

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 20A

(Emotion Regulation Worksheet 14a)

Nightmare Protocol, Step by Step

When Nightmares Keep You from Sleeping

1. Practice relaxation, pleasant imagery, and coping skills first, to be sure you are ready to work on changing your nightmares.

Do progressive relaxation, paced breathing, and/or Wise Mind exercises; listen to music or guided imagery; review the distress tolerance crisis survival skills.

2. Choose a recurring nightmare you would like to work on.

This will be your target nightmare. Select a nightmare you can manage now. Put off trauma nightmares until you are ready to work with them—or, if you target a trauma nightmare, skip Step 3.

3. Write down your target nightmare.

Include sensory descriptions (sights, smells, sounds, tastes, etc.). Also include any thoughts, feelings, and assumptions about yourself during the dream.

4. Choose a changed outcome for the nightmare.

The change should occur BEFORE anything traumatic or bad happens to you or others in the nightmare. Essentially, you want to come up with a change that will prevent the bad outcome of the usual nightmare from occurring. Write an ending that will give you a sense of peace when you wake up.

Note: Changes in the nightmare can be very unusual and out of the ordinary (e.g., you might become a person with superhuman powers who is able to escape to safety or fight off attackers). Changed outcomes can include changed thoughts, feelings, or assumptions about yourself.

5. Write down the full nightmare with the changes.

6. REHEARSE and RELAX each night before going to sleep.

Rehearse the *changed* nightmare by visualizing the entire dream with the changes each night, *before* practicing relaxation techniques.

7. REHEARSE and RELAX during the day.

Visualize the entire dream with the change, and practice relaxation as often as possible during the day.

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 20B

(Emotion Regulation Worksheet 14b)

Sleep Hygiene Protocol

When You Can't Sleep, What to Do Instead of Ruminating

TO INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF RESTFULNESS/SLEEP:

1. **Develop and follow a consistent sleep schedule even on weekends.** Go to bed and get up at the same times each day, and avoid anything longer than a 10-minute nap during the day.
2. **Do not use your bed in the daytime** for things like watching TV, talking on the phone, or reading.
3. **Avoid** caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, heavy meals, and exercise late in the day before going to sleep.
4. **When prepared to sleep, turn off the light, and keep the room quiet and the temperature comfortable and relatively cool.** Try an electric blanket if you are cold; putting your feet outside of the blanket or turning on a fan directed toward your bed if you are hot; or wearing a sleeping mask, using earplugs, or turning on a “white noise” machine if needed.
5. **Give yourself half an hour to at most an hour to fall asleep.** If it doesn't work, evaluate whether you are calm, or anxious (even if only “background anxiety”), or ruminating.
6. **DO NOT CATASTROPHIZE.** Remind yourself that you need rest, and aim for reverie (i.e., dreaminess) and resting your brain. Sell yourself on the idea that staying awake is not a catastrophe. Do not decide to give up on sleeping for the night and get up for the “day.”

IF YOU ARE CALM BUT WIDE AWAKE:

7. **Get out of bed; go to another room and read a book** or do some other activity that will not wake you up further. As you begin to get tired and/or sleepy, go back to bed.
8. **Try a light snack** (e.g., an apple).

IF YOU ARE ANXIOUS OR RUMINATING

9. **Use the cold water TIP skill. Get right back in bed and do the paced breathing TIP skill.**

(See *Distress Tolerance Handout 6: TIP Skills: Changing Your Body Chemistry*.)

Remember, if you have any medical condition, get medical approval before using cold water.

10. **Try the 9–0 meditation practice.** Breathe in deeply and breathe out slowly, saying in your mind the number 9. On the next breath out, say 8; then say 7; and so on until you breathe out saying 0. Then start over, but this time start with 8 (instead of 9) as you breathe out, followed by 7, and so on until you reach 0. Next start with 6 as you breathe out, and so on to 0. Then start with 5, then with 4, and so on until you have gone all the way down to starting with 1. (If you get lost, start over with the last number you remember.) Continue until you fall asleep.
11. **Focus on the bodily sensation** of the rumination (rumination is often escape from difficult emotional sensations).
12. **Reassure yourself** that worries in the middle of the night are just “middle-of-the-night-thinking,” and that in the morning you will think and feel differently.
13. **Read an emotionally engrossing novel** for a few minutes until you feel somewhat tired. Then stop reading, close your eyes, and try to continue the novel in your head.
14. **If rumination doesn't stop**, follow these guidelines: “If it's solvable, solve it. If it is insolvable, go deep into the worry all the way to the “catastrophe”—the very worst outcome you can imagine—and then imagine coping ahead with the catastrophe.

(See *Emotion Regulation Handout 19: Build Mastery and Cope Ahead*.)

If nothing else works, with eyes closed, listen to public radio (BBC, NPR, etc.) at low volume (use headphones if necessary). Public radio is a good choice for this, because there is little fluctuation in voice tone or volume.

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 21

(Emotion Regulation Worksheets 15, 16)

Overview: Managing Really Difficult Emotions

MINDFULNESS OF CURRENT EMOTIONS

Suppressing emotion increases suffering.

Mindfulness of current emotions is the path to emotional freedom.

MANAGING EXTREME EMOTIONS

Sometimes emotional arousal is so high that you can't use any skills, particularly if the skills are complicated or take any thought on your part.

This is a skills breakdown point.

Crisis survival skills are needed.

TROUBLESHOOTING AND REVIEW

There are many ways to change emotions.

It can be helpful to have a list of the important skills to look at when you can't remember the skills you need to regulate your emotions.



Mindfulness of Current Emotions: Letting Go of Emotional Suffering

OBSERVE YOUR EMOTION

- Step back and just notice your emotion.
- Experience your emotion as a WAVE, coming and going.
- Now imagine surfing the emotion wave.
- Try not to BLOCK or SUPPRESS the emotion.
- Don't try to GET RID of or PUSH away the emotion.
- Don't try to KEEP the emotion around.
- Don't HOLD ON to it.
- Don't AMPLIFY it.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF BODY SENSATIONS

- Notice WHERE in your body you are feeling emotional sensations.
- Experience the SENSATIONS as fully as you can.
- Observe how LONG it takes before the emotion goes down.

REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT YOUR EMOTION

- Do not necessarily ACT on your emotion.
- Remember times when you have felt DIFFERENT.

PRACTICE LOVING YOUR EMOTION

- RESPECT your emotion.
- Do not JUDGE your emotion.
- Practice WILLINGNESS.
- Radically ACCEPT your emotion.