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**IMAGERY REHEARSAL THERAPY OF NIGHTMARES**

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Definition: Teaching clients to change their nightmares into new non-disturbing dreams by composing such new dreams while awake and writing them down and practising them in imagination just before sleeping in order to have those new dreams while asleep.

Elements: a. Record or write down a description of a nightmare (this can be bypassed).  
b. Change that description in any way preferred, or describe a totally-new desirable dream.  
c. For a few minutes before going to sleep, read this description or listen to a recording of it, and imagine experiencing that intended new dream to facilitate having it while asleep.

Related procedures: Alternative practice, cognitive rehearsal, covert rehearsal, dream control, guided fantasy, homework, imagery rescripting and reprocessing, rational-emotive imagery, rehearsal relief

Application: Relief of nightmares with or without PTSD.

1st use? Krakow et al (1993)

References:

1. Bradshaw SJ (1991) Successful cognitive manipulation of a stereotypic nightmare in a 40 year old male with Down's syndrome. *Behav Psychother*, 19: 281-284.
2. Krakow B, Kellner R, Neidhardt J, Pathak D, Lambert L (1993). Imagery rehearsal treatment for chronic nightmares: A thirty month follow-up. *J Behav Ther & Exper. Psychiat*, 24: 325-330.
3. Germain A, Krakow B, Faucher B et al.(2004). Increased mastery elements associated with imagery rehearsal treatment for nightmares in sexual assault survivors with PTSD. *Dreaming*, 14: 195-206.
4. Marks IM (1978) Rehearsal relief of a nightmare. *Brit. J Psychiat.*, 133: 461-5.

Case illustration 1: (Sibilia L, unpublished)

Mara, age 5, came with mother who was midst a turbulent legal separation from Mara's father. Mara, a previously confident child, had recently insisted on her light remaining on when in bed and after a while would go to mother's bed and ask to sleep there with her. In session 1 Mara said in mother's presence that she feared a recurrence of recent nightmares. Therapist to Mara: "Would you like to try to have better dreams?". Mara was surprised, amused, and curious how to do this. Th: "As a game, we'll draw together something beautiful and amusing. You'll take that picture home and look at it before sleeping, then during the night you'll dream it". Maria was enthusiastic. In front of her the therapist drew a circle on a blank sheet of paper. Mara exclaimed: "It's an apple!". Th: "Right, now it's your turn to add something!", gave her the pencil, and Mara added some detail. Th: "Now it's my turn" and added a little circle inside: "This is a hole!". Mara (laughing): "There's a worm in the apple!". Th: "Then you draw the worm!". Mara inserted a little scrawl in the 'hole'. The therapist added a small smiling face to the 'worm', saying "Here's a smiling worm!". Mara was amused. Th:

*"Tonight, when you're in bed about to go to sleep, look at the drawing and you'll dream exactly what we've drawn".* At session 2 mother said Mara reported she had the planned dream that evening and from then on slept alone.

Case illustration 2: (Sibilia L, unpublished)

Roberta, a reflective introverted 18-year-old, sought help for depression. She argued with father who didn't allow her out at night and with her boyfriend whom she feared would leave her. She couldn't concentrate. In session 2 she attributed morning depressions and hopelessness to nightmares which often woke her - e.g. at the bottom of a black pit she saw bleeding parts of a child's body. Therapist: *"These images may represent your depression"*. Roberta accepted this. Th: *"They'd upset anyone, so let's work together to change your nightmares into pleasant dreams. Imagine and write down something you want similar to the dream you'd like to have. You could write about a beautiful period of your life"*. Roberta couldn't remember anything pleasant. Th: *"Relax and imagine you're lying in a sunny meadow"*. Roberta: *"This reminds me of something"*. Th: *"Stay with this good memory; remember everything you felt then"*. Roberta described this. Th: *"Please sit at the desk and write down the details and pleasant feelings of that good memory"*. Roberta left this session with her written desirable dream, and was instructed: *"Just before going to sleep read and imagine what you've just written and resolve to dream it"*. At session 3, Roberta said with surprise she'd had pleasant dreams for the first time in ages, though they weren't what she'd written.