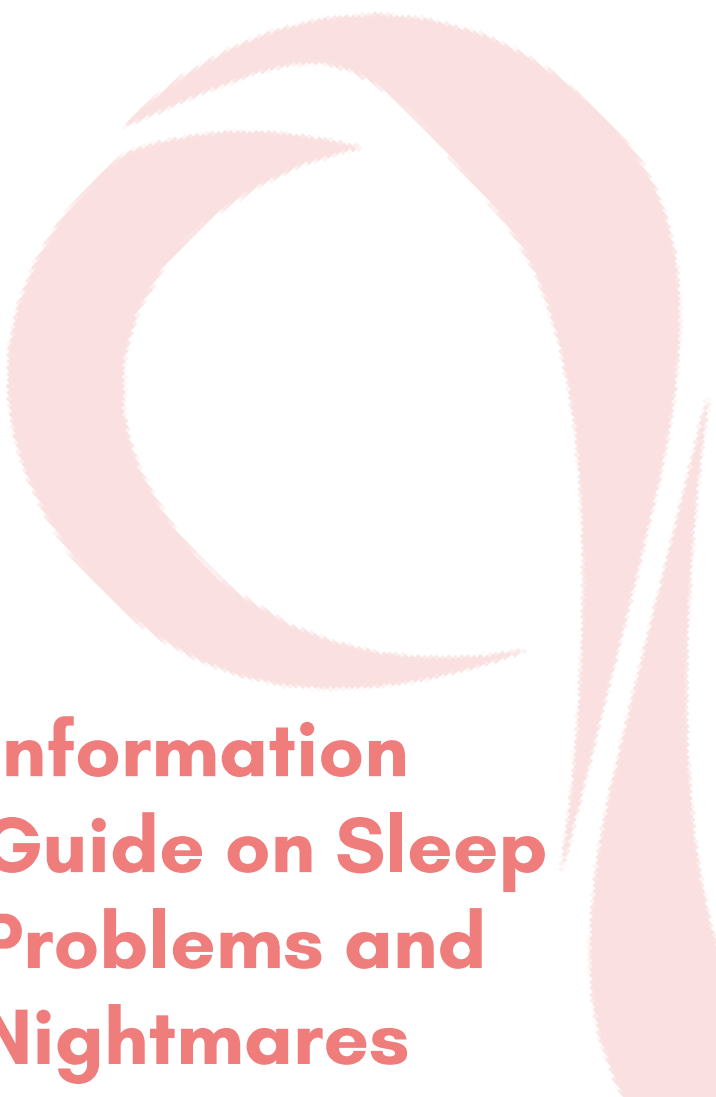


A large, abstract, red swirl graphic that dominates the background of the page. It starts as a thick, curved line on the left, loops around, and tapers off towards the bottom right corner.

Information Guide on Sleep Problems and Nightmares

Sleep problems

After experiencing sexual violence, you may find it difficult to sleep. This could mean you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. You might wake up early in the morning or several times throughout the night. This could be because you have things on your mind, or you are having nightmares (see page 4 for more information). It is very common and normal to have difficulty sleeping following trauma. There are different things that you can do to help if you're struggling to sleep:

- Having a consistent night-time routine
- Try having a warm bath or shower
- Checking that the temperature and light in the room is right
- Relaxation techniques
- Mindfulness
- Listening to music – whether this is songs you like or songs specifically to help you sleep
- YouTube – sleep meditation videos, music (rain, waves, birds)

- Sleep apps (e.g. headspace)
- Reading books / magazines
- Essential oils / diffusers
- Candles/incense
- If watching TV before bed, try watching things that won't stimulate you too much (i.e., things that aren't too scary)
- If you do find there are things on your mind, try writing them down.
- If you wake up during the night, try repeating your night-time routine to help prepare your mind and body for sleep again.

TIP!

Maybe put these things in a self-care box. That way you can come to this any time you need it

What is a nightmare?

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.

Why do they happen?

Nightmares can be very distressing, but they are your minds way of trying to process what it is 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.

Some things that can help:

- Put on a light.
- Tell yourself aloud that you are somewhere safe and comfortable, and the abuse is not happening now.
- Place your feet firmly on the ground.
- Cuddle a soft toy, your partner or a pet.
- Make yourself a hot drink.
- Use your five senses to ground yourself
 - Notice what you can **see**– Look around your room and identify familiar objects.
 - Notice what you can **hear** – a clock ticking, birds singing, a car in the distance.

- Notice what you can **touch** – 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.
- 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.

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.

Further support and information

RASAC provides further information via our website and helpline service which can be contacted via calling or email | 0300 303 4787 | www.rasac.co.uk | helpline@rasac.co.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales | 0808 500 2222 | 24/7 Support line | www.rapecrisis.org.uk | Live chat via their website

NHS provide information around sleep via their website | Sleep problems – Every Mind Matters – NHS (www.nhs.uk)

NHS Talking Therapies | 01484 343700 | www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/services/iapt-kirklees/



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Websites: www.rasac.co.uk

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