

Imagery for Self Help

Start each visualisation with relaxation by getting comfortable in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing. Close your eyes, then mentally scan your body and become aware of any areas of tension, and let that tension go with each out-breath.

- ❖ All visualisations can be strengthened by ensuring you engage all your senses in building the picture in your mind's eye - it's more than just "seeing"! If you notice any negative links or images entering your positive imagery, then abort that image and think of something else.

Finish each visualisation by taking a few moments to bring yourself back into the room where you are, opening your eyes and looking around, sitting up, and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.

Relaxing 'Safe Place' Imagery

- ❖ Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe. It may be a place you've been to before, somewhere you've dreamt about going to, or maybe somewhere you've seen a picture of.
- ❖ Focus on the colours in your peaceful safe place.
- ❖ Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence.
- ❖ Think about any smells you notice there.
- ❖ Then focus on any skin sensations - the earth beneath you, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.
- ❖ Now whilst you're in your peaceful and safe place, you might choose to give it a name, whether one word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.
- ❖ You can choose to linger there a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now.



Wise Inner Advisor

- ❖ If you're unsure about something, or need some guidance, then we all have some form of wise inner part of us which knows.
- ❖ Start with relaxing Safe Place imagery, then you can imagine walking along a path a little way and noticing a "Wise Inner Advisor" - this might be an older person, a representation of another being, perhaps a religious or spiritual figure, or some other being. Use whatever feels right for you.
- ❖ Make the image stronger by focusing on the scene, what you can see, hear, smell, touch.
- ❖ Spend some time just being with your Wise Inner Advisor, feeling peaceful and comfortable.
- ❖ Take the opportunity to ask your Wise Inner Advisor for general guidance or for advice on a particular issue. Don't expect an immediate answer, but be receptive to whatever comes up.
- ❖ Some people notice in the following hours, days or weeks that they've received their "answer", perhaps in a very unexpected way.

Confident, Competent, Content

- ❖ We can use imagery to help us feel better about ourselves.
- ❖ Think of a situation or event in the past when you have strongly felt this way. Or think of a person (real or fictional) who has the qualities you desire.
- ❖ Think about that time, or that person - what do you see? What do you hear? How are you/they behaving? What do you/they look like? What do you hear? What else do you notice?
- ❖ What feelings do you notice as you imagine yourself at that time, or being that person? What do you feel now?
- ❖ What physical sensations do you notice?
- ❖ Can you think of a word which describes this good feeling, a word you can use to bring back this feeling whenever you need it?
- ❖ Now focus on that word with the image, and notice the feelings
- ❖ You are now able to bring back this positive feeling, whenever you want or need to.
- ❖ You can combine this technique with "Goal Rehearsal" and imagine yourself in a situation, with these positive feelings.

**Goal Rehearsal / Achieving Future Success**

- ❖ Consider, in detail, the trait, skill or behaviour you would like to achieve, in what situation, with whom etc.
- ❖ Rehearse the situation in the imagination, using the desired behaviours, skills etc. Imagine seeing yourself in that situation, as you want to be - what you look like, how you sound - what you're saying and how you say it, how you see yourself acting
- ❖ Anticipate others' responses to this new you - rehearse them responding in different ways, sometimes negatively - and then rehearse those difficult scenarios with yourself responding in the way you'd like to respond
- ❖ If necessary, prepare a script of what you want to say (e.g. when planning to stand up to someone in authority)
- ❖ Use this imagery several times a day, for a minimum of 10 days. The more you practice, the easier it becomes, and the easier you will find the actual situation when it happens.

For example, apprehension about a job interview

- ❖ Enact a detailed scene in the mind
- ❖ Use different scenarios of the situation - see yourself being introduced to the interviewer, and also taking the initiative and introducing yourself.
- ❖ Imagine being asked likely questions, and rehearse your responses
- ❖ See yourself looking calm and confident - imagine what that looks like, what you'll be doing, how you'll be doing it

Colour Visualisation & Breathing

Colour can be used just by visualising the colour which is likely to influence you positively. (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/colour.htm)

We can also visualise ourselves breathing in the desired colour associated with a positive or helpful feeling, and breathing out the colour associated with the negative feeling.

Depression: **Breathe in orange** (positive energy), breathe out blue / black
Anxiety: **Breathe in blue** (calming), breathe out red
Anger: **Breathe in blue** (calming) **or green** (balance), breathe out red.

Turning around a 'bad' feeling

Sometimes we can get a 'bad' feeling in our body. It's possible to turn this feeling around by using our imagination. Ask yourself (example in italics):

- ❖ Where is this feeling in your body? *Belly*
- ❖ If this feeling had a shape, what would it be? *Oval shaped*
- ❖ How big would it be? *Rugby ball sized*
- ❖ And what colour would it be? *Dark blue*
- ❖ What texture or consistency would it be? *Solid mass*



And now:

- ❖ For this feeling to be better, what shape does it need to be? *Round*
- ❖ How big? *Getting smaller*
- ❖ And what colour would it be? *Yellow*
- ❖ What texture or consistency would it be? *Warm, light, translucent*



Image Manipulation & Imagery Rescripting



Sometimes we can get horribly distressing intrusive images that just pop into our heads, and we have trouble getting rid of them again. The image may be based on a real memory, or just some random terrible image. These images can trigger strong physical sensations, and intense emotions of fear, dread, anger or sadness.

We can learn to manipulate or change the image so that we reduce the distressing feelings:

- ❖ Imagine putting the image on a TV screen. Now with an imaginary remote control, make the image smaller, making it more distant, perhaps turn it into black and white, remove the sound or give it a different soundtrack.
- ❖ Imagine a plate or sheet of strong clear plastic and put it between your face and the image. Push that image away from your face, until it gets smaller and is further away.
- ❖ Change the imagery by coming up with a more positive or acceptable outcome (see examples such as goal rehearsal, confident & competent, or positive imagery for depression)

Positive Imagery for Depression

- ❖ When we feel depressed, we get caught up in cycle of negative thinking and imagery, doing less, and consequently feeling more depressed. Whilst it can be difficult to change our negative thinking, people often find it easier to see themselves in their mind's eye, enjoying the activities they used to enjoy doing.
- ❖ Doing this 2 or 3 times a day can be helpful in lifting our mood, and help us start to change our negative focus. The activity we visualise need not be something we're planning to do in the future, the aim is simply to reactivate more helpful thinking and imagery.
- ❖ As with all other imagery exercises, it is helpful to strengthen the image by thinking about each of our senses, noticing even small details in what we can see and hear etc. It is also often helpful to use the other exercises described above.



Inspired by Lazarus 1984