

Hypnotic Dream Analysis: A Case of Demonic Depression

Rev. Dr. Mike Lips, Ph.D.

One morning in the summer of 1995, I received a phone call from a young woman named, Susan [not her real name], who said she was depressed. She asked if hypnosis would be helpful. I told her that hypnosis has been used successfully to treat clients who have been diagnosed as being depressed by their physician. But I needed more information before I could tell her whether or not I may be able to help her with hypnosis. She made an appointment to see me the next day.

During my intake, I discovered that Susan had been having nightmares every night. She'd been having these dreams since she was five years old. Susan believed her depression started around that time. That's a long time for some one to be depressed. It sounded like she was suffering from Dysthymia, a chronic form of depression.

1. Person is depressed most of the day, nearly everyday, for at least two years. In children, the mood can be irritability, with a duration of at least one year.
2. When one is depressed, two or more of the following are present:

[a] poor appetite or overeating, [b] insomnia or hypersomnia, [c] low energy or fatigue, [d] low self-esteem, [e] poor concentration or difficulty making decisions, and [f] feelings of helplessness.
3. During the 2-year period [1 year for children or adolescents] of depression, the client has never been without the symptoms in Criteria 1 & 2 for more than 2 months at a time.
4. No Major Depressive Episode being present during first two years [one year for children or adolescents] of client's emotional disturbance.
5. No Manic Episode, mixed Episode, or a Hypomanic Episode, and no Cyclothymic Disorder present.
6. Emotional disturbance does not occur exclusively during the course of a chronic Psychotic disorder, such as Schizophrenia or Delusional Disorder.
7. Symptoms not caused by substance abuse or medication or a general medical condition, such as hypothyroidism.
8. The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

When the subject of sleep came up, she described her dreams as nightmares, which occur every night. One recurring dream was quite disturbing. She said that this dream was about demon possession [DSM-IV, 1994].

DR. LIPS: Tell me more about that dream.

SUSAN: [Paused for a few moments] Every night I have the same dream I've had, since I was about five years old. In this dream, I'm playing under the front porch at my grandmother's house. Suddenly, I have to go to the bathroom to pee. I get up and climb the porch steps and enter the

house through the screen door. I went through the living room and entered the hall that lead to the bathroom.

As I approached the bathroom, the floor opens, exposing a deep, black, hole. As soon as the hole opens up, two black Doberman pinchers, with beady red eyes, come out of the black hole blocking my way. I cannot get to the bathroom. At this point, I wake up. This happens nearly every night. I am so tired of having this sick dream. Am I demon possessed? Am I crazy?

Can you imagine having this same dream nearly every night, for most of your life? With the demonic dream component of her pastoral care profile, religion and spirituality play a significant role.

DR. LIPS: I don't think you're crazy, Susan. I don't know that you're demon possessed, either. It's possible that, when you were growing up, someone told you that you were possessed. But, at this point, I'm not sure. I believe I can help you with hypnosis.

But, for now, I'm going to treat this as a type of demonic possession. And since this is a dream I'm dealing with, I'm going to let your Unconscious Mind interpret the dream through, what we call, Ideomotor Finger Response.

SUSAN: Ok. Whatever you think is best.

After explaining what hypnosis is and what it isn't, I began the induction. The following is the entire session from Induction to Awakening.

DR. LIPS: Lay your head back against the chair and focus your attention on the white cap of my pen. As you're focusing on the white cap, let everything else become blurry. Now, when your Inner Mind, the Unconscious Level of your Mind, knows that it can resolve the problem you've come for, today... all by itself. Will you find yourself, becoming more and more comfortable, more and more relaxed... [pause] as your eyes close?

SUSAN: [After about 10 seconds, Susan's eyes closed. She entered a deep Alpha state of relaxation.]

DR. LIPS: Now, your Inner Mind, the Unconscious Level of Your Mind, can continue, now... all by itself, to resolve the problem you've come for, today, in a manner that fully meets all your needs.

In a moment, I'll have you to recall the dream you've been having. If that is Ok with you, nod your head, please?

SUSAN: Nods head.

DR. LIPS: Good. I'm going to count backwards from THREE down to ONE. At the count of ONE, one of your fingers on the right hand will lift up, all by itself, without any conscious effort by you whatsoever. As your finger lifts up, the Inner Mind, the Unconscious Level of your Mind, will go back to the last time you dreamed the demonic dream you told me about. At the count of ONE, you will find yourself sitting under the porch of your grandmother's house, as you describe for me before we began this session. If that is Ok with you, nod your head, please?

SUSAN: Nods head.

DR. LIPS: Very good. THREE... [pause]. The right index finger begins to lift off the arm of the chair. TWO... [pause] ONE. [Pause] Tell me what you see.

SUSAN: I see myself under the front porch of my grandmother's house playing with some of my toys. I've got to pee. I'm crawling out from under the porch. Now, I am going up the porch steps. I'm entering the house through the screen door... [pause].

DR. LIPS: What's happening, now?

SUSAN: I'm going through the living room to the hall that leads to the bathroom. I'm approaching the bathroom... [pause]. I can't get to the bathroom.

DR. LIPS: Why, not?

SUSAN: Two black Doberman pinchers are blocking the bathroom door.

DR. LIPS: Where did they come from?

SUSAN: They came out of the floor. The floor opened up and a black hole appeared right in front of the bathroom. And these two black Dobermans with red beady eyes came out of the black hole. They're keeping me from reaching the bathroom.

DR. LIPS: Do you want to reach the bathroom?

SUSAN: Yes. I need to get into the bathroom. I've gotta pee!

DR. LIPS: Alright. I'm going to use Ideomotor Finger Response to Interpret your dream. If that is Ok with you, nod your head?

SUSAN: Nods head.

DR. LIPS: As I count backwards from THREE down to ONE, one of the fingers on your right hand will lift up, signaling that your Inner Mind is reviewing every aspect of that dream. And when your Mind knows the meaning of that dream, then your finger will lower back down.

SUSAN: After a few moments, Susan's finger lifted. A few moments later, it lowers back down.

DR. LIPS: Tell me the meaning of your dream. What did your Inner Mind tell you?

SUSAN: As long as I'm prevented from reaching the bathroom, I will never be able to find any relief from this burden. Reaching the bathroom means release from my demonic depression. But they won't leave.

DR. LIPS: Demons! In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, I command you to leave and enter the fiery pit! [pause] What's happening?

SUSAN: Nothing. They're still there.

DR. LIPS: Hum... Demons! In the Name of JESUS, I command you to leave Susan's dreams and go to the fiery pit! What's happening, now?

SUSAN: They're gone. The floor has closed up. I'm in the bathroom. I'm relieved of my burden.

DR. LIPS: Very good. In a moment, I'm going to give you some positive suggestions for Achieving Emotional Stability. These suggestions will help you deal more effectively with life's daily problems.

In a moment, I'm going to bring you out of hypnosis. If that's Ok with you, nod your head.

SUSAN: Nods head.

DR. LIPS: Now, when you Inner Mind, the Unconscious Level of your Mind, knows that it can deal more effectively with the problem you've come for today. And when your Conscious Mind knows that it can cooperate with the Unconscious Level of you Mind... [pause] Will you find yourself wanting to move a bit... will you open your eyes... and come fully awake.

SUSAN: [Her eyes open.]

DR. LIPS: Tell me how you feel.

SUSAN: Strange. Relaxed.

DR. LIPS: You did really good. You'll find yourself improving more and more, each and every day.

Two days later I get a phone call from Susan. She wanted to know whether or not something was wrong with her.

DR. LIPS: What do you mean by "something wrong with you?"

SUSAN: People are telling me that I'm different. That I'm telling people good morning. I'm humming.

DR. LIPS: Susan, there's nothing wrong with you. You're experiencing how it feels not to be depressed for the first time in many, many years.

Susan's chronic depression subsided. She is living a normal life in South Mississippi. Hypnosis is not a cure all. But it is an effective therapeutic modality. As a United Methodist Minister, I have found that hypnosis fits in quite nicely into my ministry of love, compassion, and spiritual healing.

Some would say that hypnosis is of the devil, without ever studying it, using it, and experiencing it. But I believe it is a gift from God. I've used this wonderful tool for over 16 years with pretty good success.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual For Mental Disorders: Fourth Edition

[DSM-IV], published by the American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC. [1994], lists eight diagnostic criteria for Dysthymic Disorder.