

Two image-based techniques for enhanced emotional reconsolidation* in Jhana states (v1.1)

Speed-Run Nervous System Regulation!
Quickly locate points of unconscious tension!
Improve your relationships!
(hopefully)

"The right hemisphere's mode of understanding is holistic, integrative, relational and contextual, in contrast to the left hemisphere's fragmented, decontextualised approach. It is more attuned to the actual lived experience, to the world as it presents itself in its full, rich, and complex reality, rather than as a set of abstracted entities or categories."

– Ian McGilchrist.

"Jung considered the dream to be a product of the self-regulatory nature of the psyche."

–Marian Dunlea

"Opposites can only be united in form of a compromise, some new thing arising from the tension between them which has the power to take up their energies in equal measure as an expression of both or neither. Such an expression cannot be contrived by reason, it can only be created through living."

–Carl Jung

"An affect cannot be restrained or neutralised except by a contrary affect that is stronger than the affect to be restrained."

–Spinoza

"Reason, the neo-cortex alone, cannot shift attitude or activation in the system without the collaboration of the transformative heat of emotion."

–Marian Dunlea

Thesis:

If we take dream images and unconscious relational projections to be a product of the self-regulatory function of the psyche, I posit that they provide us with a

'right-hemisphere' path to speed-run the j(h)ourney towards self-regulation, homeostasis and a parasympathetic-dominant nervous system.

Why these techniques over others?

These techniques may be especially helpful to reach patterns of dysregulation that the conscious mind is unaware of and as such, are left improperly examined when we comb through memory for traumatic content, believing it to hold the key. Memory is partial and unreliable, its scope limited by the very patterns we seek to identify.

When we search through sensations of the body for reactivity, we often must slowly regulate emotion as it arises. This technique speeds things up by making interconnected buried patterns available for simultaneous regulation.

They also aim to provide a deep opportunity to withdraw and take ownership of the emotional projections which restrict intimate relationships, thereby allowing us to encounter our loved ones more fully and directly.

Important Background Information:

*I have chosen to avoid the phrase "memory reconsolidation" because it suggests that trauma is a piece of memory-based content to be identified and processed. Instead, maybe it is more useful to understand trauma as a dysregulated pattern of emotional-sensation within the nervous system which is partitioned/dissociated from conscious experience by the psyche to preserve cognitive function. I am using the word trauma here, but maybe the Buddhist concept of *dukkha* points to something broader and more helpful.

For our purposes, let's understand dream images as bundles of dysregulated emotional sensations, 'pre-packaged' together by the unconscious and presented to us as a symbol.

How should we understand relational projection? According to analytical psychology, many of our own internal tensions and dissociated patterns of dysregulation are intolerable (dysregulating) to the conscious mind. To manage these unconscious contents without directly confronting them, the psyche partitions them and projects their qualities onto others. This serves to protect the nervous system from overwhelm and preserve cognitive function. This is the psychological pattern of *projection*.

Both dream images and projection can thus be understood as important components of the body-psyche's attempt to self-regulate.

As such, dream images and projections represent 'poles' of the different patterns of underlying dysregulation that create our internal tension. They allow us to easily locate the unconscious tension that scaffolds our conscious personalities. These 'images' can be used to directly embody the dysregulated sensations and give us the opportunity to regulate ourselves from 'within' the pattern of feeling, thereby efficiently locating, releasing and resolving the tension.

I posit that they provide us with an access point that captures a wider and deeper pattern of interconnected emotional sensations than can be accessed by the conscious, analytical 'left-hemisphere' mind. It seems to work much more effectively and on a more fundamental unconscious level than memory-based reconsolidations (which I have worked with in the past). I only have my subjective experience to go by, but it seems like it could be an important tool to decrease neuroticism and resolve internal emotional division and conflict. These psychic divisions limit the flexibility, unity and clarity of the mind, and seem to affect the proper functioning of the nervous system.

The possibility of a more dynamic and thorough self-regulation is made possible through the bountiful supply of resource provided by Jhanic states, which I hope will allow one to resolve deep emotional divisions using the techniques below.

I have detailed two techniques. The first will be most effective when used alongside a dream journal or similar. The second may seem more practical, but it will be easier to understand and perform once you have read Technique One (and the background information above).

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Technique One - Dream Images

1. Settle into a Jhanic state, preferably J4(maybe+).

2. Allow the resource (positive feelings) to build and deepen. It should be stable, deep and spacious.
3. Now, bring to mind an image from one's dream.
 - a. Pay special attention to dream figures that are in conflict, for example the dream-ego (your avatar within the dream) and another figure with whom you are arguing or fighting.
4. Use a feeling of felt resonance to guide you towards specific symbols and figures. Which symbols introduce the most amount of energy or emotional sensation to the body-mind when brought to awareness? How does the reaction to each symbol feel?
5. Experience the image somatically, as if you are living through the image and experiencing the state of its 'nervous system' as your own. You should feel a complex set of sensations arise in the body in relation to each image.
 - a. To understand how to do this, I imagine that I am breathing through the same lungs as the dream figure, experiencing their body, tension, mood, and 'somatic viewpoint'. This should all be felt at the non-conceptual level of directly-experienced sensations.
 - b. It's important to realise that you can embody any dream symbol - including the location, the weather, the mood, an inert object. It's easiest to begin with figures as it's clearer to understand how to embody a 'person'.
 - c. Remember that all dream figures and symbols represent aspects of **our own** personal tension, even if they seem very alien to us, or appear to be someone we know in real life.
 - d. You want to directly experience how it feels **to be** that image. Imagine it is the image's nervous system you are aiming to regulate.
6. The images are likely to introduce some dysregulation to the Jhana experience. This means we have located an image which carries tension. It must be brought into a full state of regulation within the Jhana. This seems to integrate and absorb the energy, tension and 'implicit knowledge' contained in each bundle.
7. To regulate the sensations, I breathe the positive feelings of the Jhana into the dysregulated feelings until they are 'overwritten' or 'dissolved'. The space of the Jhana should clear out and become stable.
8. When you are finished, the images should no longer produce a rush of dysregulated emotion. It may take repeated attempts.
9. You may 'process' each remembered image from a dream successively, or simply prioritise the most emotionally significant dream figures and symbols.

10. In the case of conflict, embody the mutually-opposed images successively, as two opposing sets of sensations in relationship to one another. These might be understood as two emotional perspectives on one general issue.
11. I find it is often helpful to yawn, shake or stretch the body after a large release to bring the process to completion. I usually wait until the end of the full session.
12. (You may want to take note of any images that enhance or deepen the Jhana.)

For example, using a dream in which my father confronts me for shoplifting batteries:

I bring the symbols of the dream one-by-one into awareness inside the jhanic resource. With each introduction, the emotional-body provides a specific 'felt' reaction. This gives deeper information about the emotional content baked into the image.

First, I embody the father-image, which brings the experience of a certain set of emotional sensations (angry, judgemental, shocked, confrontational, worried, etc.) and then the dream-ego-image (me), which brings a new set of emotional sensations (feeling threatened, ashamed, worried, etc). Remember that the father and the dream-ego both represent internalised perspectives of my own divided psyche, it is not advised to understand them as corresponding to real external people.

Each image brings a distinct blend of dysregulated emotions that represent different sides of a pattern of internal conflict. By embodying the sensations of both sides, 'feeling them through' and bringing them from a state of dysregulation to regulation, I bring them into a sense of integrated unity and absorb the energy and implicit understanding of both patterns.

I then also embody the dream image of the relational space (the emotional tension between us), the dream image of the batteries (energetic, hopeful), and the dream image of the room/building in which the conflict takes place (confining, limiting). These are important aspects of the dream that should not be overlooked.

We do not need to analyse or deconstruct the dream for our purposes. In fact, analysis by nature will only produce a partial slice of 'left-hemisphere' knowledge, which leaves out the richness, depth and infinitely-layered quality of dream images. However, analysis is helpful to build a conceptual understanding.

Technique Two - Relational Projection.

1. Settle into a well-resourced Jhanic state, preferably J4+.
2. Allow it to build and deepen.
3. Now, bring to mind a real-life relationship, either a difficult relationship or a strong one.
 - a. We may choose a relationship with a degree of most pain/conflict, or more loving relationships. Most relationships will contain both.
 - b. It can be any sort of relationship: romantic, platonic, professional, etc. It can be a current relationship or one from the past.
4. Remember, that both our image of ourselves in this relationship, our image of our partner, and our image of the relationship, are all **images** - understood here as a symbolic representation of a collection of sensations held in the psyche. We internalise our partner as an image, and we internalise our own sense of identity as an image. We treat them as we treat dream images.
5. Now we repeat the pattern from technique one. We embody (the sensations contained within) our image of ourselves in relationship to our partner, we embody our partner in relationship to us, and we embody the relational space between us. We can also embody an image of the physical space our relationship takes place (a home, office, school, etc.).
6. We bring each pattern of sensation from a state of dysregulation to regulation within the Jhana.
7. This process reclaims the unintegrated emotional sensations that our psyche projects onto the other, and moves them towards regulation and integration.
8. It can be used to dismantle the triggers that we have developed in response to a specific relationship with another person. In doing so, it is likely to partially regulate patterns of dysregulated feeling that have been transferred from past (often formative) relationships to the one we have processed.

Again, each projection-image brings a distinct blend of dysregulated emotions that represent different sides of a pattern of internal conflict.

Often, we have internalised the perceived perspective of another person, holding it in opposition to the perspective of the ego.

Technique Two can actually be performed in real time when in the company of another person, provided that one has access to a stable well of Jhanic resource. When we feel the activation of a reactive trigger during a conversation, we can discreetly regulate it internally, and then embody the perceived (projected) emotions of the other and regulate that pattern of feeling. This has thus far proven to be a great way to work on relational issues, and to build a sense of confidence and autonomy.

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Aftercare:

This is heavy work. Take it slowly and allow time for things to resettle. You may notice, as I did, a huge increase in energy, mood and executive function after a short time with the techniques. You should still pace yourself, and not do too much all at once.

I find that once I have processed my limit of unconscious patterns, that my body gives me a signal to stop. For me, this signal is a strange metallic taste of batteries (hmm) on the tongue, and a feeling of emotional stress/pain on the breath. I recognise these sensations from an experience in which I overdid TRE emotional release. Once this limit has reached, it is better to stop and allow the body-mind to readjust before continuing. Too much will overwhelm the body and lead to a longer recovery. One can rest and recharge by connecting with nature, exercising or socialising. Get the body moving! (or sleep!)

A few warm pulses of J1 before finishing also helps as a balm, but you should feel great if done safely and successfully.

I imagine that the limit is highly dependent on an individual's nervous system, their capacity for self-regulation and the strength/depth of the Jhanic resource. I hit my limit after about 1.5 hours of deep reconsolidation. Twice after pushing past it, I experienced deep energetic depletion alongside some emotional rawness, and decided to wait until the next day to continue. My tolerance was shorter the following day.

(And just to be clear in case anyone I don't know ends up reading this doc - I am a regular meditator who has written this after a year of experimenting with somatic meditation practices and only a few days of experimentation with the Jhanas - take everything written here with a huge pinch of salt. This is a home experiment / work in progress. **This is not advice from an expert!** Working with someone properly trained is always best/safest, especially in the case of major trauma.)
Good luck!

Michael / @kaleidosight .

"Looking brings about the activation of the object."

-Carl Jung