

# Nightmare Rehearsal Treatment for Trauma-Related Nightmares

This handout offers therapists an overview of nightmare rehearsal treatment (NRT), a form of exposure therapy designed to help clients reduce the severity and frequency of distressing nightmares.

## 1 Introducing NRT

Begin by explaining to your client the purpose and process of NRT. Emphasize the aim of modifying their nightmares by changing a single detail, leading the client to realize that their dream is not a reiteration of their trauma but a creation of their mind.

## 2 Client Narrative of Nightmare

Ask your client to write a detailed account of their recurring nightmare. Encourage them to focus on all aspects of the dream, ensuring the description is comprehensive.

## 3 Changing a Detail

Next, ask your client to alter one detail in the nightmare narrative. Make it clear that this change does not need to negate or invalidate their trauma but can be a separate element within the dream. Have them rewrite the nightmare narrative but incorporating the changed detail.

#### **4 Daily Reading**

Instruct your client to read the altered narrative daily. The frequency and duration of the task should be adjusted according to their needs and progress.

#### **5 Regular Feedback and Adjustment**

Each therapy session should start by discussing any changes observed in the nightmares and emotional responses to the changed narrative. Based on this feedback, adjust the treatment as necessary to ensure it continues to provide relief to the client.

#### **6 Values and Committed Actions**

As the nightmares shift and become less distressing and/or frequent, use the subsequent stage of therapy to refocus on your client's values. Discuss and set committed actions that align with those values to help them regain a sense of control and direction in their life.

### **Key Points**

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- Nightmare rehearsal treatment reduces nightmare severity and frequency.
- The therapy involves writing and rewriting a nightmare's narrative with a changed detail, but one which doesn't invalidate the client's trauma.
- Adapting the therapy to client needs is critical, especially when nightmares involve lived traumatic events.