

# Transforming Nightmares: Basic Toolkit

Nightmares can provide rich material for personal and spiritual development, when we find the strength to face them directly. The Alchemical Dreamers' Guild™ encourages all people to gain basic literacy in working with their nighttime dreams. Please enjoy and share this basic nightmare toolkit!

## 1. "All Dreams Come in the Service of Health and Wholeness" -Rev. Jeremy Taylor

→ We invite you to try on the assumption that all dreams, even when nightmarish or mundane, point us in the direction of healing, growth and integration, even when this is uncomfortable or intense.

## 2. All Dreams Have Multiple Layers of Meaning

→ Don't get stuck looking for the one "right" meaning of a dream. Dreams are more like personal metaphors, offering an infinite well of potential insights. One nightmare may point to aspects of physical health, emotional wellbeing, spiritual growth, and more—all in one fearsome package!

## 3. Mammals Are Wired for Nightmares

→ During sleep, parts of the brain that monitor safety (the amygdala) and process the previous day's emotions (the hippocampus) are active and primed for fear. Sleep deprivation and changes in sleep schedule increase the propensity toward fearful dreams.

## 4. Urgency in Dreams Reflects Urgency in Waking Life

→ Nightmares can be invitations to directly face something we are avoiding. For example: unpleasant memories, something we are running from, a difficult conversation that needs to happen, the need to acknowledge burnout, impending physical health issues, etc.

## 5. Notice Any Stinkin' Thinkin'

→ Fearful thoughts kindle easily into nightmares during sleep—most dreamscapes directly reflect our meandering thoughts. And like a wildfire, one fearful thought tends to be followed by another that burns even hotter until the mind is ablaze. Can you notice your fear thoughts before they catch fire?

## 6. Mammals Are Wired for Connection

→ Sharing dreams with a trusted friend, participating in an online dream journaling community, or joining a dream group can help transform nightmares. Share your dreams with others!

## 7. Reality Is Not a Given: Mindfulness Creates Choice

→ When you realize you are living a nightmare, you have two options: to see things differently, and to actively change what is happening. Transformation occurs when you live lucidly and dream lucidly, instead of living immersed in your thoughts and automatic reactions.

## 8. Transforming Nightmares: Resources

→ In Durham, the Alchemical Dreamers' Guild ([www.DreamCircling.Com](http://www.DreamCircling.Com)) offers updated lists of local dream groups, dream consultations, and professional training opportunities. Books exploring nightmares include: *Dreams of Awakening* by C. Morley, *The Wisdom of Your Dreams* by J. Taylor, *Trauma and Dreams* by D. Barrett, and *Sleep Paralysis* by R. Hurd. International Association for the Study of Dreams ([www.asdreams.org](http://www.asdreams.org)) also provides information about dreams & nightmares.



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Alchemical Dreamers Guild (Durham, NC): [DreamCircling.Com](http://DreamCircling.Com) & [NavigateChange.Org](http://NavigateChange.Org)  
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