

MODULE 5: UNCONSCIOUS LOVE

The Basic Idea

- Love is consciously manifested/felt only episodically
- When not felt, it consists in:
 - Long term potentiation (memory)
 - Weak nerve signals
- In regular cases, love is not consciously felt most of the time. That is, **love is unconscious**.
- In some other cases, love is entirely unconscious.

Skepticism About Unconscious Emotions

- Emotions are typically conscious experiences
- We feel them
- We are aware of them

- **G. Hohmann** study on soldiers supports this point:
- When the ability to perceive changes in the body is affected, experiences of emotions are affected as well.
- If emotions are perceptions of changes in the body, there is no emotion when there is no perception of changes in the body.

- Also, **Sigmund Freud** defined emotions as being essentially present to awareness.
- States that are below the threshold of awareness are not emotions; they are instincts or drives

A Case For Unconscious Emotions

- Blindsight: "Seeing" without seeing
- **"Affective blindsight"**:
 - (Beatrice de Gelder, Alfons Hamm)
- Emotional responses are processed in subcortical pathways. As a result, patients show:
 - No visual awareness
 - Accurate guessing of emotional expressions
 - Threatening expressions activate the amygdala

Further Cases For Unconscious Emotions

- The cognitive-behavioral "cure" for homosexuality
- People in a coma processes emotional stimuli
- **Hohmann's soldiers**
 - Anger **feelings** were absent, but anger **behavior** was present
 - **Brogaard**: This indicates that they did have emotions. Just not at a conscious level.
 - Their emotions were in the form of **partially unconscious** processing of emotional stimuli.
 - "A mental kind of anger"

Unconscious Emotions and Capgras Syndrome

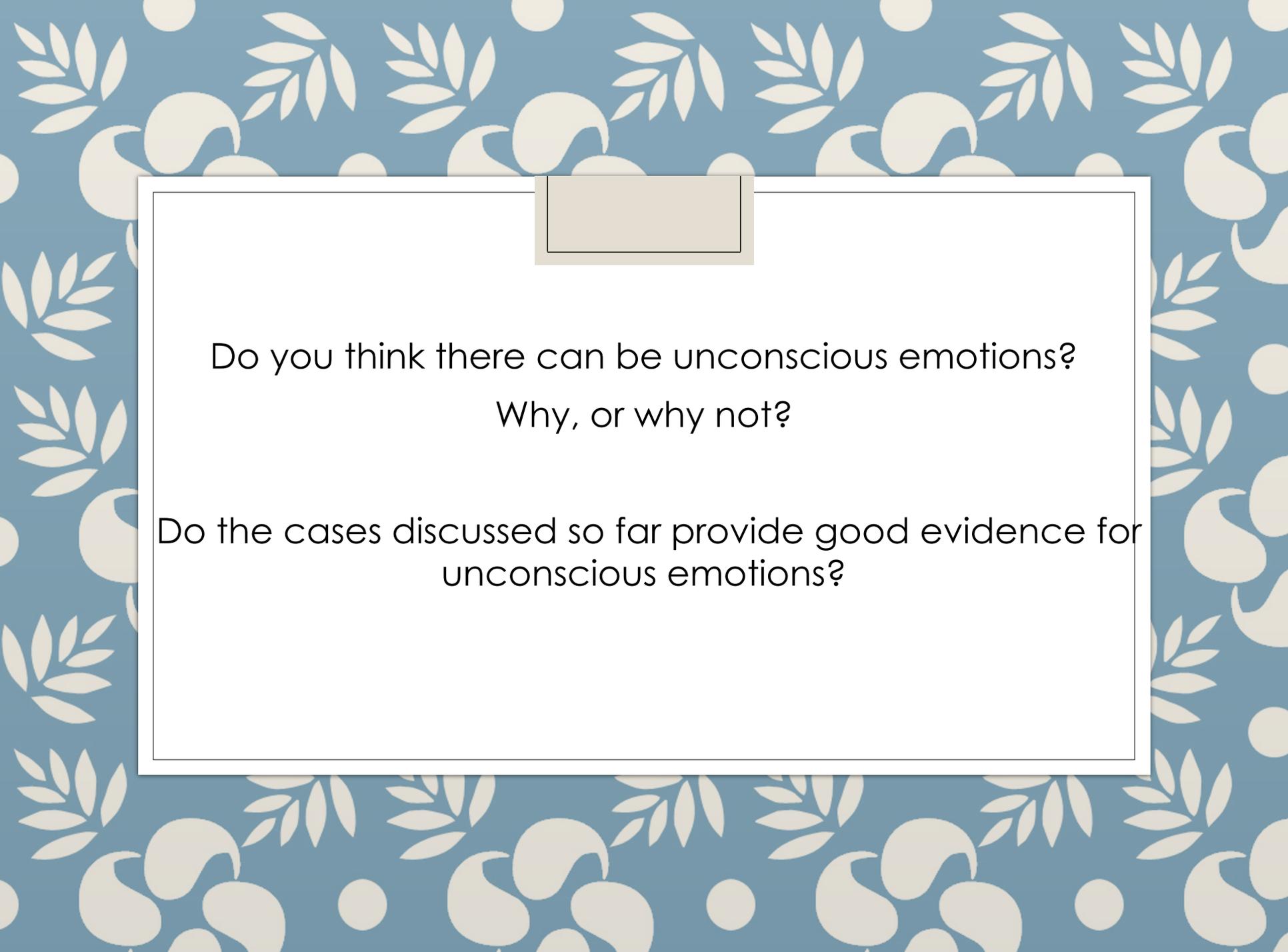
- In Capgras syndrome, family members and friends are perceived as impostors
- The face recognition mechanism in the brain is disconnected from the emotional brain
 - **Unconscious "like"/"dislike" response:** normally helps recognition.
- Recognition through vision: "This looks like my mom's face"
- **No feeling of familiarity:** "This is not my mom"

Two Emotional Pathways

- **Joseph LeDoux** studies on fear
- Sensory input --> Thalamus --> Amygdala
- 1. **The fast pathway:** *Directly from the thalamus to the amygdala*
 - Half a second faster
 - Below the level of awareness
- 2. **The slow pathway:** Conscious awareness of the stimulus, before it reaches the amygdala

Unconscious Emotions in Patients with Amnesia

- No conscious recall of the situation's emotional features (e.g. its potential danger)
- Quick response to emotional stimuli: due to **operation of the fast pathway**
- Some emotional responses (e.g. fear) do not require conscious awareness.



Do you think there can be unconscious emotions?

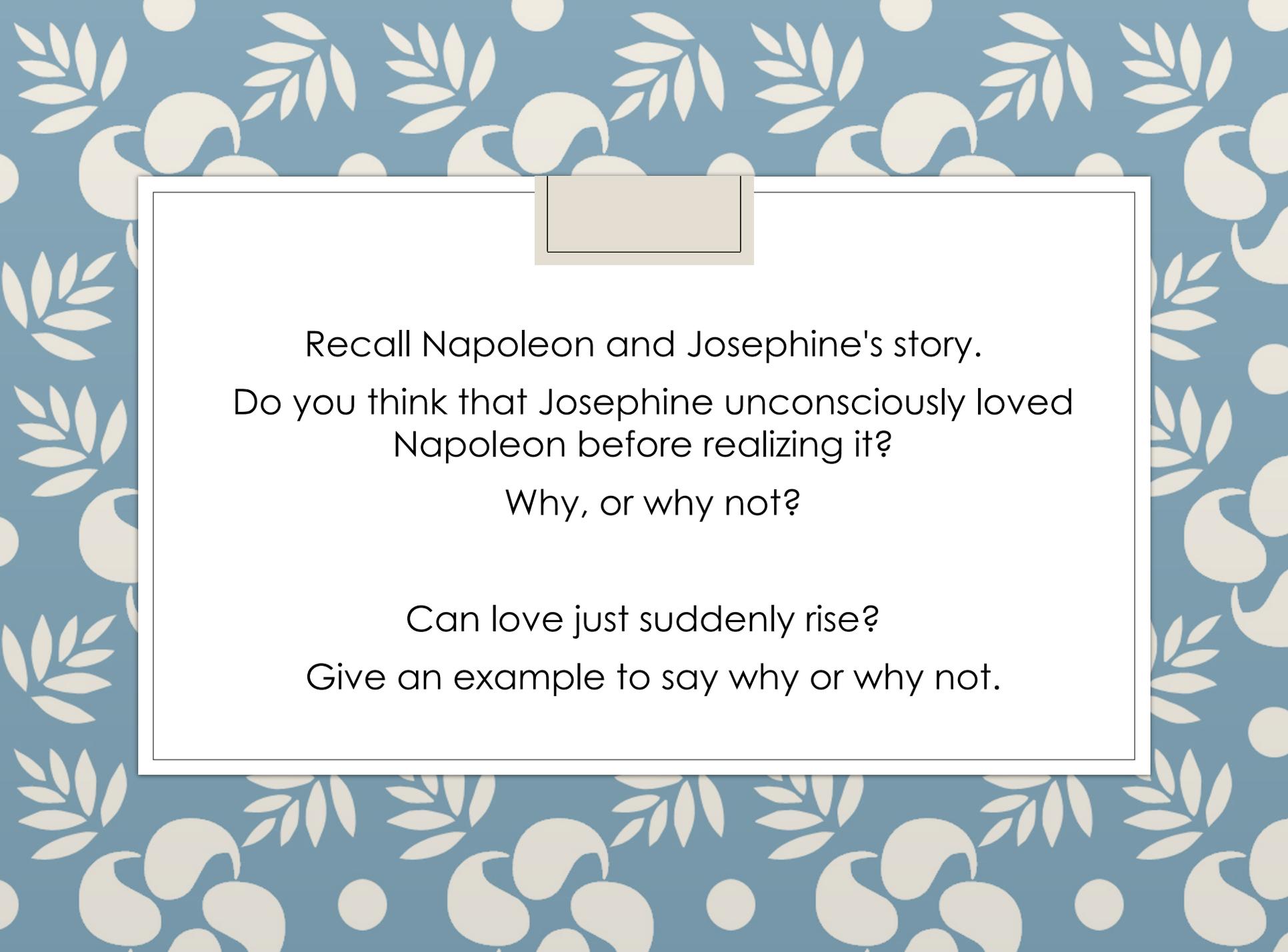
Why, or why not?

Do the cases discussed so far provide good evidence for unconscious emotions?

Unconscious Love As the Best Explanation

- Here are two cases:
 - You and your friend Ryan
 - Napoleon and Josephine
- And two possible explanations about what was going in these two cases:
 - a) Love was there, unconsciously, for a long time before it finally was manifested
 - b) Love arouse suddenly, overnight or from one moment to another

Brogaard favors the first explanation.



Recall Napoleon and Josephine's story.
Do you think that Josephine unconsciously loved
Napoleon before realizing it?

Why, or why not?

Can love just suddenly rise?
Give an example to say why or why not.

The Psychoanalysis of Unconscious Emotions

Sigmund Freud, again.

Suppression mechanism: Emotional responses are sometimes "pushed" below conscious awareness.

- Shameful, painful, conflicting or otherwise unacceptable emotions
- Disguised and distorted into a physical manifestation

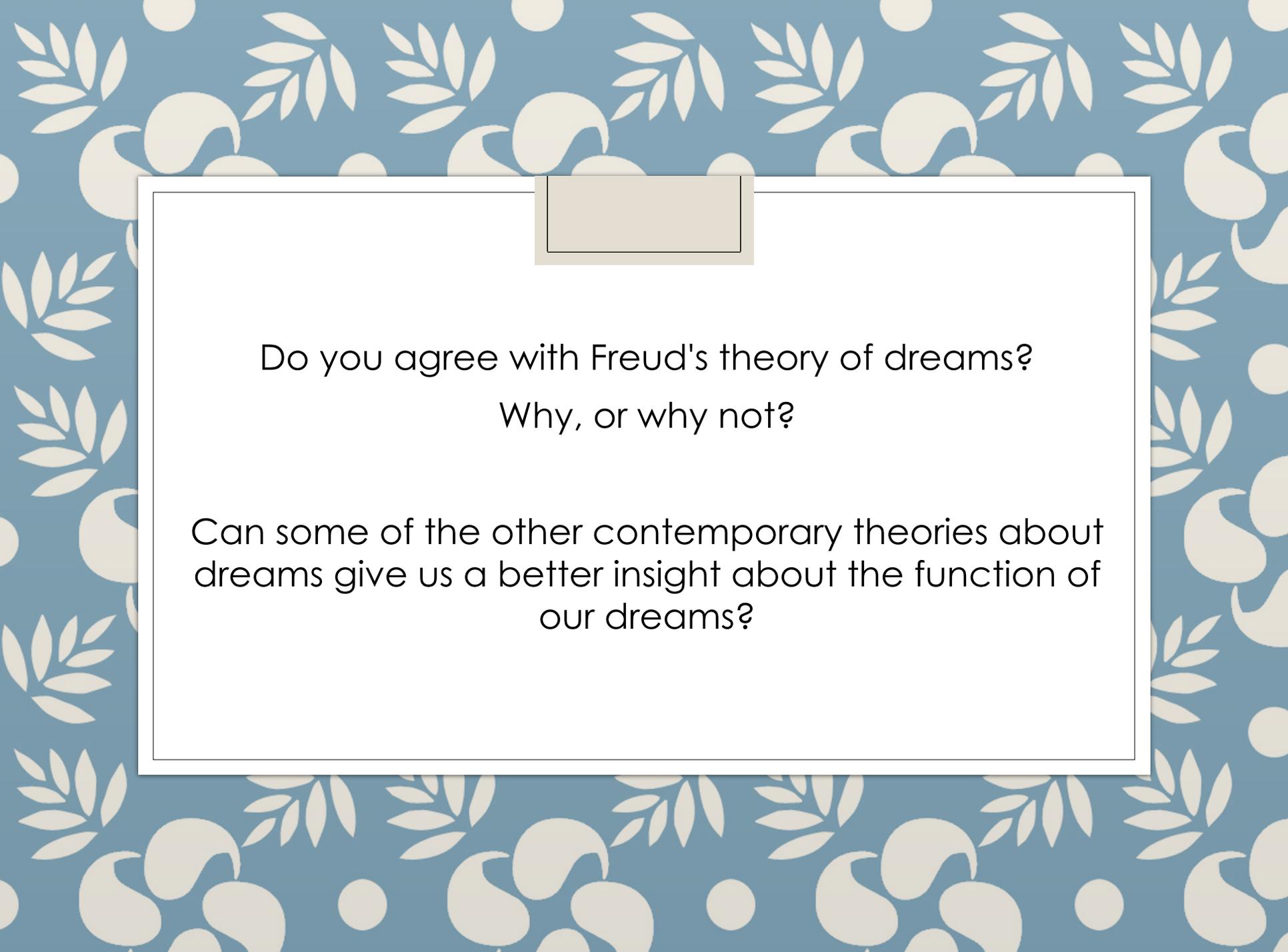
Elizabeth von R.'s love for her brother in law.

Accessing the Unconscious Mind: Dreams

- Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
 - Dreams have hidden meanings that reveal the contents of our unconscious minds
- **Wrong:** There is **no obscure symbolic layer**
- **Right:** Dreams **do provide information** about the dreamer's desires, fears, worries and other emotions.
 - This meaning is **openly revealed, not hidden.**

Some Contemporary Theories of Dreams

- Rosalind Cartwright, psychologist:
 - Dreams function as a **healing mechanism**
 - New emotional problems are related with old problem solving strategies
- G. William Domhoff, dream researcher:
 - Dreams **openly reveal wishes and concerns** in real life
 - They are a good guide for self-knowledge
 - They **do not reflect the unconscious**
- Robert Stickgold, psychiatrist:
 - **In some cases**, dreams reveal unconscious contents in our minds.
 - **Amnesiacs** dream about things that they do not consciously remember.



Do you agree with Freud's theory of dreams?
Why, or why not?

Can some of the other contemporary theories about dreams give us a better insight about the function of our dreams?

A Rival View: Love As a Disposition

- A **disposition** an attribute such that, in certain kinds of circumstances, leads to certain kinds of events or behaviors.
- Examples:
- Fragility
- **The Big-Five of Personality:** Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, open-mindedness, neuroticism.

Love As a Disposition

- "Love is a disposition to produce certain consciously felt emotions and behaviors in certain circumstances"
 - Such as: getting sweaty palms, crazy heartbeat, caring behavior...
- If love is a disposition, then:
- It can be long lasting
- It doesn't have to be consciously felt at all times

Some Reasons To Reject The Dispositional View

- If love is a disposition, then so are other emotions (e.g. anger, fear)
 - But **anger and fear are not dispositions!**
- Love is the foundation of other dispositions, but not a disposition itself
 - Compare love to hunger: **hunger is not a disposition!**
- Love is instantiated in the nervous system in many ways
 - E.g., as emotional memories
 - Stored in pieces, reconstructed by the hippocampus every time we recall them
 - These processes are the basis for certain dispositions to act in certain ways
 - Take place below conscious awareness