

Narrative - Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (N-IRT) for Nightmares

Guidelines Handout

- 1. Many people choose to start with the most frequent recurring nightmare or theme, but you choose which nightmare to start with.**
- 2. Use N-IRT for only one nightmare or theme at a time.**
- 3. Practice the imagery rehearsal for minimum of 10 minutes before bedtime each night (or other time of your choosing) for four weeks. Some people notice improvement in nightmare frequency or emotional intensity within a few weeks, but for some it takes longer. If there is no improvement after four weeks of nightly practice, try a new rescription.**
- 4. General instructions for developing a rescription:**
 - a. Picture the first part of the recurring nightmare or theme, being sure to NOT include distressing content, then rescript the ending. Refer to the N-IRT Worksheet.**
 - b. Rescription should be consistent with your values.**
 - c. Rescription should include no violence.**
 - d. Rescription should include minimal movement on your part. (Some people report that the new imagery shows up in their dreams, so it is best if you are not moving much in the rescription, to ensure more calm sleep.) The goal of N-IRT is to stop or reduce the nightmares or decrease the emotional distress level so they are easier to cope with. The goal is not to change the content of the actual dreams, but that sometimes does happen.**
 - e. The new ending should be vivid in detail, including what you see, hear, feel, etc. The more detailed, the better IRT seems to work.**
 - f. The rescription should be somewhat creative or implausible. If it is too firmly rooted in reality, it may not work as well.**

PLEASE know that if the nightmares are related to a real past traumatic memory, N-IRT in NO WAY invalidates the memory. N-IRT is targeting a symptom of nightmares to help improve sleep. It does not target the memories themselves. Memories are stored in a part of the brain different from the sleep centers. N-IRT targets the neuronal pathways of nightmares that have become stuck in the sleep center of the brain.