
Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Visualization/Guided Imagery

What is Visualization/Guided Imagery?

Imagery or visualization involves using your imagination to help put your body in a more relaxed state. Just as your body can become tense and stressed in response to thoughts that make us angry or anxious, it can also become more calm and relaxed in response to calming, peaceful, and pleasant thoughts. One of the most basic ways to use imagery to relax is to close your eyes and imagine being in a place that is peaceful and relaxing to you. It may be a place you have actually been in the past, or it may be a place created in your imagination. It might be a quiet beach; a cool, shady spot in the woods; snuggled in front of a fireplace; fishing; or any place else that is peaceful and soothing to you. Use all of your senses in your imagination. For example, see the waves gently lapping on the shore or the light filtering through the leaves of the trees. Hear the birds singing or the leaves rustling. Smell the flowers, the grass, or the salt air. Feel the sun or gentle breeze on your skin. Feel that you are actually there. Smile and let your body relax. Enjoy being there for a few minutes. You can use this as a regular relaxation exercise or in times of stress when you need to relax. Following is a scripted example of a visualization exercise.

Visualization Exercise- The Private Garden:

Close your eyes. Allow yourself to get comfortable. Begin with a few slow deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth, letting your body get relaxed. Let the chair fully support your body as you continue to breath and relax.

Now, use your imagination to picture yourself walking slowly along a path. It's a pleasant path, any kind that you wish. It's a beautiful day, and you feel relaxed and happy. You can feel the warmth and energy of the sunlight on your skin. Soon you come to a gate. You know this gate leads to a special place where you feel welcomed, safe, and comfortable. Push the gate open and allow yourself to enter your very own private garden.

Your garden is filled with your favorite things. Whatever is pleasing to you can be found in this place. Perhaps there are flowers, trees, animals, birds, water, or even music. Look around and notice what is in your garden. See all the colors and objects that are in this place. Notice how beautiful they are. Look at the various shapes and see how varied they are.... Look at the ground, look at the sky, and see where they meet. Your garden is calm and tranquil. Everything peacefully co-exists in the garden. As you are looking, become aware of how things might feel in this private place of yours. Begin to

Visualization/Guided Imagery (continued)

explore this place with your sense of touch. Perhaps some things are soft and warm, and others are smooth and cool. Simply spend some time exploring, using your sense of touch as you continue to feel at peace and comfortable. Notice what the air feels like; is it cool or warm? ... Is there a breeze or is it still? ... Take the time to feel the peace and serenity in this private place. As you continue to explore your garden by seeing and feeling, become aware of the sounds that you hear in your garden.... The sounds in your garden are pleasing to the ear and very comforting. Perhaps it is quiet in your garden, or maybe there are a number of sounds. Some of the sounds may be very soft, while others may be louder. Relax and listen for a while and see if you can identify the different sounds in your garden. As you're listening to the sounds in your garden, become aware of what smells you might smell. Take a deep breath in, and notice the fragrances that are present. Some of them may be familiar, while others may be unfamiliar. The fragrances are pleasant and soothing. Take your time and enjoy your visit to the garden, using it in whatever way that you wish. Spend the time that is necessary for you to rejuvenate and to care for yourself.....

When you are ready to leave, slowly walk back towards the gate of your garden. You have enjoyed your visit to the garden and feel relaxed and content. This good feeling will remain with you throughout the day. Push the gate open and return to the path that led you to the garden. As you make your way back up the path to the here and now, remember that you can use your imagination to return to your private garden at any time you wish. Visit your garden any time you would like to relax, to be comforted, or just to enjoy its beauty. You are now ready to resume your day. Stretch gently and open your eyes, feeling refreshed and alert.