

Introduction to Guided Visual Imagery

Visual imagery is a useful meditation practice that uses guided imagery for achieving relaxation and calmness of mind. Imagery is a useful way for the mind and body to communicate with one another in a peaceful way. For example, if you were to picture yourself in a stressful situation it is likely that your body will react to such thoughts and you may feel stressed.

You may notice an increase in your heart rate, and you may feel tense and on edge. Alternatively, if you were to picture yourself in a relaxed and calm situation or place your body is likely to feel relaxed and experience pleasant sensations.

During the practice you will be provided with some suggestions of places that you may like to use, along with having the opportunity to visualise your own safe and relaxed place.

Visual Guided Imagery exercise

- This exercise will involve you creating a special place in your mind. Find a comfortable spot, either sitting up or lying down. When you are feeling comfortable, allow your eyes to close. Allow yourself to focus on your breathing, by allowing it to slow down and become deeper and deeper. Do this for a few seconds.
- Notice how your body is starting to feel. You may be feeling more relaxed or calm or more aware. As your breathing slows down and you are feeling calmer, allow yourself to travel, in your mind, to a special place. Imagine that you can go to a place that makes you feel good.
- Your special place might be on a long white sandy beach on a bright summer's day. The seagulls are flying overhead and you are splashing your feet through the cool water. You can smell the salt and feel the warmth of the sun on your skin.
- Perhaps your special place is a peaceful garden, surrounded by every shade of green you can imagine. You are lying in a hammock beside a pool listening to the leaves rustling in the breeze. On a table beside you is laid out a selection of your favourite food and drink. You reach out to take a bite and savour the sensations in your mouth.
- Take a few moments to find your own special place. It may be somewhere outside, in the bush, in the country, at a resort, on the water, at the snow, or it may be a special place inside such as a candle lit scented spa bath. It may be an actual place or an imaginary place you have created so you can feel good.
- You are now in your special place. Imagine looking around. What do you see? What catches your eye? Do you notice any special shapes or colours?
- Are there any special sounds you can pick up? Music, voices, wind, quietness?
- Do you smell anything special? Flowers, trees, food or drink?
- Are you tasting anything?
- Make the temperature comfortable. Be safe here. Feel the ground with your feet.
- Look above you...What do you see? Hear? Smell?
- How are you feeling? Peaceful, relaxed, alert, energetic?
- Are you sitting up or lying down, standing or moving? Are you alone or with people?

- As you wander and look around, allow yourself to enjoy what you see and feel and hear in your special place.
- Memorise the sounds, sights, tastes and smells of your special place. Realise that you can come back here whenever you wish to relax and be at ease.
- When you are ready, allow yourself to come back to where you are and open your eyes and bring the feeling of peace and relaxation with you.