

Tips on how to deal with Bad Dreams and Nightmares

Recently, at a Smart Moves monthly seminar, a tired mom told us her daughter had been tormented by a succession of nightmares, all of which were centered on a bad man entering into their house. After several weeks, both mom and daughter were drained of energy and sleep and mom wanted to know if there was anything she could do other than bringing her daughter into her bed each time.

When a child has a bad dream or nightmare, parents often find that the quickest and easiest course of action is to have them come directly into your bed. It's risky because it can lead to a child forming a habit of coming into your bed every night. The objective to help the child feel secure in their own bed and empower them to believe they can deal with a bad dream on their own.

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Purchase a full-size statue of a guard dog, which you can find at (some) pet stores and often feature all the ferocious looking, protective breeds. They are usually made from a lightweight paper mache type of product and are always painted to look life-like. Some people even use them in the windows of their homes as deterrents against robbers. Have your child name the new guard dog and place it outside their bedroom door. This strategy works really well... pleasant dreams!
2. A second option is to have a ceremony in which the largest of your child's teddy bears is appointed "the" nightmare bear. Explain to your child that nightmare bears have a duty to absorb all bad dreams and nightmares before they start and nightmare bears will also soak up bad dreams and nightmares for other members of the family. Tell them that if nightmare bear doesn't happen to catch one of their bad dreams on time, it's because bear was busy deterring a family member's bad dream. Tell your child that all they have to do for bear to begin the process is reach over and hug bear tightly. Let the sleep begin...