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# THE DREAMS WE HAVE

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**Our dreams are what moves us forward in life. Imagining what one day might be is highly motivating and an important testing ground for current decisions. Imagination can provide the direction and the motivation for change. Fears, however, can reduce the flexibility and openness which are required to fulfil these aspirations of the future. These are fears which are basically maladaptive. Better emotional and cognitive connectedness with oneself and better communication with the outside world can help to overcome these fears, Communication-focused therapy is one of the approaches used to improve internal and external communication.**

Keywords: happiness, motivation, fears, communication-focused therapy, CFT, psychotherapy

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## Imagination

Imagination, also called the faculty of imagining, is the creative ability to form images, ideas, and sensations in the mind from input of the senses, such as seeing or hearing. Imagination helps make knowledge applicable in solving problems and is fundamental to integrating experience and the learning process. [1][2][3] However, imagination requires that there is communication with oneself and with others which makes the meaningful information available the imagination can work with. (Haverkamp, 2010b, 2018a) Imagination also requires openness and a flexibility of ideas which can be blocked by fears. However, communication also helps to reduce these fears.

Ideas alone are not as persuasive as images and what we see the world could be like. It is the seeming reality of the imagination that can induce the emotions, the motivation and the cognitive plans to bring about change. To change the external reality requires often the building of an internal reality which can be a good playground to try out different situations, actions and behaviours. Awareness of own needs, values and aspirations is important to build a future that will lead to greater happiness, satisfaction and contentment in the future. Working with rather against them also provides more motivation to build a future with a better fit while making the present a better place.

## Building the Future

Without imagination, we could also not imagine our relations with other people, which form an important building block in our life. Relationships with other people and oneself are what the future is built on. Meaningful communication can happen on the inside and on the outside, but it requires meaningful communication, the sending and receiving of novel information, for any type of change. Even if one does not desire change in one's life, a change in mood or a change in perspective are also changes which require meaningful communication. Life needs to change as the condition in the environment and within oneself change. Beneficial change is adaptive which requires good information about oneself and the environment. Connectedness with oneself and others can be helpful, as can an open imagination which is built on this connectedness and derives its inputs and strength from it.

Overcoming one's fears of one's imagination begins with the realization that a thought is just a thought, and a freedom of these thoughts is necessary to explore the wide range of possible options that are often available. Fears can make the world and one's range of option seem narrower than they actually are. Overcoming these fears becomes easier when one connects with oneself and the world in a more meaningful way. In communication-focused therapy (CFT), for example, awareness for the own communication styles with oneself and the world, experimentation with them, as well as reflection on them and developing insight into them helps to improve one's meaningful communication with oneself and others, which reduces anxiety and fears. (Haverkamp, 2010a, 2017b, 2017a, 2018b) Having a better sense of one's resources and needs, values and aspirations can increase the sense of stability and security

in the world, because these fundamental parameters change little over time. From here it is then easier to imagine a future and find greater contentment in the present.

## Positive Imagination

We can also imagine things that make us fearful or anxious. A far better strategy is to imagine the positive outcomes, while keeping possible negative consequences in mind. Motivation should be directed towards what makes us happy and helps us fulfil our aspirations and deeply held values. This requires connecting with the feelings that drive one towards something and those that drive one away from something else. Making this identification can be very helpful when making decisions or plans for the future. At the same time, making the information from the emotions, thoughts, memories and other inputs available to the rational mind helps make better decisions.

## Emotions

Imagination requires emotions as the engine that drives them. Often our brain in a dream makes up a story to fit an emotion. On the other hand, we use stories to induce emotions. A good test of an image one builds about the future is whether it is associated with positive emotions. This is a sign that one is heading for a future that is more in sync with one's values and fundamental interests. Emotions are signals and they can be a good indicator if one is on a good path or not, especially if reflected upon by the rational side of the brain.

Being more connected with oneself helps in this process. In communication-focused therapy (CFT) the basic approach is to work with how meaningful information is sent, received, elicited and processed. The image we have of the world is built from perceptions and memories of these perceptions as well as all the other meaningful information that has been communicated to us. This is why how one practices communication can play such an important role in how one's image of the world is constructed. The emotions are also information and provide valuable input for building the own representation of the world. Thus, being connected with the own emotion, more awareness of them and reflection about them, helps to understand better how one sees the world and why. This in turn leads to greater confidence, greater motivation and better decisions.

## Information

Our imagination requires information to build a new dream, idea or thought. How one selects one's information has an effect on the quality of new thoughts. Openness to information combined with being sensitive to one's inner life, the emotions, thoughts and values, allows for more high-quality information as an input. Openness is best practised in everyday life with an inquisitive mind which can also help reduce anxieties and fears. The problem with anxiety is often that people shy away from exposing themselves to

meaningful communication, whether in the form of a sensation, perception, an interaction or a feeling, out of fear of a negative feeling, such as getting hurt. However, having more information and insight can actually reduce fears and lead to better decisions. A vision or dream founded in insight can be of much more value to oneself and be more stable and longer lasting than one which is not.

For information to be meaningful requires that it contains information which has the potential to bring about a change, which should be given a wide interpretation, such as a change in feelings, perspective or as an addition to knowledge and understanding and so forth. Openness to meaningful communication with the outside and the inside worlds can lead to adaptive and positive change in how one sees and interacts with the world. This does not mean exposing oneself to potentially hurtful situations, but learning which situations are hurtful and unhelpful and deciding not to expose oneself to them. Meaningful information gained from an interaction with a colleague at work, reflection on one's own self-doubts or an argument with a loved one should all help to learn more about what forms of communication and with whom help one build a world for oneself, and by doing so also for others.

## Following Our Dreams

A dream exists in one's mind until it is acted upon. In life, small improvements in the workplace or in one's relationship do not necessarily require imagination beforehand. However, for a larger plan or just a decision about a minor detail in life, dreams are important. Our imagination lets us build something more complex than a simple thought can accomplish. Life itself requires a lot of imagination to manage, build and maintain.

Overcoming one's own fears of following one's dreams, which are built around one's needs, values and aspirations is important to gain more happiness, satisfaction and contentment in life. More informed dreams lead to better decisions, and this information needs to be gained through communication with oneself and others. Many people in their daily routines become disconnected from themselves, especially at stressful time, such as when there are workplace problems or rough patches in a relationship. However, this makes them lose a sense for their own resources and strengths, as well as a sense of direction even more leading to ever greater feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. A greater awareness for one's own feelings and thoughts reverses the disconnect. But this also applies to one's communication with the world. In stressful situations, particularly if life as a whole becomes overwhelming, there is a tendency to disconnect from the world, which can lead to greater anxiety and fears as it makes the world a more uncertain place. Awareness for what is happening and reflection about it, together with the information from the inside, the feelings, perceptions, memory and thoughts, can also help reverse this disconnect.

Better internal and external communication can so help to reduce the fears of following one's dreams. Communication with oneself helps to gain greater awareness for one's values, needs and aspirations and greater confidence and faith in oneself, while communication with the world helps to make it a more certain and predictable place and provides the information to realize one's dreams in the world.



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