

# Imagery & Illumination



**By  
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In this initial monthly column and succeeding columns, I'll cover many facets of the Imaginal experience, itself an inexhaustible treasure trove of/for healing. In keeping with the theme of this issue of the newsletter, I can speak directly to it while at the same time introducing myself to the readers.

*Imagination is a pathway to Illumination.* I say this from first-hand experience:

In the early summer of 1974, I spent six weeks in Jerusalem as a visiting professor in law and psychiatry at Hadassah Medical School. At the time, I was a practicing Freudian psychoanalyst. I was a traditionally-trained medical doctor specializing in psychiatry and had gone on to become a psychoanalyst. Such a career had been my ideal since I was 19, and I realized it at 37. When I went to Jerusalem, I thought I had learned incontrovertible "facts" about the mind and had in my grasp the most central answers about mental life. In Jerusalem that summer, however, my understanding of the mind and of the profound connections between mind and body were transformed. In Jerusalem I met a young man who had undergone three years of extensive psychoanalysis – five times a week – to rid himself of persistent depression. His analysis had produced little relief. After these fruitless three years, he went to a woman who practiced "visual Imagery" or, more precisely, "waking dream" therapy. He had had four sessions with her – once a week, for a period of a month – and considered himself cured. Given my Freudian perspective then, I could hardly believe him. However, the fact remained that in one month, with a new and different kind of therapy, his depression had lifted.

My interest deeply aroused, I met with his therapist, Mme. Colette Aboulker-Muscat (a contemporary, I was later to find, of the French clinician Robert Desoille, who developed the Imagery technique called "directed waking dream"). This meeting changed my life. I told Mme. Aboulker-Muscat that I had heard about her remarkable success



with the young man but had never heard of her therapeutic technique. As we exchanged a few remarks about mental Imagery, I recalled, and told Mme. Aboulker-Muscat, that Freud's explanation to analysts about using "free association" in essence was an Imagery exercise. Freud advised the analyst to tell the patient to *Imagine* the two of them riding on a train, the patient looking out the window and describing to the analyst everything he or she sees in the passing countryside.

Mme. Aboulker-Muscat responded by asking, "In what direction does a train go?" I was caught short by this seeming *non sequitur*. What did this have to do with therapy? Worried that somehow I would give the "wrong" answer, I cautiously said that trains travel in a horizontal direction, and I made a horizontal gesture with my hand. Mme. Aboulker-Muscat responded by making an upward movement, saying, "And if the direction were changed?"

At that moment I became filled with light, a being of light. This time-space person disappeared. I don't know how much time

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elapsed but when I came-to, Colette saw the beatific look on my face and asked me if I were interested in learning more. "Of course!" I replied. The next morning I began my "new" education, the beginning of a nine-year apprenticeship birthing an educator and clinician of Imagination in its differing aspects of short Imagery exercises; longer guided exercises; and the deep exploration of self called Waking Dream. (One of my books, *Healing Visualizations*, for example, delves into more than 100 such short Imagery exercises to heal physical and emotional disorders, while *Waking Dream Therapy* describes the deep exploration of self. The latter taught in my New York State Regent's chartered training center for health care professionals, The American Institute for Mental Imagery).

What I learned from that moment of Illumination was that the vertical movement Colette made by raising her arm was the direction of freedom and that Imagery was its path. Imagery has the capacity to correct and repair problems of everyday life and can take us to transcendent heights – to Illumination and beyond – while also allowing us to plumb our creative depths, providing the inner spark for external expression of our creative possibilities.

Here is an exercise to bring us closer to Spirit.

Close your eyes. Breathe out long, slow exhalations, making them longer than your inhalations. Getting used to this rhythm, breathe out and in three times (afterwards breathe in your usual way). See a circle of gold in the blue sky. See your body becoming an arc on the lower part of this circle, and God becoming an arc on the upper half. What is your experience? Keep it. Breathe out and open your eyes.

Do this exercise in the morning when you arise, once a week, for three weeks on the same day and time every week. It is a nice way to begin and incorporate the Illuminative experience of Imagination.

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*In addition to training and supervising clinicians through his school, The American Institute for Mental Imagery (AIMI), Dr. Epstein has an adult education center for the general public and maintains a private practice as well. His latest book project is on longevity and immortality through the Imagery process that he has developed along with other techniques and methods of Western spiritual therapeutics. On his website you'll find a list of all his publications, many of them downloadable, as well as many, many Imagery exercises. To date, he has published over 500 Imagery exercises available to the general public. setting to explore the significant elements of the dream with a guide. The possibilities suggested by this deep exploration of Self are then carried out by the client in daily life. Within a short time, this therapy produces lasting transformations of thinking, feeling, and behavior.*

## ***Illumination of Guilt in Iambic Pentameter***

The wet white windowsill glistens with rain  
Colored by the amber glow of a lamp  
That lights the droplets that rest on the pane  
Of the window. Now the curtains are damp,  
Forming a mane to frame the female face  
Which has formed, and which stares through silently,  
A rain smeared expression of what? Through lace  
I am not sure, but her gaze is on me.  
I move my body a little and wait,  
To be sure I have not merged with those eyes  
That stare so penetrably. It is late  
And I wait until the heavy rain dies  
Down. Then I eerily turn towards the light  
To see if the face remains there all night.

*– Juliet Rohde-Brown, 1994*

