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Learning to Stop Traumatic Nightmares with Ease

Justin Havens

Resource Guide

Learning to Stop Traumatic Nightmares with Ease

Traumatic nightmares are a ubiquitous part of PTSD, and can be defined as vivid recreations of past events which often evoke high levels of anxiety and lead to poor sleep and have a significant impact on daily functioning. The focus of my research is an innovative behavioural approach to resolving these nightmares, which involves teaching a new skill that provides a capability for individuals to resolve their own nightmares, has a broad application base, is safe, non-invasive and easily replicable. The core concept of this approach is the ability to influence the content of a dream when awake, and to utilise this in a way that reduces the incidence of being woken up during a nightmare.

The concept of rehearsing a desired ending for a nightmare is not new in itself and is often referred to as Image Rehearsal Therapy, though this new approach offers significant advantages with its broader and more flexible approach which can be taught in a group context in 2 hrs. In essence, the individual asks themselves the question ‘what would I like to happen next that feels good and puts me in control?’ An example might be a burns victim, who always wakes up at the moment of burning, instead imagining themselves standing under a waterfall laughing as all the scabs get washed away. The impact of the successful intervention is that the individual doesn’t wake up, the dream process continues, REM sleep is able to successfully complete its task, and deeper levels of sleep occur which leave the individual feeling more rested the next day. Although not a ‘cure’ for PTSD, it can facilitate significant change and improvement for individuals, providing stabilisation and preparation for further therapy.

The originator of this concept, called the ‘Planned Dream Intervention’, is a former US Navy psychologist called Beverley Dexter, who has taught this skill to several hundred US servicemen and veterans, though no formal research or effect quantification has taken place. Anecdotally, 8 out of 10 participants are able to stop their traumatic nightmares within a week of being taught the Planned Dream Intervention.

The aim of my research, as part of a PhD at the Veterans and Families Institute at the Anglia Ruskin University, is to provide this validation, and to further develop the method for use with UK combat veterans.

About Justin

I am an EMDR trained psychological therapist accredited by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). I currently work with trauma and PTSD in the NHS for the Gloucestershire 2gether Mental Health Trust and in private practice. In my previous life, I have been an Army Officer, Manufacturing Engineer, Production Manager and a Management Consultant.

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Justin Havens - Counsellor, Psychotherapist
Registered Member MBACP (Accred)

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Presentation - No More Nightmares



The slide features a blue background with white text. At the top right is the Anglia Ruskin University logo and name, with locations listed below. The main title 'No More Nightmares' is centered in large white font. Below it, the subtitle 'How to use Imaginal Dream Interventions to stop nightmares' is partially obscured by a red circle with a white right-pointing arrow. The presenter's name and credentials are listed below the subtitle. A small portrait of Justin Havens is on the right. The email address 'mail@justinhavens.com' is at the bottom left.

Anglia Ruskin University
Cambridge Chelmsford Peterborough

No More Nightmares

How to use Imaginal Dream Interventions to stop nightmares

Presented by:
Justin Havens FdA BA MBACP (accred)
Trauma Therapist & PhD Researcher



mail@justinhavens.com

1 Hour Training Presentation

Click the image above to view the presentation

Download Handout

Includes:

- ✓ How to use Planned Dream Interventions® to end Nightmares
- ✓ 4 Steps to a successful Planned Dream Intervention®
- ✓ Examples of successful Planned Dream Interventions®

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How this is different to 'Image Rehearsal Therapy



Justin answers a question picked up from the event

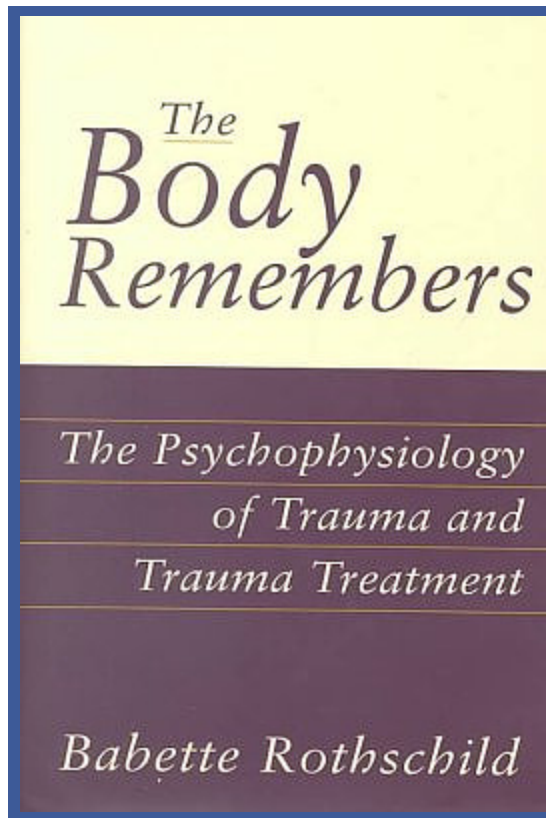
Q: How this is different to 'Image Rehearsal Therapy which is a CBT intervention that has been around for quite a few years

A: I would say the difference is a bit like CBT and EMDR, in that Image rehearsal can work, generally takes longer, requires more effort, only works on one dream at a time which must be repetitive, requires 1:1 therapy, and doesn't provide too much guidance on how to change the dream other than 'change it any way you want'.

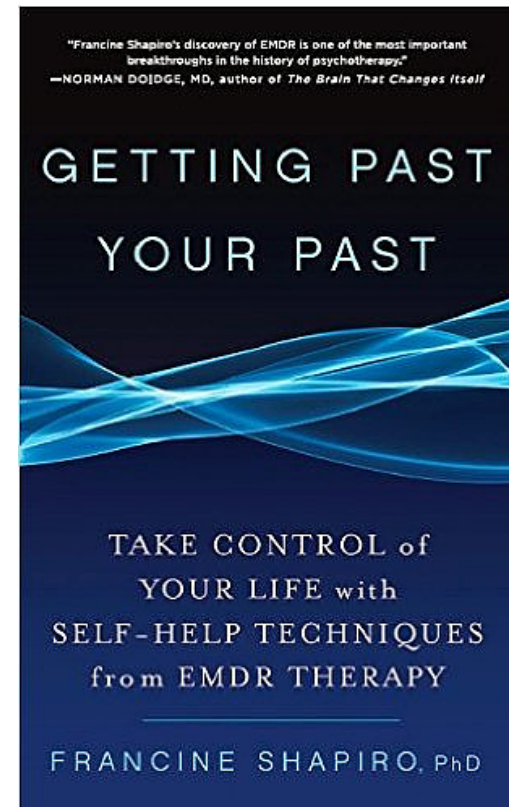
Please get in touch if you have any further questions at mail@justinhavens.com

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