

Nightmares

Nightmares about the abuse are common for survivors. They may make you feel very shaky and may have felt very real. You may feel anxious about going to sleep for fear of having nightmares.

Although Nightmares may be distressing, they are simply your minds way of trying to process what they are unable to process during the day. Once these memories are fully in our awareness, as uncomfortable as they may be, they can be processed; and this is a step towards your healing.

After a horrible nightmare, it can be hard to get the images out of your head and to stop any unpleasant sensations in your body. Grounding techniques can be very helpful in bringing you back to the real world.

- Put on a light.
- Make yourself a hot drink
- Tell yourself aloud that you are somewhere safe and comfortable and the abuse is not happening now
- Cuddle a soft toy, your partner or a pet.
- Place your feet firmly on the ground
- Use your five senses to ground yourself – notice what you can hear – ie. a clock ticking, birds singing, a car in the distance. Notice what you can **see**– Look around your room and identify familiar objects. Notice what you can **smell** – any scent you have been wearing or detergent on your clothes, cigarette smoke if you are a smoker, furniture polish. Notice what you can **taste** – Toothpaste, the drink you have made yourself, imagine the **taste** of certain foods. Notice what you can **touch** –Feel the softness of one of your hands on the other, the fabric of the bed, the material of what you are wearing, the hardness or coolness of objects in your room.

When you feel strong enough, return to your bed and reassure yourself firmly that you will not have another bad dream. If you do have another nightmare – Don't blame yourself – **it is not your fault.**