

Nightmares & Night Terrors

A. Children's Nightmares & Night Terrors

Take Care of the Basics First

Create a pleasant, half-hour, bedtime routine. Make **predictable** meal times and routines your top priority. Two hours before bedtime, avoid all electronics.

Create A Safe Place

Adult Guide: Begin by helping the child create a safe place—one that makes her/him feel **very** relaxed and happy. If the child is younger, record the details for them. Ideally, you will do this long before any nightmares arrive.

And now, describe this wonderful, safe place.

Now, draw this place that helps you feel **very** safe, relaxed, and happy.
Include lots of details and colors that you just love!

*Reference: Anne Sayre Wiseman's excellent book, *Nightmare Help*.

Instructions for the Adult Guide

Take four steps to hear what dream monsters, scary things, or just scary dream people are saying and still feel safe while you listen. (Refer to the worksheets that follow)

Step One

- Have an adult guide and your **special things** close by to remind you that you are safe.
- Place your drawing of your special **safe place** where you can easily see it.
- Then, ask the adult guide—with whom you feel safe and happy—to watch while you **draw your scary dream** with felt pens or crayons. Color the drawing even if you feel nervous.

Drawing

I draw all the scary parts of my dream and use the colors that seem to fit.

Step Two

- If you are feeling too nervous to hear what the scary part of your dream is about to tell you, make a second drawing of your scary dream. This time, change the drawing so that you **feel safe enough to hear what the scary part has come to say to you.**
- You can draw dream friends, a temporary jail, or whatever helps you feel more courage and in charge of the scary situation.

Drawing

I change my scary dream drawing so that I can feel safe enough to talk with all the scary parts of my dream.

Take Care of the Basics: Create a pleasant, half-hour, bedtime routine. Make predictable meal times and routines your top priority. Two hours before bedtime, avoid all electronics.

Step Four

After you have listened to all the scary parts of your dream and also told them how you feel, use your imagination and **think of a good solution for the problems in your scary dream**. Check with the scary parts and be sure they also understand that your solution is a good one. Finish up step four with a drawing of your dream solution. Oh! Don't forget to draw in signs of **your** own courage and strength! Sweet dreams!

Drawing

After listening to my important dream message, I use my imagination and draw the best solution for everyone.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

According to Dr. Patricia Garfield, who wrote *Your Child's Dreams . . .*

Children's three, most common, **pleasant** dreams are:

1. Engaging in a **Pleasant Activity**: A game, a picnic, or a bed-time story
2. Obtaining a **Desirable Possession**
3. Giving an **Outstanding Performance**

Children's three, most common, **unpleasant** dreams are:

1. Being **Chased or Attacked**
2. **Sensing Something** Scary
3. Occurrence of **Injury or Death**

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Although uncommon, a few dreamers, in particular, children ages **3 to 7**, can experience a disorder of partial arousal, termed "**night terrors.**" These dreamers awaken screaming in terror, and appear **unaware** of people in the room, or their surroundings. Night terrors, which usually occur during the first **two** hours of sleep, are probably the result of being **catapulted** from **Stage 4 sleep**, where some dreams can occur, into sudden wakefulness.

Stress can also have some effect on the **frequency** of night terrors. Fortunately, as the nervous system **develops**, most young dreamers cease having night terrors as they become older.

For additional information, refer to Dr. Patricia Garfield's excellent book, *Your Child's Dreams*.

B. Adults and Teen's Nightmares & Night Terrors

When You Awaken from A Nightmare during the Night

- 1 Begin by taking seven, deep, centering breaths. Focus only on your breathing.
- 2 If it won't disturb your partner, inhale deeply and tense your muscles—include your feet, legs, buttocks, stomach, hands, neck, shoulders, and face. Hold the tension for ten seconds. Then, release all your tension and take seven, slow, deep breaths.
- 3 Review your dream. Think of any changes you would make to your dream story or to a dream image, that would make you feel safe, secure, and satisfied. Rehearse these changes a few times in your imagination.
- 4 Next, think of one positive thing you will do to respond to your dream's message in your waking life. Your positive action is based on sound reasoning, has loving intent, and is in the best interests of all concerned.
- 5 Visualize the details of how your positive action results in a dramatic and joyous outcome, in your waking life tomorrow. Have fun and really exaggerate!

To return to sleep in a peaceful & a positive state of mind . . .

- 1 Imagine three people whom you trust completely. You feel safe in their presence.
- 2 Imagine one person who is very loving and sincere.
- 3 Picture three images or events that inspire complete joy.
- 4 Recall three memories (recent or more distant) that inspire complete joy.
- 5 Picture images/places that inspire complete relaxation.
- 6 Affirm that you will respond to your dream by taking one positive action today or tomorrow.
- 7 Conclude by taking seven, deep breaths. Focus on the details of a peaceful nature scene—Imagine a beautiful body of water, movement that delights, bird-songs, pleasing scents, and perhaps, one of the loving persons imagined earlier.

Dreamwork

- [Top Ten Dreamwork Techniques](#) — “Your Guide to Happiness, Wisdom, and Purpose”
- [What Did You Dream Last Night?](#) — “Ask A Puzzling Question Tonight . . . Discover Your Dreaming Mind's Answers Tomorrow”
- [Artists Dreaming Joy](#) — A workbook that helps artists express a multitude of joys

