

Coping with nightmares



- • Try not to lie paralysed with fear for too long – remind yourself that you are safe now. Move around, get yourself a warm drink.
- • Find your hot water bottle or teddy bear.
- • Get up, put the light on and walk around, check doors etc. to remind yourself that you are safe now.
- • Reorientate yourself to your immediate surroundings; remind yourself what day and year it is, where you are now, things that are different now from when you were traumatised or hurt.
- • Practice relaxation techniques.
- • Write the nightmare down in a book and put it away in another part of the house, reminding yourself that you can leave its images there. Maybe take it to your next therapy session to discuss with your counsellor.
- • Put the light on and read something that is reasonably light and undemanding or put the television on.
- • Have a warm shower.
- • If nightmares are particularly fierce, is there something in your daily life that is triggering them? Is there something that you need to protect yourself from?
- • If you were assaulted in your bedroom, change the furniture around, paint the walls, hang new pictures change rooms if possible (all of this to be done in the daytime of course!)
- • Are you spending all your energy during the day trying not to think about the traumatic events that you have been through? Sometimes taking the time to write your feelings and thoughts in the daytime will mean less “stuff” to “bubble up” in dreams. Your feelings and thoughts need some kind of expression so if you tend to them during the day they are less likely to plague you at night.

• • After experiencing trauma it is often hard to control your body and mind to help you feel safe again.

• • It is often most difficult at night, and for many reasons your dreams may express the trauma that you suffered you may wake with nightmares, feeling fearful, unsafe and re-traumatised.

• • Here are some things to do after a nightmare that may help you calm down.



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