

Pleasant imagery

Pleasant imagery is a technique that uses your imagination to create a pleasant scene, a bit like what you do when you daydream.

This relaxation technique allows you to focus on a favourite place – real or imaginary – that's safe, calm and pain-free.

Studies have shown that imagery is a very effective technique for reducing stress and pain.

Imagery can help you in two ways. It distracts you away from unpleasant thoughts or experiences. When you are concentrating on something pleasant, you are not able to give as much thought to your discomfort. It can help you to relax. You can use imagery along with muscle relaxation exercises to enhance the benefits of relaxation, or you can use it alone.

Common pleasant imagery scripts that people use include a walk on the beach, or a walk in the garden. To practise this, you can create your own story or you could listen to some music. If you are doing it yourself, try and come up with as much detail as possible – think about the things that you see, feel, taste, smell and hear.

Find a comfortable position. This may be in a chair, on your bed or outside somewhere calm and quiet.

Find your own calm, safe place to go to in your imagination, and build up a picture of that in your mind...

Example script

Close your eyes and imagine you are on a beach. It's a small, sheltered cove. You have the place to yourself. It's a beautiful clear, blue sky day, perfect for walking. There's not a cloud in the sky.

The waves are coming in slowly and the water sparkles in the sunshine. The air is fresh and salty. Inhale the clean air. While you breathe in, imagine the air is filling you with energy. As you breathe out, feel your pain and anxiety go out with your breath and fly away over the water.

You hear the cries of gulls as they fly overhead. Watch as they swoop and dive and perform the most amazing acrobatics. As you watch them, feel their joy and excitement as they play in the air currents.

Under your feet the soft sand is lovely and warm. Curl your toes and feel the crunch of grains of sand. The warmth from the sand travels up your feet, making your whole body feel warm, relaxed and calm.

You move on and walk slowly along the beach. You notice a small crab making its way along the sand, leaving tiny prints as it goes. Shells glitter in the sand. The trees along the edge of the beach are swaying in the breeze. It all feels so calm and unhurried.....

