

# 19 Keeping a dream journal to help you process nightmares

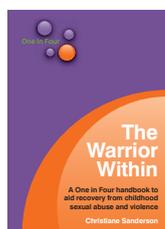


If you are working through *The Warrior Within*, this exercise and further useful information to help you in your recovery can be found on page 75.

Find a notebook that you can use as a dream journal and keep this by your bedside with a pen. Whenever you wake as a result of a dream or nightmare, or when you wake up in the morning, record it in your journal, no matter how terrifying. Try to include as much information and detailed content as you can, as well as how you felt. This will help you to keep track of your dreams, and identify recurring themes, with which to process and make sense of them.

Falling asleep after a nightmare in the hope that the nightmare will not return is often futile. Remember if it has not been processed it is much more likely to recur. In recording your dreams you will be able to process their content consciously, and link them to the trauma experiences. This will make it easier to integrate them into your memory system, which in turn will reduce the nightmares.

During the daytime when you feel safe and are in a calm state you can read through your nightmares or dreams and consciously reflect on them. This will help you to consider hidden or symbolic messages and what they mean. When you reach the terrifying or upsetting parts, write 'Stop. This is just a dream.' Practise saying this as it will help you to say the same thing while you are asleep and stop the nightmare.



The content of this exercise sheet is based on *The Warrior Within: A One in Four handbook to aid recovery from childhood sexual abuse and violence* by Christiane Sanderson

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