

# Ask Ursula

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Best-selling author and hypnotherapist, Ursula James answers your questions from three perspectives to help you progress on a spiritual, mental and physical level

## "I get terrible night terrors"

At least twice a week I wake up feeling in mortal danger; I scream, my heart races, I leap out of bed and rush to a window or door. Once I'm calm, it's hard to remember what the dream was about. But, I think the main theme is being shut in some small space, or seeing the ceiling coming down. I've had night terrors as long as I can remember (I'm now 30). They leave me feeling really shaken and upset, and I know my husband finds it very hard to live with. I'm really not keen to delve into the dark recesses of my mind to see what's causing them; can you recommend a gentler solution?

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### Mind... Use self-hypnosis

When we are dealing with fears it is often our imagination that plays the strongest role, so even if you did 'delve into the dark recesses' there would be no guarantee you would find relief from your night terrors. Making your sleeping space as calm and tranquil as possible is important. Just for a few weeks, remove any books, magazines or newspapers from the room, and do not turn on the radio or TV while you are in the bedroom. For at least three weeks, it is important to make your bedroom an area for sleep only; clearing physical space encourages clarity in the mind. The most effective process I know to deal with night terrors is self-hypnosis. The quickest way to learn is by using a CD (visit [ursulajames.com](http://ursulajames.com)) or there are plenty of books and workshops out there. With self-hypnosis you control your sleep process, and can make simple suggestions to yourself to have a good and peaceful night's sleep. Always make them positive, for example, 'I can sleep deeply and well, and will wake refreshed', etc. You are retraining your mind to enjoy the benefits of sleep, rather than dread it.

### Body... Have a cuddle!

It is important to be aware of the surroundings in which you sleep, as there may be objects in your room that act as triggers to these night terrors. Having the window open, or the curtain partly open, will help to relieve some of the feelings of claustrophobia. Allow this room to be cooler, so when you get in to bed the change in your body temperature will promote a more natural sleep. Gentle exercise in the hour before bed, especially one that has a spiritual component, will help to relax your muscles and calm your mind. Autogenic training, where you relax and contract your muscles while laying in bed, will promote the body's natural ability to sleep. Finally, never underestimate the value of a good cuddle. Oxytocin is released when we demonstrate affection to someone we love, especially if it is a physical demonstration. Feeling cared for will promote a positive sense of wellbeing, which will go with you into your sleep; fear will be so far from your mind that your brain would have to make a major effort to stimulate you in such a negative way.

### Spirit... Get a dreamcatcher

Dreamcatchers have been used for hundreds of years as a method of promoting peaceful sleep. You can buy one, or, better still, make one yourself; the important thing is that it includes in its design some sort of web or trap; this is symbolic of the net in which any bad dreams will be captured before they get into your thoughts. Hang the dreamcatcher over the head of your bed, and, just before you go to sleep at night, you can visualise all of your fears being caught up in it. The dreamcatcher will also weaken bad dreams' connections with you; as a result, each night your terrors will diminish. Once they have stopped, take the dreamcatcher outdoors and ritually burn it. Say the following as you do so, 'Fire take my fears and release them into the wind. May they return to the earth and be reborn in beauty'. This acknowledges the return to universal harmony: earth, air, fire, water and Spirit. Or, you can use your own affirmation. You'll notice that from that point onwards, the atmosphere in your bedroom will feel much less claustrophobic, and your sleep will be peaceful.

Visit Ursula's blog at [thebookofflightandshadow.com](http://thebookofflightandshadow.com) or follow her on twitter. Connect with Ursula on Facebook as she talks about her new book *The Source – a manual of everyday magic*. Note: not all letters or emails sent in to the experts will be answered; only those selected for publication.