

WORK WEARY

Using day dreams to further your career

Weeks of stress and your resignation letter ready for signing? Perhaps a course in day dreaming will help. It claims to wake dormant spirits. All humbug? **SPIEGEL ONLINE** contributor **Kai Oppel** tested it for himself.

Legs outstretched, arms across my stomach. I don't have any serious problems, but I am lying on a couch in Cologne. To improve my career. DreamGuidance is the name coach Birgitt E. Morrien gives to her approach of using day dreams to get to the yearnings that lie dormant deep within us. Life's routines often keep us from perceiving our true dreams and prevent us from knowing how to achieve true happiness. At least according to Ms Morrien.

I close my eyes. Morrien speaks in monotone voice. Completely calm. Yawn. No, I'm not falling asleep. I breathe steadily, in and out. Morrien is still speaking slowly. I ask myself what the hell am I doing on this couch and how can such hocus-pocus work? Morrien keeps on speaking. I yawn. I'm listening unthinkingly to her voice. And then it happens: images begin to appear before my closed eyes. I dream of my

65th birthday. I have a beer belly, and I'm wearing a yellow jumper. It's a sunny afternoon. I'm standing under a tree looking out towards a view of mountain peaks being reflected onto a small lake. A long white table stands on the lush green grass. Friends and family are visiting and grandchildren are playing around us.

In my dream I'm now getting younger, each time by 7 years. Kai at 58. I'm receiving an award for my achievements. Kai at 51. I'm sailing across a lake on a nice yacht and with a pretty lady.

Routine leads to discontent

"I take clients to a future stage of their lives from where they can recall special moments from the more relaxed perspective of an older person", explains Ms Morrien. This is how this coaching approach differs to others. "Classical coaching asks the client where they want to be in five years time", says the communications expert. Most people know exactly what they want by then. And there lies the problem: "Most people think in routines." she says. And these are generally the cause of discontent at work. Communication coaches often use their courses to

discuss how clients are to behave in the immediate hours or days to achieve the best results, just like a football coach preparing players for the next game. Career and life goals for twenty, thirty or even fifty years ahead usually get ignored.

But these are what Morrien wants her clients to become aware of. Her courses don't come cheap. The basic fee is around 150 euros per hour. But she claims the price can be reduced by 50%: accreditation means she can apply for public funding on behalf of her clients. I'm still stretched out on the couch journeying through my life. Kai at 44, in a smart office in a fashionable old building with ten members of staff.

Kai at 37 finishing work early and collecting his son from kindergarten. At some point Morrien brings me back to the consultation room. I then make quick drawings of my day dreams, and am told to give them titles.

Tired after 10 hours of day dreaming

Day dreaming differs significantly to hypnosis. "During a dream, the client is always in control", says Bernhard Adelberg, a practitioner of complementary medicine. Birgit Morrien explains that our waking consciousness recedes a little when in a state of day dreaming.

What's surprising is that these day dreams, on closer inspection, can inform clients – at least in the ideal case – on how to achieve success. I see myself at 37 as I take a break to

collect my not-yet-born son from kindergarten and then seven years later as an employer with ten staff. Is a career in self-employment my path to happiness?

After the day dream, I sketch out a career plan with Morrien. My task is to think of me as an older Self giving a younger Self good advice. I tell him: "Give yourself time", advice I would never have given before the coaching.

The course has taken almost ten hours so I'm feeling tired. I leave Co-

logne with a strange feeling. For the next four weeks

I lack motivation to work. "It's possible that you'll start questioning things after a coaching session", were Ms Morrien's parting words.

After a while things become clearer. I now have a faith-like belief that my life goals will be unachievable as a company employee. But I also realise that I need plenty of time to achieve them. "For many people, gaining a new perspective of the future functions as a kind of mental beacon", says Birgitt E. Morrien. "To bring life goals to fruition, they prepare a long time beforehand, for example by saving up for a sabbatical". And they then have a goal which may bring them happiness.

POST SCRIPT: 3 YEARS LATER Kai Oppel has begun to achieve his life goals: The Munich-born man has become a father and set up a public relations agency.
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