of naming things. This is Step One, get the story and get the person telling the story to give it a title. I cannot stress too much the importance of this step. In our culture, many of us are losing the gift and the art of telling stories and making stories. When we can help each other to tell our stories in this way, we are promoting each other into the roles of story-makers, storytellers and the makers of stories for our own lives. That's important. That's big. There is power in that.

Okay, Step Two, Step Two is if you're playing guide or friend for the person telling the dream, you're going to ask a few essential questions. I think of these essential questions as basically three in number. You'll slip in some subsidiary questions. We'll see how that works later on when we're talking about an actual dream in all its detail. Question one is always the same. It's feelings, feelings, feelings. I'm repeating it because sometimes we have a hard time expressing our feelings. We'll go off about what we're thinking or some associations or something else. If you're listening to a dream, the first thing you want to know is how does the dreamer feel about it? When I say how do they feel about it, I mean primarily: how does the dreamer feel about this experience right afterwards? Feelings in the dream are of course interesting and important, but the most interesting feelings to consider are the feelings right after. You might have had a dream in which you met a saber-toothed tiger and were torn apart, and you wake up feeling good. Well, your feelings afterwards are going to be a very interesting coloration to how you look at the dream. It's obvious, if you just go with it as a text, you might be missing the fact that the feelings are telling you something quite different about the dream than what the text might seem to say.

Your first feelings around a dream or an experience of synchronicity of something like that also, again your immediate guidance to whether this is basically negative or positive, whether it's urgent or not, whether it's personal or whether you need to do something with it soon or not. Neutral feelings, blah feelings, you don't have strong feelings and that might be telling you, well this is interesting information maybe but it's not something that is pressing. It's not

something that is urgent. It's something at a distance. Sometimes, on the other hand, you might have a dream whose content seems quite mundane and humdrum but your feelings are so strong that you know that you need to do something with that dream. That's the kind of dream actually, the humdrum dream which leaves you with a feeling of urgency that is sometimes showing you things you need to attend to in waking life. That's the kind of dream that you might need to think about right away in terms of, is it rehearsing you for a situation that's about to emerge in your life, and maybe giving you a way of handling that situation better?

**[0:06:14]**

The second question I call the reality check question. It has two aspects. First of all, you ask the person telling the dream, "What do you recognize from this in the rest of your life?" What do you recognize from this dream in the rest of your life? What is familiar? Do you know that band? Do you know that child? Do dragons fly out of your basement? The question relates to your physical life but it relates to your life in the imagination as well. Maybe you don't have dragons in your basement but you dream about them all the time. You love dragon stories. You've read Anne McCaffrey and followed other dragons. What do you recognize from this in the rest of your life? It provides a context of understanding. The other aspect of the reality check question is this: Hey, could any part of this dream manifest in the future in some way, literally or metaphorically? Although the dreamers know absolutely not, be patient and ask a few more questions because dreams are constantly coaching us to what lies ahead. A purely analytical approach to dreams often misses this altogether. Western psychology tends to miss it in general. The old shamanic indigenous wisdom is that dreams are preparing us for the future. They're rehearsing us to challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Let's not miss those messages. If you're helping someone with a dream or looking at your own dream, because all of this can be applied by yourself to yourself, let's remember that, don't fail to ask: Could this happen in some way in the future? If the answer to that is maybe, yes, well, then the other thought is going to be, if you like it, what can you do to manifest this future event? And if you don't like it, how do you avoid it?

The third question, we're still in Step Two of the Game, is to get some focus on what the dreamer most wants to know about. If I'm talking to someone, I might say, "Okay, what do you know about this, or what are you curious about?" Sometimes the dreamer has set an intention before having the dream, in which case it will be nice to know what the intention set the night before is and then play the game of trying to link the intention to the dream that came through. Sometimes making that link requires some imagination and some detective work.

Okay, we're ready to talk about Stage Three in the game, Step Three or Move Three in the game of doing Lightning Dreamwork. This involves learning to talk together in a way where we can be heard and can offer helpful feedback in a

way that respects the dreamer and makes the dreamer the final authority on the meaning of his or her own dream in his or her own life. We don't tolerate gurus, masters or authorities in this approach to Dreamwork. We accept in this approach that the dreamer is going to be the final authority on his or her own dream, so we learn to talk to each other this way. If we're going to offer feedback on a dream, we say, "If it were my dream, I would think about such-and-such." If it were my dream, you've listened to someone's dream, you talk to them by saying, "If it were my dream." Maybe it's a story from another part of life, then you begin by saying, "If it were my story or if it were my experience." Then you say whatever you like. You can have any theory, opinion, background or any kind of life experience, and you can speak. You can be a Freudian, a Jungian, a gestaltian, a shaman in terms of your understanding of dreams, and you can speak from that point of view. All that is required of you is to suspend and avoid any tendency to tell people what things mean. Offer your feedback. It doesn't matter whether you get it right or not actually. See, this is part of the liberating quality of this approach to sharing dreams and sharing life experiences. In offering your feedback, you do not have to get it right. Sometimes you can say something to the dreamer that leaves them completely cold, something that is far-removed from their own sense of what the dream is about. That can be tremendously helpful because it assists the dreamer to hone in on what their feelings about the dream are and what their associations about the dream are. Of course, you can be an absolutely gee-whiz, infallible dream reader and you just absolutely get it right. Well, you might have gotten it right but even so, you're not going to say, "I've got it right. I'll tell you what your dream means." You're going to say, "If it were my dream, I'll think about such-and-such." You'll find, once you've mastered the art of talking to people this way, it carries over into all sorts of life situations. It makes it much easier to talk to people about things that might be sensitive or difficult if we speak in a less respectful way.

**[0:10:45]**

The last step in the Lightning Dreamwork Game is to get some action. It's to come up with an action plan. It's to encourage the person who has had this dream or had this experience, to do something to honor it. They might be clueless once again about how to approach this. What does it mean to take action from a dream? Well, it might mean to condense some guidance for life and guidance in handling a situation. It might be as simple as coming up with a rule for life, like I'm going to maintain better boundaries or I'm going to watch out for that person. It might send you on a shamanic shopping spree because you dreamed of wearing a certain color or certain type of clothes or shoes you don't have. And you think, "Gee, that felt good in the dream. Let me bring that into the body, into life and go and get those shoes and dance in the red shoes maybe." It might send you off in a line of research. I do a great deal of research inspired by strange words and clues given to me in dreams. I love it. In the age of ante-Google, it's sometimes a very quick manner to get some information based on a dream. You might want to go back inside the dream. This is one of the core

techniques in our Active Dreaming approach that I teach in The Shift courses and of course in my live workshops, and write about in my books. Which is going back inside a dream so that you have more than just the report or the memory from the dream. You are recovering more of the experience of the dream. Once you learn to do that, you can go beyond the scenes you remember and have a further adventure. You can face that terror. You can go through that mystery door. You can talk to that person. You can go on all sorts of travel and expeditions.

Those are just some quick examples of the many kinds of actions that a dream might inspire you to take. One thing you could always do for temporary closure in the process is to ask the dreamer to come up with a bumper sticker, a mantra, a slogan, a banner or a few words that hold something of the energy's direction of the dream. So, there's an overview for now of how the Lightning Dreamwork Game works. In a moment, I'm going to ask Amy from The Shift Network to share a dream with me and we'll demonstrate how this works in practice by talking through her dreams. So, Amy, are you ready?

Amy: I am ready.

Robert: You go right ahead, share a dream with us please.

Amy: Okay, so this dream is called "Sidewalk Shark."

Robert: It's called "Sidewalk Shark?"

Amy: Yes, and when it started, I was in a house that wasn't mine. There was a young man whose name was John who was slightly disabled, and I was helping him cook and decorate his house even though we had just met for the first time. He was showing me around. The whole house felt really clear, light and beautiful, but then up on the attic on the fourth floor, the stairway had a huge gap and then all of a sudden the energy was incredibly dense and had a horrible feeling. I was going to clear it with some salt just for starters. And then looking out the window, I saw this beautiful shark that was wounded on the side of the road, on the sidewalk. So, we ran downstairs and some friends of mine picked him up. Right by its throat it was bleeding as if it had swallowed part of a machine that was still on. My friends actually were carrying it upstairs, and I was dumping water on it. I felt really protective about the shark. I was trying to call a friend, and there was just nothing that I could do. There was a vet surgeon, this female surgeon who was preparing to open up the shark which was mostly hollow. And I just had to step back and trust that it was going to be taken care of and then I woke up.

Robert: What an intriguing dream. Okay, let's do our process. You gave the story a title, that's step one. You did that very well. You held our attention and we were

enthralled, scared, nervous and excited. What are your feelings right after the dream, Amy, your feelings right after the dream?

[0:15:00]

Amy: I felt like it was ominous. I was concerned, and I felt like there was something that maybe I should be aware of. I was worried.

Robert: Yes, okay, thank you, you said that very clearly. The second question is the reality check. What, if anything, from this dream do you recognize in the rest of your life? For example, have you had any connections, thoughts or dreams about sharks? Do you have any connection with a shark and John and the house?

Amy: Yeah, well sharks are powerful allies for me. I've dreamed about them often since I was little, never had one wounded before though so that was upsetting.

Robert: So, you've had positive associations with sharks for a long time.

Amy: Yes, positive, yes.

Robert: Okay, anything else familiar?

Amy: Well, all the people that were in the dream are people that I knew. I've never been in this house. I didn't know the boy, the young man who I was helping, and I didn't know the surgeon, but the other people I knew.

Robert: What about the need for cleansing a space and your using salt in the dream, is this something that you've experienced in your life? Would you use salt for a situation like that?

Amy: Yes, using salt as a clearing agent and setting a protective, energetic field is something that is familiar to me that I've done before.

Robert: Okay, so is it possible that some elements of this dream could manifest in the future in some way? Is it possible that someone, for example, might require surgery? Is it possible that you might need to cleanse a space for yourself or for someone else? Is it possible you'll run into a character who reminds you of John? Are any of these elements things that could play out in some way in the future?

Amy: Well, yes, I've actually been meaning to do a salt grid in my house, so I definitely am thinking that's something that maybe this was a prompting towards. I could certainly meet somebody like John. That doesn't seem out of the ordinary. I mean, yeah, I think some of these things feel like they could come to pass.

Robert: Right, okay, thank you. So, we did Step Two which was to ask the essential questions, and Amy responded very quickly and clearly. Step Three is to play "If it were my dream" game. So, I'm going to give Amy some thoughts and

associations from my point of view. I'm not going to pretend to understand her dream, I'm simply going to give her the first things that come to me. First, Amy, if it's my dream, if it were my dream, I'm always intrigued by a house that is larger, bigger and different from my regular house. I often think of it as maybe an analog for the house of my soul, my body or my life. I'm always intrigued on different levels. In the case of this house, there's a slight problem here which is that some cleansing is required on the attic level. If it's my dream, my mind goes back to a house that I owned years ago on Long Island which actually was a haunted house. There were literally the ghosts of an elderly brother and sister who had hated each other in life, up in the attic level of that house. We never got around to renovating it, but I've had encounters with them from time to time. I never used salt. My attitude was rather laissez-faire. As long as they're not bothering me, it's okay. But I would take that element of the dream, given my experience of life, as a literal prompt to do a literal cleansing which we're going to do. I've done cleansing with salt as well. I mean, I'd certainly look and see whether something is off in the attic, in the house of my life, and maybe this involves someone like John as well.

Far more important than that, for me, is this whole episode with the shark. Like you, I'm distressed by that. Like you, I regard the shark as an ally. Here's the heart of it for me. I work with the shark as an ally for people who have developed cancer. Sharks, by and large, don't get cancer. They do occasionally get it, but they're pretty cancer-free. And the shark is a tremendous ally in imaginal ways and shamanic ways for people who have cancer. I worked successfully and talked about this with a number of cancer patients, through the energy of the shark. In the street, in the wounded shark, for me is the image of the power of healing and the gift of healing, which is self-wounded, instead of being available for those in need, the power of healing itself has been challenged, threatened or cut open. I have another life association with this in the description of the piece of machinery maybe that damaged the shark. I had a dog that I loved, a great, big, sloppy, black dog who was a bit goofy. Once, she picked up part of the blade of a big agricultural tractor, a mowing machine, and chomped it in her mouth and was bleeding from her mouth because she had bitten down on a piece of machinery. The relevance of that to this story is that for me that dog and her slobber were medicine. That was a healing dog. That was an informal service dog with the power of healing in her slobber and her love. I noticed that something that others might find fearsome, in this case the shark which is a power of healing for you and for me, has been damaged and is going to require attention and surgery. That prompts me to think very carefully about who and where in my life I might encounter someone, possibly someone challenged by cancer who is going to need the power of healing. I'm going to want to make sure that I am fully in touch with that power in myself, for myself and others.

[0:20:50]

When we move towards the action plan, I'm going to think about what I can do to keep the shark, the healer, the healing agency and power of the shark in my life and in my body, intact and complete. I'm going to think about what mechanical approaches in life, what mechanistic approaches in life, in human, maybe soul's approach in life, damaged that spontaneous, deep and primal power of healing. My thought is running wildly at all those fronts. I'm tremendously excited by the dream. Like you, I'm troubled by it, and I want to take some action. Is there some kind of action that you could take when we think about the action plan part of the process, Amy? Is there some action you could do? You're going to cleanse your house with salt. Is there some action you could take in relation to this shark and all the symbolism we've been discussing?

Amy: Yeah, well there are two things that stand out to me from what you were just sharing. When you were talking about the ghost in the attic, did you say that house was on Long Island?

Robert: Yeah.

Amy: I have family there and I have ancestors there that have passed over. So there was something resonant about doing a cleansing or a healing around my connection with my ancestry, this attic being the higher realm in that house of the soul or the Self. There's also a huge resonance around the shark being a representation of a healing capacity that has been wounded. I guess an action step from that would be to cultivate my embodied relationship with the shark. And to be open and particularly responsive to how that may be called forth, to honor it and nurture it as something that shouldn't be ailing on the side of the road.

Robert: Excellent, so do you have any physical action that you might take to continue to embody and nourish that connection with the shark as a healing agency? Is there something you could do, like go swimming or eating plenty of fish or something else that would engage the shark side of Amy?

Amy: Oh, well I don't eat fish, but maybe I can eat a lot of seaweed.

Robert: Good luck with that!

Amy: I could take sometime in the water. Actually, I've been dying to go to the ocean, and I'm going to make time for that this weekend. I will bring this consciousness. Actually I have a, I think you call it a fetish, like a carved stone shark, so that will definitely be coming with me.

Robert: Well, that's great. I would take you there if you haven't gone there yourself, it's good to have some object that represents the shark close to you, a sculpture of the shark, a shark tooth or something, but going to the ocean is great. Amy, for



temporary closure, if you were to wrap this up into some slogan, one-liner, mantra or bumper sticker that you could carry with you to remind you of the most important message, what kind of words could you come up with, maybe something about honoring the shark? Are there some words that occur to you?

Amy: The thing that's just springing to mind is to find the blessing in the bleeding.

Robert: Find the blessing in the bleeding, okay, well that can work. That's an example.

Amy: There are probably others.

Robert: I'm wondering whether the shark would be content with that. It works for me, but sharks are impeccable killing machines which is one of the reasons why, when we enlist their alliance, they are so great in working inside the body of cancer patients and killing the cells of their diseases. They do that very well. Find the blessing in the bleeding, is fine for me if it works for you. Thank you so, yeah.

**[0:25:15]**

Amy: Can I offer one more?

Robert: Yeah.

Amy: It would be, don't fear ferocity.

Robert: Don't fear ferocity. All right, that's good. That's fierce, thank you, Amy. So, thanks to Amy, we'd just gone through a version of the Lightning Dreamwork Process. Every time you do it, it's different. Remember the four steps. Number 1: Get the story and the title. Number 2: Ask some essential questions, feelings, reality check, what do you want to know about. I'm not sure that I asked Amy that, but we went there right away. Number 3: If you're talking to someone else, play the "If it were my dream" game. Number 4: Always get an action plan.

Now, we talked about this is a game to play with someone else. You can play it with yourself of course. You can do the essential steps. You want to do the story and title. You want to journey that. You can ask yourself the essential questions. You can play the game of dialoguing with yourself and looking at your dream from different points of view. You could even pretend, if you're really going to do this all by yourself, that you're willing to look at the dream from several different angles. Give it a Freudian view. Give it a shamanic view. Give it something else. Where it all comes to closure and climax is we want an action step. Amy is going to the ocean. She dreams of a wounded shark. She likes the shark. She feels its power as a healing agency. She is going to the ocean. That is great. That is a physical step. The art of coming up with a one-liner or a bumper sticker is one to be practiced. As you do that, you find that you are bringing out, bringing into clear focus an energy, a direction that you can work with and you're also becoming an aphorist. What is an aphorist? An aphorist is someone who

commits aphorisms, one-liners, like Mark Twain. “You can’t trust your judgment if your imagination is out of focus.” It’s funny how, as you practice that, you get really, really good at coming up with one-liners, which is fun. So, there we are. There’s the Lightning Dreamwork Game. I would love you to go out and play it with whoever is willing to share a dream or a story.

**[0:27:15]      End of Audio**

**© 2019 The Shift Network. All rights reserved.**