

Dream Rehearsal Instructions for Nightmares

DREAM REHEARSAL INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR CAREGIVERS

The fears and negative emotions associated with nightly occurrences of bad dreams are believed to be treatable with the use of a simple technique called Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT). When children have bad dreams, adults rarely have strategies to help them beyond offering words of comfort and using the phrase, "It was only a dream." Some children are upset by one dream in particular that comes to them one night and never returns. However, some children have a nightmare that continues to revisit them and frighten them with each reoccurrence. In addition, some children have multiple recurring nightmares.

IRT STEPS

STEP 1

Therapist and Child will put the story of the nightmare into writing.

STEP 2

Therapist and Child will imagine a more positive alternative ending for the nightmare and write it down. The new ending is meant to soothe the emotions, instead of allowing the emotion to take the form of violence and revenge in the sub-conscious.

STEP 3

Caregivers should support child by reading the new version of the dream each night just before falling to sleep. Do this right before lying down to go to asleep.

STEP 4

Perform a relaxation exercise immediately after the rehearsal, in order to facilitate a peaceful drifting off to sleep. Use a technique you already know, or try Progressive Muscle Relaxation or the Deep Breathing Warm-Up
