

# Sleep After Trauma

Practical steps for night-time anxiety, hypervigilance and disturbed sleep.

### Important

This resource is for information and self-support. It is not a substitute for therapy, medical advice, emergency care, or a personalised clinical assessment. If there is immediate danger to life, call 999 or go to your nearest A&E.; For urgent mental health support in England, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option.

## Why sleep can be difficult after trauma

After trauma or long-term stress, the body may treat night-time as unsafe. Hypervigilance, nightmares, pain, memories and anxiety can interrupt rest. The aim is not perfect sleep immediately, but a repeatable night-time safety routine.

## My sleep pattern

What usually happens at night? _____ _____ _____	What time is hardest? _____ _____ _____
What I do that helps a little: _____ _____ _____	What makes sleep worse: _____ _____ _____

## Wind-down routine

- Reduce stimulation where possible in the last hour.
- Use a repeated routine: wash, drink, set room, low light.
- Write down tomorrow's tasks so the mind does not hold them all night.
- Avoid trauma processing late at night if possible.
- Prepare a grounding object, drink or note beside the bed.

## If I wake from a nightmare

- Name the room and current date.
- Put feet on the floor or press hand to the bed.
- Look for three things that prove I am in the present.
- Use a light, drink or grounding object.
- Say: "That was a memory/dream. I am here now."
- Avoid immediately analysing the dream if it escalates distress.

## Night-time safety plan

<p>If I feel unsafe at night, I will:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Someone I can contact if risk increases:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>What I should move away from at night:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Professional/urgent support route:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

### When to seek more support

Seek additional support if sleep disturbance is persistent, linked to traumatic memories, increasing risk, affecting daily functioning, or leading to thoughts of self-harm.