

Creative Visualization for Relaxation

Creative visualization or guided imagery uses pictures, memories or scenes created in your mind, similar to a daydream, to place yourself in another time and place. It uses the power of your imagination to significantly reduce stress and physical symptoms. You can visualize or imagine yourself in a relaxed state and imagine relaxation spreading through your whole body.

You can create and record your own script or scene, or use one from one of the many books, tapes or videos on relaxation. Loosen clothing, sit or lie down in a quiet place and close your eyes gently without squinting or tension. Relax tense muscles as much as you can before you start.

With a script, either written by yourself or others, read it over several times to get used to the details or have a family member read it slowly, and try to imagine the scene in your mind. With a recording, play it at a comfortable volume and try to follow the scene in your mind. Include all of your senses, imagine the sights, sounds, smells, texture, temperature, taste and touch. Notice any movement, colours, shapes, or a sense of space.

You want the experience to be pleasant and safe. The location can be real or imaginary. Use positive affirmations, short statements or thoughts that affirm your ability to relax. Avoid negative language and grammar, use “I can relax at will,” instead of “I am not tense.”

Allow 10-20 minutes for a guided imagery exercise. Try to practice three times a day. It is easier first thing in the morning and at night lying in bed.

Once you have practiced the skill, you will be able to do it almost anywhere. Imagery and visualization are tools that can be used with its full length script or create just one scene for a quick fix at work, in waiting rooms, and before or during a stressful event.

Build your script around scenes that are peaceful, safe, comfortable and calming for you, your very own special place indoors or outdoors. Give your special place a private entry and fill it with detail for all your senses. Choose your strongest sense if you have trouble creating a scene with all the senses. Allow yourself to be creative.

Think of your favourite place. Is it light or dark, indoors or out, warm or cool, wet or dry, a natural or man made place? What does it smell like? Write down what sounds you were aware of while visualizing this place. Create your own script.