Exercise

UK English

Nightmare Exposure And Rescripting

PSYCHOLOGYTOOLS®

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Nightmare Exposure And Rescripting

Description

Exposure to- and rescripting of- nightmares is a helpful technique for taking control of bad dreams. There is evidence that imagery rescripting for nightmares can be used as a stand-alone intervention. The *Nightmare Exposure And Rescripting* worksheet contains instructions for conducting this technique.

Instructions

As with traditional imagery rescripting the client is guided through a helpful sequence of questions:

1. Eliciting the nightmare / image.
2. Eliciting the current emotion.
3. Considering the desired emotion.
4. Then developing a new image to accompany the desired emotion.

References

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Exposure and rescripting are techniques that can help you to regain control over nightmares and bad dreams.

Exposure

We can make situations less fearful by confronting our fears.
Imagine your nightmare is a movie script, that it has a beginning, middle, and end. Write down the story of what happens in your nightmare and read it through often. You can write it in words, or draw it out like a comic strip.

Rescripting

We can't change events that have happened in our lives, but we can change the stories we tell about them. Nightmares are just a story about something that has happened, and our minds 'play' that story at night as if it's a video. If we change the story in important and memorable ways we can encourage our minds to play a different video.
Follow these instructions for your nightmares. You may need do it multiple times if there are lots of important moments. Once you have rescripted your nightmare it is important to rehearse the new version so your mind will remember it while asleep.

Identify the worst moment of your nightmare
Where are you? What are you aware of? What is happening?

What emotions are you feeling at that worst moment?
Identify your emotions and what you feel in your body. Either during the nightmare or on waking.

What would you *prefer* to feel in that moment?

How would the story need to change for you to feel that way?
It's your story, you're only limited by your imagination. The more creative, imaginative, or funny, the changes that you make, the better - anything that makes your new story stand out will make it more memorable.

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Identify the worst moment of your nightmare

Where are you? What are you aware of? What is happening?

I'm running down the path towards my house. It's dark and windy. There are noises behind me but I'm scared to look. The ground is rough and it's wet. I slip and I'm scrambling.

What emotions are you feeling at that worst moment?

Identify your emotions and what you feel in your body. Either during the nightmare or on waking

Fear, terror – my heart is pounding.

What would you *prefer* to feel in that moment?

I would like to feel excited and happy.

How would the story need to change for you to feel that way?

It's your story, you're only limited by your imagination. The more creative, imaginative, or funny, the changes that you make, the better - anything that makes your new story stand out will make it more memorable

I'm running in a big cross-country race. I can hear other runners all around me. I look behind me and lots of people are in fancy dress – a pantomime horse. I slip and stumble but someone dressed as a unicorn helps me up. We turn the corner and there are crowds of people cheering us on to the finish. As I cross the line I'm greeted by my family and given a medal.

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