

Questions and Layouts

Individual, Relationship and Dreams

Your entry into the World of Change begins with presenting your problem as a question. Making a question is a two step procedure. You should take time with this. The clearer the question and the deeper your perception of the issues at stake, the more precise and profound Change's answer can be.

Establishing the Field

The first step is to consider the problem. Search out the feelings, images and experiences involved. Articulate what you feel and think about things, what you know and what you do not know. Look for relevant memories and experiences, hopes and fears, dreams and desires. Simply try to see what is there, no matter how contradictory. This will establish a field of associations that can focus the symbols and relate them to your personal concerns.

Formulating the Question

The second step is to formulate the actual question as clearly as possible. Base it on what you want to do. Find the border, the place where your desire melts into uncertainty and search out the level of specificity you really need. It does not really matter what you are asking about as long as it is personally important and your motives in asking are sincere. There is, however, an effective form for the question.

Yes and no questions are not usually effective. An effective formulation of a specific question might be: "What about doing X?" or "What should my attitude towards X be?" If you are confused about the whole situation, you can ask the most basic question to Change: "What time is it for me? Please give me an image of my overall situation." You can also ask for a strategy or guide: "What is the most effective stance to take towards Y?" "How can I best achieve X?" or "How can I best help A?" If you are truly on the horns of a dilemma, you can ask for an

image of each alternative, formulating two questions: “What about doing X?”
“What about doing Y?”

In asking these sorts of questions, or asking about another person, you should be sure your motives are clear, straight and compassionate. Tradition says that the book will respond clearly to a real need but will not allow itself to be used for greedy or manipulative ends.

Active Dialogue

The question you ask can also be the starting point in a continuing dialogue with Change, what the depth psychologist C. G. Jung called active imagination. It can lead to further questions as you explore the matter you are considering in depth. Give the oracle’s first response careful consideration. If further questions arise, do not hesitate to ask them. Change invites this sort of dialogue. Here is an example:

You ask a **Basic Question** about a problem or your overall situation. After consideration, you find you need help to focus and make better sense of the response. You can then ask for a **Guide**. As you contemplate this and its relation to the basic answer, you find you need a way to connect to the actual situation, what you can do now. You can then ask a **From Now** question. I have found this dialogue form very effective in taking Change and the basic re-formulation of thought it suggests into action.

Relationship Readings

Our significant feeling relationships are like a net that fate throws over us to keep engaged with the ongoing process of our own souls and the soul of the world. They can be a true tangle, a source of real and unnecessary suffering, a kind of ecstasy or, in Jung’s words, an alchemical vessel. In my experience, when a relationship is troubled, the first step is to disentangle the people involved and give them a clear place from which to speak, a place that both reflects who they are, their needs and desires, and can recognize the other as really other. This

begins the dialogue. The next step is to give the relationship itself a voice independent of but connected to the people involved.

Here is a sort of Layout or procedure you can set up to help bring these voices into play. First get a general feeling sense of things. Look at the crisis and how it might have evolved. Try to feel into the hidden side of the people involved without judgment. Try to sense or feel where the relationship itself is, what its concerns might be. Note your own reactions to things and the conclusions you begin to draw, without presuming they are correct. This is part of establishing the overall field of the divination.

When you have a sense that the people involved understand that the basic thrust of the question is to find a solution to the problem that works for the good of all involved, ask each person to draw the tokens to establish their individual positions in the relationship. Note the answers. Then ask them to alternate in drawing the tokens or forming the lines to produce a third figure, representing the voice of relationship itself.

Work through the individual readings until each person feels comfortable with them as an expression of their position, identity and needs and the two begin speaking to each other through the symbols. Then take on and introduce the voice of the relationship, speaking through it to each person involved. This can create a very fertile field for insight and understanding, but it depends on your own inner preparation, your willingness to use but not be bound up in your own emotional material. This is an act of true divination, giving voice to what is hidden and does not have a language of its own. Have courage and compassion, be guided by the symbols and expect surprises, for this can truly be a healing act.

Dream Readings

Dreams express our relationship to whatever the Inner World is. They can be confusing, problematic, profound and trivial at the same time. Whatever they are, they are important and humans have been searching for a way to understand their deeply symbolic language for centuries, using a variety of approaches. What

seems important to me, however, is to open an area where we can interact with the dream without reducing it to analytical allegory or being swamped by its simple presence, lost in clouds of confusion or inflated by its powerful contents. Here is a sort of procedure and Layout that can be very helpful.

The first step is to write the dream out, getting a sense of its narrative units, characters, feeling tones and landscapes. Look at who you are in the dream. Look at the way it is re-arranging your memories, feelings and associations to create the various elements it portrays. Look at the breaks between sections, when the dream goes blank. Do not judge too hastily, particularly with unpleasant or highly attractive figures. Just look and feel and note things down.

Then pose these three questions. Record all the answers before you start contemplating any one of them.

- 1) What is the message or meaning of this dream has for me?
- 2) What is my position in it (as dream-ego)?
- 3) What long term or core issues does it address?

In my experience you will feel the connections immediately as you begin to circle through the various positions. It is, of course, extremely helpful if you can recognize the hexagrams immediately. Do not get fixated into any one of them too soon, though. Keep circulating. Let them build their own net of meanings. Work with your personal experience of the hexagrams involved. Keep a close eye on their relation to the dream images. Pay attention to the positions of the transforming lines, for this is one of the ways you can locate yourself in the process and identify the Voices that want to speak to you.

I have found that looking at the interrelations of these answers can bring a kind of spontaneous insight into how the dream process is working and what it is speaking to in your life. The conclusion of the reading will probably arrive as a kind of “aha!” in relation to the overall field. The dream then begins to recede, satisfied, perhaps, that you have acknowledged it.