

NIGHTMARE PROTOCOL



OVERVIEW

Choose a recurring nightmare you would like to work on

WRITE DOWN the narrative or the central elements of the bad dream

REWRITE the dream CHANGING the arc of the story so that it results in A POSITIVE ENDING

JUST BEFORE FALLING ASLEEP, INDUCE THE INTENTION TO RE-DREAM

REHEARSE and RELAX during the day

Before starting the steps, practice relaxation, pleasant imagery, and coping skills first, to be sure you are ready to work on changing your nightmares. Consider progressive relaxation, paced breathing, or any relaxing exercise.

Adapted from:

DBT Nightmare Protocol

<http://wichitasac.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Reflections-A-Brief-Guide-to-Imagery-Rehearsal-Therapy-for-Nightmares.pdf>

Please note that this alone may be intolerable for some trauma survivors with severe posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), problems with dissociation, or other severe mental illness. This guide is not an attempt to practice medicine or provide specific medical advice, and it should not replace or overrule a qualified health care provider's judgment. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment. Always consult with a qualified and licensed physician or other medical care provider

STEP 1: THE NIGHTMARE

TODAY'S

Date

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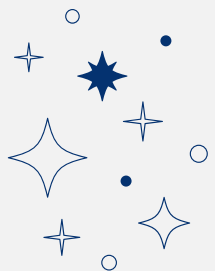
TODAY'S

Date _____

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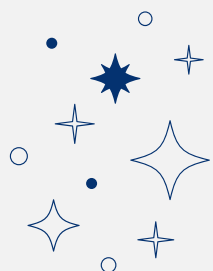
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WRITE DOWN THE NARRATIVE OR THE CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF THE BAD DREAM. SPEND SOME TIME TURNING THE NOTES INTO A MORE DETAILED PARAGRAPH OR TWO DESCRIBING WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DREAM AND TO WHOM. WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IS TO CAPTURE THE MOST FRIGHTENING ELEMENTS OF THE DREAM ON PAPER: THE ACTUAL INJURY OR DEATH, HORRIFIC IMAGES OR SOUNDS, AND WHAT LED UP TO THE DRAMATIC ENDING.

[illegible]

STEP 2: THE RE-WRITE

REWRITE THE DREAM, CHANGING THE ARC OF THE STORY SO THAT IT RESULTS IN A POSITIVE ENDING. THIS REQUIRES SOME IMAGINATION BUT CAN BE DONE WITH THE HELP OF HEROIC STORIES OF SURVIVAL YOU RECALL FROM LITERATURE, THE MOVIES OR THE MEDIA. THE STORY CAN BE OUTLANDISH, INTRODUCE RESCUERS, INVOKE YOUR OWN SUPER HERO SUPERPOWERS OR A REALISTIC USE OF SELF-DEFENSE, MARTIAL ARTS, WEAPONRY AND/OR THE HELP OF WELL-TRAINED DEFENDERS SUCH AS THE MILITARY OR LAW ENFORCEMENT.

[illegible]

STEP 3



JUST BEFORE FALLING ASLEEP, INDUCE THE INTENTION TO RE-DREAM. Follow each of the steps below:

1. Say this to yourself (really use these exact words),
“If or when I have the beginnings of the same bad dream, I will be able to INSTEAD have this much better dream with a positive outcome.”

2. IMAGINE the details of the REWRITTEN DREAM from beginning to end. Review any part to make sure you can really see it or feel it.

3. Repeat to yourself the statement above reinforcing that you will have the positive dream before you allow yourself to fall asleep

If you do not have success on the first many attempts, do not despair. Keep experimenting with rewrites. Give the techniques a minimum of a 10-night trial and note the challenges you are facing.

