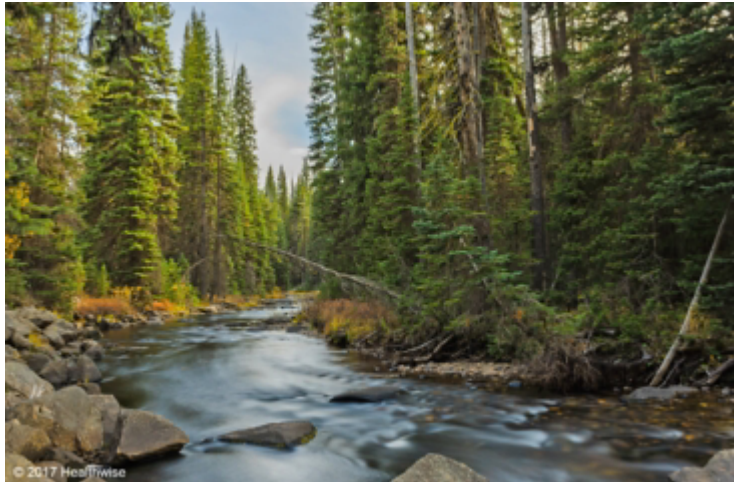


Learning About Guided Imagery for Stress



What are guided imagery and stress?

Stress is your body's response to a hard situation. It can be physical, emotional, or mental. A lot of things can cause stress. You may feel stress when you go on a job interview, take a test, or run a race. This kind of short-term stress is normal and even useful. It can help you if you need to work hard or react quickly.

Stress also can last a long time. Long-term stress is caused by stressful situations or events. Examples include long-term health problems, ongoing problems at work, and conflicts in your family. Long-term stress can harm your health.

Guided imagery is a technique of directed thoughts and suggestions that guide your mind toward a relaxed, focused state. This technique helps you use your mind to take you to a calm, peaceful place. You can use it to relax, which can lower blood pressure and reduce other problems related to stress.

How does guided imagery help to relieve stress?

Because of the way the mind and body are connected, guided imagery can make you feel like you are experiencing something just by imagining it. You can achieve a relaxed state when you imagine all the details of a safe, comfortable place, such as a beach or a garden. This relaxed state may help you feel more in control of your emotions and thought processes.

How do you do guided imagery?

You can use a smartphone app or a video to lead you through the process. You use all of your senses in guided imagery. For example, if you want a tropical setting, you can imagine the warm breeze on your skin, the bright blue of the water, the sound of the surf, the sweet scent of tropical flowers, and the taste of coconut. Imagining those things can make you actually feel like you're there.

But you don't have to imagine the tropics to feel peace. Guided imagery can take you to your own restful place. To give guided imagery a try, follow these steps:

1. Lean back comfortably in your chair. If you can, close your eyes. Put your arms on the armrests, or fold your hands in your lap.
2. Take a deep breath through your nose. Breathe in slowly, and then let the air out completely through your mouth.
3. Do it again slowly. Keep breathing like this. Gather up any tension in your body, and send it out with every breath.
4. Let a feeling of warmth spread from your lungs to your neck and head, down your arms to your fingertips, through your body and into your legs, all the way down to your toes. Stay this way for a moment.
5. Now imagine a pleasant day. You're at a park or at a place you've visited in the past where you felt at peace.
6. In your mind's eye, look at what lies in front of you. Maybe you see the sun, filtered through trees. Maybe clouds are drifting by.
7. Look to one side, and then the other. Notice the feel of the air around you. Notice how it feels on your face and on your arms.
8. Stay here for a while. Let it become real for you.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **N291** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Guided Imagery for Stress**".

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