



Guided Imagery



“Guided imagery is a mind-body intervention by which a trained practitioner or teacher helps a participant or patient to evoke and generate mental images that simulate or re-create the sensory perception” - Wikipedia

The use of Guided Imagery is fairly common and it involves using mental images and perceptions to shift one's focus and state of mind. You use your imagination and attention to create a visual image in your mind, one that promotes a sense of relaxation and rest. This can be done on your own, with a teacher or guide or perhaps an audio recording of some kind.

The main difference between guided imagery and mindfulness meditation is the use of your attention. With guided imagery you intend to think of or visualize a certain image (place, feeling, sensation) and place your attention there often using it for a specific purpose. With mindfulness meditation you are using your attention to watch what is happening in your mind (thoughts, sensations, perceptions coming and going) but not necessarily focusing on any particular image or “place” in your mind. Both are powerful practices however this guide is to help you get started with Guided Imagery (see the mindfulness meditation handout for more information on that).

Guided imagery is the use of relaxation, visualization and imagination to improve well-being, health and mood. In using guided imagery you create an image in your mind, one that is calm, serene, peaceful, fun (something that generally feels good) and you direct your attention to follow this image through written, video or audio script.

**To get you started here are a few basic practices you can use.
(either you can read these aloud to yourself or ask someone to walk you through it)**

Find a quiet, private space and make yourself comfortable. You can use your breathing to calm your body and center your mind. Take a few slow, deep breaths and center yourself. Be sure to get physically comfortable as well.

Begin to imagine something in your mind. (you can leave your eyes open or close them)

Imagine your favorite place (real or imaginary) or a place you would like to go to. Feel into the sensations of the place, the sun, the wind, the smells, the colors, the temperature, the textures in the room.

Let go of the Pain or Discomfort you are feeling. If you have any pain or discomfort in your body first notice it and then imagine that perhaps the wind is blowing it off or the water in your space is washing it away. Maybe you are in the mountains and the trees are doing the work of holding your discomfort.

Imagine having a conversation with the thing that is troubling you; Ask it what it is trying to tell you, what you need to know. Thank it for this information and then let it know it can go now. Watch it move away from your body in some form (ex; a balloon going up, water washing down, a leaf blowing away, a bird flying away with it)

Imagine now that you are a flower and you can feel your petals or rays flowing in the air. You are feeling the strength of your roots growing in the soil, the water nourishing you and the sun warming you. You feel connected to the earth.

As you get ready to leave this place imagine you find a key and then a door that enters a room where you can leave all your pain and discomfort. Go there, leave your problems and your pains in that room. Put them on the shelf, stack them in piles if you need to. Then close the door and lock it on the way out placing the key somewhere safe.

See yourself refreshed, alive, joyful. Sit with that for a minute. Now you are ready to return.

Try this exercise for 10 or 15 minutes whenever you are feeling stressed and need a break from your current situation or stressor.