

Major Findings from IASD Cancer Project, 2006-2012

- When cancer strikes, both patients and caregivers often report an increase in vivid dreams and nightmares.
- Many survivors report that before diagnosis, dreams informed them that they were becoming ill.
- All dreams and nightmares offer insight and energy for personal growth and healing. They put the dreamer in touch with whatever is out of balance in their lives and also show them their deepest strengths and hopes—offering creative possibilities for moving through the dis-ease.
- Because dreams speak the language of symbol and metaphor, most dreams do not depict the cancer situation in a literal way, but instead refer to the cancer in symbolic ways. However, after diagnosis and during treatment, dreams often offer guidance for making decisions about choice of doctors, treatment options, and lifestyle changes.
- Because every dream holds multiple meanings, every dream offers potential for healing on many levels: mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. The dreams of those facing cancer tend to emphasize the need for emotional, relational, and spiritual resolutions.
- The dreams of those facing cancer often re-activate past personal traumas and use past experiences in symbolic ways to remind the dreamer of enduring strengths and capacities for moving through present illness and future crises.
- Over time, as cancer survivors confront the conflicts and fears stirred by their dreams, they report an evolving transformation of both symbols and emotions that correspond with a sense of resolution, hope, and meaning.
- Guided imagery with dream symbols becomes a powerful, targeted approach for direction healing energy wherever the dream has indicated imbalance. Research demonstrates that the practice of guided imagery can help bring about a sense of wellbeing, a sense of meaning and hope, as well as help alleviate side effects of treatment including pain, nausea, and fatigue.
- Guided imagery with personal dream images is an effective way to transform the images and energies of nightmares.
- Because research shows that guided imagery can enhance the functioning of the immune system, guided imagery with personal healing dream images can be a particularly effective way to boost the body's innate healing systems.
- Survivors and caregivers who work with their dreams over time find that they are participating in a process of renewal, reconciliation, and transformation. They find that dream work is a creative practice for becoming an active participant in the journey through cancer.