

We Are Always Dreaming

I
Tami Simon: You're listening to *Insights at the Edge*. Today, my guest is Dr. Catherine Shainberg. Catherine is the founder of the School of Images and has over 40 years' experience in adapting traditional practices into a modern medical context. She teaches workshops internationally, and is the author of the book *Kabbalah and the Power of Dreaming*, as well as a new book and audio series from Sounds True called *DreamBirth: Transforming the Journey of Childbirth Through Imagery*.

In this episode of *Insights at the Edge*, Catherine and I spoke about the particular style of imagery she teaches—working with imagery to jolt sudden and spontaneous insight. We talked about how imagery is the language of the body and how we can learn to listen to what our body is telling us. Catherine also offered us a brief illustration of how she works with clients with imagery. And finally, we learned about the Kabbalistic lineage in which she's been trained and how her work with imagery applies to the journey through childbirth.

Here's my conversation with Dr. Catherine Shainberg:

Catherine, in your new book, *DreamBirth*—right at the beginning of the book, you make a pretty astonishing statement. Here it is: “We are dreaming all the time—not just at night.” And I thought that was so interesting. We're dreaming all the time? I'm dreaming right now—even as I ask you this question?

Catherine Shainberg: You are! [*Laughs.*] And so am I. And so is everybody else who is alive, because dreaming is about experiencing. It's the brain that picks up experiencing.

So, I'm in a room. It's a little cold outside. I'm experiencing the cold. The light is a little dim. I'm experiencing that. All of this is a part of what comes into me and is assimilated by my experiencing brain—which is a much older brain than what we call, vulgarly, the “left brain.” So we're just—to simplify—I'm going to talk about the “right brain” and the “left brain,” but of course it's much more complex than that.

In the dreaming—in the right brain, we are picking up experience and we are responding to it inside of ourselves. When you are sleeping, your left brain is asleep, which makes it much easier for you to be seeing what's happening in your right brain.

What's happening is a great flow of experiencing that is interactive—that is, your body interacts with it. Your body itself is talking. It's constantly talking to itself and only the right brain is really picking up those messages. We're not privy to them unless we tap into what we would call the subconscious. Again, the subconscious is your “right brain” speaking. It's a like a television screen, but in 3-D dimensions.

So yes, you're always dreaming. Night dreams are “pop-ups” in the flow of dreaming. In the ancient world, it was called “the cauldron.” You actually do see that in alchemical drawings—a man sitting in a great big pot, with a fire underneath the pot. He's cooking. He's being cooked. The cauldron is the cauldron of experiencing. That's what your dreaming is about.

When you have a particular question, it's like fishing. It's like you take a fishing line and you throw it in a particular place of the lake. At that place, the fish will pop up. It's that particular fish that pops up. So your night dream is the fish that pops up. But the lake is always there. The movement inside the lake—the life inside the lake—all of the information inside the lake is there.

That's why I say we're always dreaming.

TS: Now, I just want to clarify something. You said, "Left brain [and] right brain, but of course that's too simplistic." Can you help me understand this in maybe *not* such a simplistic way? Left brain, right brain? The reason I say that is whenever anybody talks just about the left brain or the right brain, I've wondered to myself, "Is it really that cut and dried?"

CS: No!

TS: Maybe you could expand that a little bit so I understand it a bit more.

CS: Well, I'm not a scientist, so I'd hate to do that—but the neocortex is *you*. Your conscious brain. It's very large. It sits in the front of your skull. Most of the linear processes happen in the neocortex. All the rest of the brain is involved with subconscious processes. Dreams appear in that much larger, much more ancient brain.

That's where the exercising of the brain happens—when you're dreaming. It's not in the neocortex.

So that's what I mean. We would have to really look at the brain movements to be able to explain that. It's in every dream book that you can find on the shelf. I won't go more into that.

TS: OK—but this idea that we when we go to sleep at night, this analytical part of our brain is finally quiet. Our left brain, if you will, is finally quiet. So how, in the midst of our daytime life, can we experience that kind of quietude in our left brain?

CS: I often explain it to people by talking about the sun and the moon. When the sun is up, you don't necessarily see the moon. Sometimes, you see a pale reflection of it in the sky, but the moon is always there. So it's the same thing here, because you're busy thinking in a linear way [and] you're not looking at the screen inside of you that is showing you the images and the sensations that you're experiencing.

You're not looking at that. But you can learn to do that. It's very simple. In fact, you can do both at the same time.

As I'm talking to you, I can look into my other screen and see all sorts of images rising inside of me. Now, we can train ourselves to do that. Let's say you go to a clairvoyant. A clairvoyant will be speaking to you about your life, but the way that that person is seeing your life is through images that are popping up in that person's mind.

Let's say I have a student coming in to my office. I don't do clairvoyance, right? But it happens to me all the time—the student comes in and I suddenly see mice running all over the place. Why do I see mice? So I ask myself the question, "Why am I seeing mice when this person is walking into the room? Why do I see red?"

So I'm in constant contact with my experiencing self that is reflecting back to me something that's happening in the room that we could call "energetic," if you want. The way that I always express it is that each one of us is a "dream field." We're filled with images. We're made from images.

We could say that we are an energetic body—that is, a body made of light. A body made of vibration. And then, these vibrations take form.

Let's say I've had a very difficult relationship with my mother. These experiences and these emotions come into me as images that are difficult. I carry images with me. The person who is able to see they're dreaming—whether in the nighttime or the daytime—will pick up those images.

We do that all the time. Let's say that you're walking into the office and suddenly you have a feeling of dread. You don't know where it comes from, but something in you leads you to go to the left and to meet this person in the left office. And you ask this person, "How are you doing?" And the person says, "Well, terrible. I just found out that my mother's dying."

What led you to that? How did you read that? We can all do that. We're really reading it through our dreaming.

Generally, we associate that with a night dream. You go to sleep; you have a dream that that so-and-so's in difficulty. In the morning, you go to the left office and you say to the person, "I had a dream that you were having some difficulty." And the person says, "Yes, I just found out my mother's dying." How [can] we pick that up?

So that's what I'm talking about.

TS: What I'm curious about is still how you can help people. And I know this is part of your work—at least, it's my understanding. [How can we] begin to access this dream field—this dreaming nature—while we're awake? How can people start to do that?

CS: First, it's really to pay attention to your presence. You're sitting somewhere—what are you feeling? Most people don't have time to feel. They will if the pot is burning on the fire. Then they'll have time to smell the burning and they'll run to the kitchen to take the pot off the fire. But they won't pick up the more subtle cues.

So that's the first level. If somebody comes into my office and asks me how to do that—well, close your eyes, breathe out three times—and we generally breathe out going backwards, going three, two, one. Because we're putting the body into a quiet space by doing that.

And then, you can ask something very simple. You're in a meadow. Where is the sun? Is it to your right, to your left, in front, behind? The inner world is never going to lie if you do it very quickly—if you work very quickly—that way. So the person will say, "Well, the sun is to the left." That tells me something has to be explored at the left. By doing that, we're wakening in the person the need to go exploring to the left or to the past in their life.

As they learn to do this work, it becomes much more live in them. Those subtle cues become more present to them. They're going to see it more and more. Ultimately, they learn to be what I call "dreamers," which [are] people who are constantly in touch with that aspect of themselves—which is a huge part of ourselves. Maybe—you know, percentages don't mean anything. But let's say 80 percent of ourselves is hidden to us unless through the dreaming.

I train them, basically, to become what I call dreamers—that is, people who are constantly in contact with their imaginal [*sic*] world, as well as their rational world. The two become balanced. They interact. The more you do the work in the imagery, the more your left brain gets grounded, because you're grounded in the experience of your physical body.

It's strange to say—and people will ask me that question: "How come we have to go into the physical body to really develop ourselves? Isn't that grounding ourselves too much? Shouldn't we be trying to leave the physical body?"

It's quite the opposite. You have to go into the physical body and really explore it—that's your grounding, like a rocket needs the grounding of the Earth to shoot up. So we need to do that. We go into our physical body and [experience] now. The more we do that, the more we develop what I call "the dreaming."

Now, the dreaming is not fantasy. It's something very, very concrete and very exact. So your dreaming body is never going to lie to you.

TS: There's an interesting quote from the book: "Dreaming is the language of the body."

CS: Right.

TS: Can you explain that?

CS: Yes! For example, if I tell you, "Close your eyes and imagine cutting a lemon." What do you experience physically?

TS: I can feel it in my throat.

CS: Exactly. You can feel as if you're tasting the lemon, right?

TS: Yes.

CS: OK. That's what's really, really important to understand. Just an image can move your body. A precise image can do something precise in your body.

So—remind me again of the question. I've kind of lost the question!

TS: We're dreaming together. "Dreaming is the language of the body."

CS: Yes. By creating an imaginal image, I move my body. This is the language of the body. I can move anything I want. I can move my heartbeats; I can move my blood; I can change a lot of [muscles]; and much more. I can change the energy in my body. I can affect cells in the body—if I have the precise language. I've just shown it to you, let's say, by using the lemon.

TS: Sure, and I get the lemon example. But I also have met people who have worked through healing crises and have used imagery to varying degrees of success. What's your explanation when somebody uses imagery and they feel like they're sending a message to their body—just like we did with the lemon—and the message is one of, "Heal my cancer cells," and they see something or another. And it doesn't work.

CS: No, because it's not about positive thinking. Most imagery out in the public is simple relaxation or positive thinking. What I'm talking about is something very different. It's very specific to the lineage I come from and you'll see it in—not all of the book exercises, but in many of the exercises in the book.

It gives a little jolt. It jolts the imagination to move. It's not a relaxation. It enables the body to start moving in a certain way. You're surprised. There's a little surprise inside of you, and then the body will move.

If it's a positive affirmation, it's very nice—but it's not going to make it move. You have to think of it in terms of poetry. If you read a poem, it's not going to make you move unless there's this little "jolt" that suddenly jumps you from one place to another.

So, you may be smelling a flower and suddenly you're in the stars. It's something in the language that has created that jump. And when you've had that jump inside of you, you're in an entirely different place. You're in a healing place, in fact.

Let's say I'm walking down the street in my usual mode and somebody comes around the corner. I can't explain it—some movement, some something—my heart moves. I've fallen in love. I've changed from one state to a completely other state. This is what we need to obtain in the work of imagery. This is the great power of imagery that is most often not understood.

TS: Now, Catherine, I wonder if maybe you could just take us on a little adventure and we could have a little jolt experience now, together. A little brief imagery practice of some kind—in the way that you teach so people could experience what you’re talking about.

CS: All right. So: Close your eyes and breathe out very, very slowly, seeing the number three. Breathe out to the number two. Breathe out slowly and see the number one—tall, clear, and bright.

And you imagine that you’re walking into a rose garden. [It’s] a beautiful day and the roses are in bloom. You walk around the rose garden looking at all these roses and smelling the roses. Look around and choose the rose that attracts you the most. When you’ve found a rose that attracts you the most—tell us what it looks like, Tami.

TS: For me, it’s a big, dark red—like dark maroon—very full rose and it has a beautiful scent that I can smell.

CS: Does it have leaves?

TS: Yes.

CS: How many?

TS: Just two.

CS: OK. Does it have thorns?

TS: Yes.

CS: And how many thorns?

TS: I’m going to say five.

CS: OK. Now, breathing out, look into the center of the rose. What color is it?

TS: I see, like, a black hole.

CS: OK. And what do you feel when you see the black hole?

TS: A sense of endlessly dropping in space.

CS: And are you—is it exciting or is it frightening?

TS: It’s exciting.

CS: OK. Good! Now breathe out and jump into the rose, and become the rose. What happens to you when you become the rose?

TS: Well, I definitely felt the “jolt” that you were describing—when you said, “Become the rose.” That was the jolt moment for me.

CS: Yes, it is. So, tell us what it feels like to be the rose.

TS: It feels wonderful.

CS: That doesn't tell me anything. What would tell me something is you describing your image—your sensations, your feeling.

TS: Well, I notice I'm feeling a little anxious about making the listener focus on me instead of their own experience, so I'm not going into too much detail. But, maybe for the sake of example, it would be helpful.

CS: Just for the sake of example.

TS: I feel a sense of spaciousness—big, endless, vast space. I feel very happy that the thorns are there to protect me. And I feel very open through the petals.

CS: Good. All right. Now, breathe out and come out of the rose. Now you're standing next to the rose. What do you look like?

TS: I look like me again, but I'm in love with the rose.

CS: Are you dressed the same way? Is your hair the same color? Your expression—how is it?

TS: Actually, I seem different. I seem like I have some type of magical cloak on at this point.

CS: What color is the magical cloak?

TS: It has stars on it and it's a deep reddish-purple color.

CS: OK. Good. And your expression?

TS: I look quite happy.

CS: Now, look at the rose. What does it look like now?

TS: Well now it's become a little psychedelic. It's morphing and it's sort of alive and breathing. Yes.

CS: It's exciting, right?

TS: Yes.

CS: Good. And breathing out, open your eyes.

So, we've done a number of things—*[laughs]*—in a very short exercise of one or two minutes. Right?

TS: Yes.

CS: Generally, I don't explain. But everything in the image tells the truth about the inside of a person. And in some cases—let's say somebody's jumped into the rose and has come out and looks beautiful, but the rose looks wilted—*[it]* tells us something about that person and about the difficulty of creating proper boundaries.

So we water the rose. We *[respond]* to the need of the image. It's very, very important in this work to be responding to the necessity of the image, because the image is both a diagnosis and a way forward. The more we respond to the image, the more it flourishes.

It's like children—if you don't pay attention to them, they get scruffy and angry. If you pay attention to them, they flourish. If you wash them, if you take care of them, if you feed them well, they flourish. It's the same with the inner images.

Let's say that we were looking at an ovary, since the book is on women and their reproductive life. You look at an ovary—and I've had many women looking at their ovaries and saying, "Well, my right ovary has a shadow on it," or, "It's dark. The left one is clear. The right one is dark." So we respond to the necessity of that image by peeling the shadow or by cleaning the ovary or by massaging it—whatever it needs. And lo and behold, the body actually repairs itself because you're talking the language that the body understands.

This was a student I had, who had just gotten married. But she had a real problem. She had too much testosterone. So, she had lots of black hair growing on her body and she actually had to shave every day. It was very shocking and difficult for her, right? She wanted to become pregnant, and she had never—in her whole life—had a period.

So I gave her an exercise to look at the ovaries. The ovaries were like hard stones. But the exercise was really to polish—to massage—the ovaries every day. Every day. And I was going away, so I left her with that one exercise. I came back four months later and she was pregnant.

But this was the only thing she did. And that was very important to know, because it allowed me to ascertain it was the imagery that had done that. That she had actually talked to her body in ways that the body understood—dialogued with the body and helped the body to recover.

TS: Now, Catherine, what's so interesting to me is I think most of the time—in my past, at least—that I've heard people talk about imagery and working with imagery, it's, "I'm going to give you the image. I'm going to give you the image of your healthy ovaries and you work with this image." But this "jolt" method of dialoguing to see what comes forward is quite different.

CS: Yes, it is quite different. Now, you let's say you tell me you have glaucoma . . .

TS: Yes.

CS: . . . Because I know that if I give the body this particular image, it's going to affect the eye in a certain way. I may do just that. But in most cases, I ask the person to look in—to say what they see. It's much more accurate because in the seeing is [complete accuracy].

TS: You mention that this work that you teach and that informs your writing comes from a particular lineage. Can you tell us a bit about that lineage?

CS: Yes. I studied with a woman in Jerusalem, who was a Frenchwoman called Colette Aboulker-Muscat. She was considered one of the great Kabbalists—one of the two Kabbalists in Israel at the time—two women Kabbalists. They were mainly men. So she came from a lineage that was Sephardic—which is the Mediterranean Jews. They had started off in the south of France and Spain, and then emigrated to North Africa—to Algeria.

It was also part of my lineage, because my mother's family came from exactly the same place. When we discovered each other—when I found her—I really found my roots [again].

But this was a 12th-century rabbi who was teaching the old systems of visualization that had come down from the Bible—from the times of the Bible. If you look at the Bible, every single story in the Bible starts with a dream, a vision, or clairaudience. Of course, all the prophets were talking—so the prophets were doing this inner work of dreaming and

visualizing and hearing through that dreaming part of themselves. They had what they called The Academies of the B'nei Nevi'im—of the Sons of the Prophets.

So, I believe—though we have no proof of all of that—but the lineage talks about that. That the work comes directly from there.

For centuries and centuries, it was passed on through certain families—certainly through Colette's family—on how you did the imagery. How you developed the dreaming. So that's what she was teaching. That's where I got my formal training—with her. Although I had done that since I was a tiny child.

TS: Would you say that there are key Kabbalistic teachings that inform or frame this approach to working with imagery?

CS: I would say so, yes.

TS: And then: what are those?

CS: Now, Kabbalah is formalized. Around, for example, the Tree of Life. There are certain formal ideas that are developed. But there are lots of different kinds of Kabbalah. I believe that this is the most ancient because it's inscribed in our bodies. You can look into your body and you know everything—if you are led that way, to really look in. It's going to show you how you're made, how the world is, how the cosmos is. But your images are going to lead you there.

It's a very ancient form of Kabbalah. Later on, there were other systems of Kabbalah—the sounds, sounding the name of God with movements of the body. There [were] studies of text and the many different levels of the text—so the story level, but you go deeper and deeper into the story until you find the hidden message in the text.

That I teach also, but not in the same way. I teach it through looking at the dream and how you read the different levels. Or looking at a Bible story and how you read the different levels, and then you do the imagery and you enter into the true or deeper meaning of the text.

But, our work has always been to work with the image [very directly]—the internal image. I will never say to a student, “This is what you see.” I will, in some cases—when it's just the body and we want the body to do something—tell exactly what the image should be.

Once you start moving up the ladder—let's say you're working on emotional issues. Well, let's go up into the attic and you'll come to a—how do you call that? You open the drawers of the old—how do you call that? The drawers of a—*the drawers*. Anyway, you open the drawer and you find the pictures of your ancestors or what your ancestors left to you.

But I don't tell them what they're going to see. I open up a window for them, telling them, “You're going to walk through this window.” And let's say the window is opening up a drawer in which the ancestors have left a bequeath to you. What do you find? What do you want to keep? What do you want to leave?

There's always this opening that allows them to discover what it is inside of themselves —and whether they want it or whether they don't want it. They're always free. The more you do this work, the more independent and strong people get because you're not telling them what to do.

It's a bit like yoga, if you want. You're going through a posture—that's your window. But what happens inside of your own body—if you're truly looking and if you're being led to truly look—then it's your own experience. Nobody has the same one.

When we look inside of the images of people, it's totally astounding. That's what people react to a lot in workshops—when there are maybe 30, 40 people there to hear what other people discover. It's just mind-boggling. It's so different and so powerful.

So it's not telling them what to see. I don't ever tell them, "This is what I see in you." I tell them, "Close your eyes and take a look!" Tell *me* what you see.

TS: In the beginning of our conversation, you used this interesting phrase that I made a note of [and] wanted to follow up with you on. You talked about how we could go "fishing" into the dream field with a question.

CS: Into the—?

TS: Into the dream field with a question.

CS: Right. Right.

TS: So I could ask any question? And how do I know that I'm receiving a response or an image from the dream field?

CS: You'll always know because it rings differently. The sound of it is different. It's just very simple; very clear; very, "Yes. No. Turn right. Turn left. Go to see this one. Give this phone call." It's very simple.

It's not a complicated mind-game. An image will pop up, showing you where to go. If you follow it, even if it doesn't make sense, you'll see the difference.

Now this is one of the works of training somebody in the dreaming—they learn to surrender to the images and to follow them.

It may not make any logical sense. I'll tell you a story—it's not to talk about myself, but it's an example. Now, I was supposed to go to Harvard. I had a full scholarship to Harvard. And I kept on hearing, "No, you're going to the Middle East. No, you're going to Israel." So I ended up going to Israel, to the horror of my family. I sat there in a *kibbutz* wondering what in the world I was doing there, until one day I heard the name of the woman who was going to be my teacher. And the moment I heard her name, my whole brain exploded with light, I knew that's why I'd come, and that's where I had to go. I didn't even know she was a teacher.

I went there and I found my roots—which was quite astonishing, because at the time I knew nothing about my mother's family roots, which were the same as Colette's. I had left the States to come to Jerusalem. It was totally irrational, and it led me where I needed to go—where my soul was calling to me to go.

So, the dreaming is never going to lie to you and it's always going to show you the way. Now, it doesn't mean it's going to be an easy way, but it will show you the way.

To give you an example, here's a young woman who makes a choice. She makes the choice of having this baby. The father of the baby comes in and says, "You've got to tell her not to because I don't want this baby." "OK," I say, "this is not my job. My job is to open up the inside so that she can see what her soul wants to do." And the soul was very clear: "I want this baby!" She kept the baby and it's been very hard, but that's what the soul had chosen.

I don't decide the inside of the dream. The dreamer decides. The dreaming decides. It's not logical, but ultimately it takes you where your soul and your heart will sing. In the long run, it will take you where you need to go.

TS: Now, Catherine, I want to be very straightforward with you. Which is: in my own experience, I think I have a pretty good idea of what you're talking about when you talk about how we can turn our gaze inward to this dreaming experience—and go fishing, [get] answers, and [also]—when you said, “Imagine yourself in a rose garden,” I could see a rose garden. But in my experience, often when you say something to somebody like, “Imagine yourself in a rose garden,” they report back, “I don't see anything. Nothing. I asked a question and I didn't hear an answer. I didn't hear anything definitive.”

So I'm wondering: Is this true for all people? That this imaginal field can be accessed instantaneously [and at] a moment's notice?

CS: Yes, it is. But there are little tricks to make people see. Many people who will say, “Well, I don't see anything,” they don't see anything because they're frightened, they don't want to feel, or they're frightened of what's going to be revealed.

The other thing to remember is that when we talk about imagery, we're talking about the five senses. We talk of imagery because the sight is our most powerful sense. But some people are much more attuned, let's say, to kinesthetic sensations. Others, it's taste. Let's say you're a cook. Well, I'm not going to see images, but I'm going to taste it. So their road to their inside dreaming may be the tasting.

I remember a friend of mine. He was a nutritionist. This woman walks in—and I was sitting next to my friend. He says to me, “Cheese. This woman was eating cheese.” [*Laughs.*] He could smell it! Whereas if somebody walked into my office, I see the mice, I see the angry mother, I see a lot of things happening in image—that's my most powerful sensation. But he was a nutritionist and he could smell cheese. And it was the truth, because he asked her the questions and she said yes, she [mainly] ate cheese.

It's a field that you can access through any one of your senses. Ultimately, all the senses will come together and create a synergy so you'll have a 3-D world inside.

A person who is afraid of what they're going to be feeling or knowing—of knowing themselves—they're going to have a hard time. [For] somebody who prefers to be mental, it's much easier to be in the rational world—who will have a preconceived idea that that's where they need to be—they refuse to see. They won't know that they're refusing, but they'll have a hard time seeing.

And there are little tricks to help them see. We know that they can see because they have night dreams. If they have night dreams, it's obvious that they can see.

TS: In terms of these little tricks, you introduced us to the, “Three, two, one.” That helps us relax and see the big, bright “one” before we do the exercise itself. Are there other little tricks that you can share with us?

CS: Well, I can give you a little exercise with one of the tricks that I use with people who say that they can't see. I say, “Close your eyes and see a chair.” And it's amazing—they'll always be able to describe to you a chair. From there, I say, “Can you see a throne?” Yes. Generally, from the chair they can move to the throne. “Can you sit in it? What does it feel like?”

This sounds silly, but it works because you started from something very graphic and common. They'll be able to move from there.

TS: OK. Now, Catherine, I'd love for you to let our listeners know how you moved from working with imagery in general to applying it specifically to the journey of childbirth.

CS: Oh! Well, first to tell you, when I was in Jerusalem studying with Colette, I didn't speak the language. The only thing I knew how to do—or thought I knew how to do—was to teach yoga. So I had groups of students who spoke English. I managed with my bad Hebrew. I started teaching them yoga—but not all the yoga that is common in most studios. I was teaching them imagery in the body. Again, how do I move the body to do this?

[A student's] doula came up to me and said, "Can you give a class for birth professionals?" I had no idea about anything. I still have no idea. I'm not in the birthing rooms. So I'm not doing that work. But they were telling me, "We need something to get the placenta down very fast." Or, "We need to lower the blood pressure." Or, "We need to get [fewer] cords around the neck of the baby." They would tell me what they needed.

Now, I know what the language is that can speak to the body. So I wrote the exercises. That's how it all happened. It was not that I knew anything about the birthing profession—except giving birth to my son. [It's] that I can apply the language in any way that is required.

It can go from the most simple thing, like learning to write to very complex spiritual development—because it's a language that can be applied to anything. It's your basic language. It's your primal language. It's a language that babies understand. Or animals. So, if you want to communicate with an animal, you communicate in images. They understand images.

Now, I'm not an animal communicator, but I've done that with a number of animals. I simply speak to them in images. They respond in images.

TS: Now, Catherine, if we were to take a common problem—it seems like it's become more common in our society—which is difficulties with conception. Women who want to have a baby and go through all kinds of potentially extreme medical measures in order to proceed. How might using the approach that you teach work with imagery? What kinds of suggestions would you have?

CS: There are two chapters in the book about that with very specific exercises on what you need to do to prepare for conception. Now, the work for infertility may be more—let's say more in-depth. We have many, many more exercises that are not in the book.

But that would require—again—sitting with the person and finding out what is blocking. It could be an ancestral pattern. Let's say that—in the ancestral pattern—I'm very connected to my aunt, and my aunt never had children. So I'll never have children. It's a belief system in the dream field that is blocking the process. So we clear that out.

It could be many, many other things. It could be a sperm count that is not high enough. We're actually doing a study in Japan just now on the exercise to lift the sperm. [It's happening] in a hospital in Japan, [finding] out whether the exercise really does create more motility of the sperm and more healthiness of the sperm.

There [are] so many things that one could address, but again it depends entirely on the person's situation.

TS: There's a pretty wild quote from the book, *DreamBirth*, that I wanted to read for you. It's a wild quote, and it has to do with the experience of actually being in labor and giving birth. Here it is: "If you're completely in your dreaming, what seemed like hard labor can become effortless, ecstatic, and orgasmic."

And I thought, "Is that really true?" In the midst of hard labor? And what does it mean to be completely in your dreaming in the midst of hard labor?

CS: Well, that's how I experienced it and that's how many of my students have experienced it. When you're in your dreaming, you don't feel your body the same way.

Let's say that I'm at the dentist and he's doing all sorts of things to my mouth. But I'm walking in a meadow, where the flowers have a heavenly scent. I'm sensing and smelling the flowers, I'm not focusing on the pain in my mouth. If I focus on the pain in my mouth, it gets much worse. If I go into a dreaming state, it's a very different matter.

All the interruptions that laboring women are subjected to are detrimental because it breaks the rhythm. It breaks the fact that they're in their body—they're completely immersed in this monumental internal movement. If they stay with it, they'll be OK. Generally.

“Generally,” I say because all sorts of shifts can happen in the body. But if you have a DreamBirth doula there, they'll be helping them on the way.

What I mean by “the dreaming” is that if I am dreaming, I am not going to be so directly concentrated on the pain. The pain dissolves in the presence—in the present thing of my experience.

But I'm talking in my experience. And I can say that from my own labor. I didn't feel it the way most people talk about it. It was just—I was a great, rushing torrent and I was flowing down in the waters of the torrent. That's what happened.

Now, I was interrupted at one point and that's when the pain got really bad. When I was able to get back into my dreaming, it was much easier.

TS: Now, Catherine, before I end this conversation, one thing that I have a lot of curiosity about is to know a bit more about the spiritual teacher—Colette—that you studied with in Jerusalem. One of two women Kabbalistic teachers at the time that were on your radar. I guess I would love—if you would—for you to paint a picture of her for me. What [was] your relationship like with her?

CS: When I first arrived there and I didn't know she was a teacher, she said to me, “What do you want?” And I said, “Well, I want you to teach me how images move people.” She said to me, “I've waited for you a long time.” So she adopted me as her daughter.

She was a very great woman. She was really queenly. And totally, totally dedicated—so the house was open from early morning to late at night. She never left her house. She did walk up and down the street, but she never left the area. She was always there. This was her offering to the world—which was that [if] anybody needed her, she was there.

She was completely selfless. There was no money involved. Today, it's quite impossible to that—especially in the States—but there, it was very different. She did have a husband who was a wonderful, extraordinary man and who had a job, so he took care of her. But after he left—although there was some money in the background to pay for her needs—everybody in the community would come 'round and bring her gifts. A baked potato in a cloth. Or [they] would come and help clean the garden. Or do something for her, because she was such a magnet for so many, many people.

And they would come, and they would present their difficulty or talk about their difficulty. She would answer them by having them do an exercise. She would send them home [with], “Do this exercise for three days, every hour on the hour, and call me back.” So, she was an absolute magnet—so much so that I remember once a letter arriving that said, “Colette—Jerusalem.” The letter arrived at her doorstep. Everybody knew her.

She was both a *grande dame*, as we say in France—a great lady—and also an extraordinarily giving person. She was like the very center—the heart—of things for a lot of people.

She used to often sit in the little terrace in her little garden. You'd open the blue gate, go down the seven steps, and you'd sit there with her. A lot of her work was done in public. Now, she had her private students in the morning—but the rest of the time, it was all public. People would come and ask a question, and she'd give them tea and maybe even feed them.

It was a really open house. Every Saturday night, they had an open house where they fed 60 people or more. She would talk or a speaker would talk. That was the way of closing the Shabbat.

She was teaching and giving classes and seeing people privately. [She] really affected a great, great many lives.

TS: You have the sense, it seems, that you're clearly carrying on—if you will—her teaching work. Do you also have the sense that people who study with you—or select individuals who study with you—are now carrying on this same lineage for future generations?

CS: Oh, yes. I'm training a lot of people. Actually, all over the world—because I travel all over the world teaching. There's about four or five months of the year that I travel. So yes—they're being trained in different countries.

Then I have—now we're modern—so I have classes on webinar. So they train all year 'round. Some of them are really, really magnificent practitioners of the work. I hope that eventually it becomes a well-known work, because it is so simple and so powerful. It reveals so much if the person is willing and honest enough to look in so they can see and so they can better themselves from the images that are theirs—that they've been able to access. When I was talking about fishing—you can really access it by giving this little movement, “opening the window,” or giving the little jolt that will allow them to access what's in their cauldron.

TS: And just a final question, Catherine: Do you have a hope or a wish or a dream, if you will, for your new book *DreamBirth: Transforming the Journey of Childbirth Through Imagery*?

CS: Actually, I was very, very happy to do the work with all these birth professionals, because I realized the best way to teach the work is to get back to the basics. And the basics are: the women, giving birth, and their children.

We find that a lot of the mothers who've done *DreamBirth* will call us up to find out, “Well, what do I do with the sibling rivalry? How do I wean my child? What do I do if . . .?” They've learned the language and they're bringing it there. It's teaching a new generation the language that they've lost—which I think [is] really the primal language that enables us to become free, not to be the victim of outside forces. Or to be simply manipulated by outside forces—but to truly find inside of ourselves the truth and the way to meaning. To true meaning inside of ourselves.

So I was very happy that this can go to the young mothers, because then they can also teach their children and use it in their own family life. I'm hoping that that language will start to spread with the book. That's my dream.

TS: I've been speaking with Dr. Catherine Shainberg. She's the author of a new Sounds True book called *DreamBirth: Transforming the Journey of Childbirth Through Imagery*—a book that has 161 imagery exercises in it: different jolting experiences, taking the dreamer through conception, pregnancy, labor, and bonding. Catherine has also created an audio series on *Imagery for Conception, Pregnancy, Labor, and Bonding*.

Catherine, it was really wonderful to talk with you and to speak with someone who is so genuinely and purely carrying on the work that you're doing. It's very inspiring. Thank you.

CS: Thank you so much for having me on your program, Tami. Thank you.

TS: Our engineer today is Aaron Arnold. Our series editor is Jeff Mack. And the music that you're hearing is from Tom Colletti, from the album *Yoga is Union*, available through Sounds True.

SoundsTrue.com. Many voices, one journey. Thanks for listening.