

visualization 30

for you to know

Our bodies cannot think for themselves; they only respond to what our brains tell them. If you tell yourself you are in an anxious situation, your body will become tense. If you tell yourself you are in a peaceful situation, your body will become relaxed. Visualizing a peaceful situation in your mind, even if it is not really happening, can help you release anxiety.

At gymnastic meets, Kara used to get anxious as she sat and waited for her turn. To help herself stay peaceful, she learned to use the time to pretend she was sitting in one of her favorite places—in a lawn chair next to the pool at her aunt’s house. As Kara waited for the coach to call her to perform, she would picture herself relaxing in the sun, sipping a cool drink. When she replaced her thoughts of anxiety with this mental image of peacefulness, her body responded by relaxing. When her name was finally called, Kara was able to do her gymnastics routine with more grace and confidence because she was working from a state of peace rather than anxiety.

activity 30 * visualization

directions

Before starting this exercise, rate your anxiety level on a scale from 0 to 10 (0 being completely peaceful, 10 being highly anxious.) Write your number here: _____

In the space below, draw a picture of the most beautiful, peaceful place you can imagine. It may be a real place or one that just exists in your mind.



To continue this exercise, first read through the text below. You may choose to simply remember it as you visualize your peaceful place, or you may want to have someone else read it to you slowly. The visualization should take from five to ten minutes to complete.

Find a quiet place to sit comfortably, and close your eyes. Take a few deep, slow breaths. Pretend that you are in the beautiful, peaceful place you have just drawn. As you sit there, look around you at everything you can see. Notice how vivid all of the colors are. Notice how clear the air is and how detailed and exquisite every line and shape and texture looks to you. Notice that everything has a sense of peace about it.

Listen to any sounds that are present in this beautiful place. All the sounds you hear are melodic and pleasing to your ears. The sounds add to the sense of harmony and peace that surrounds you. Notice that any scents in the air are also pleasing. They are the most beautiful fragrances you have ever experienced. They add to the peace and relaxation that you feel all around you and within you. As you inhale, you feel as if you are inhaling beauty and relaxation.

Notice that everything you touch feels good to you. The textures that brush against your hands or legs, the air that caresses your face or skin—everything feels gentle and pleasing. Any flavors you taste are pleasant to you, too.

As you experience this time in this beautiful, peaceful place, you are filled with a strong sense of security, stability, and balance. You feel safe, centered, and grounded. You feel calm and sure of yourself. Every cell in your entire body is immersed in peace.

Sit quietly for a minute, just noticing and enjoying this wonderful feeling of peace. Know that this feeling is within you and is yours anytime you want it. All you have to do is remember it. Now you are going to leave this imaginary place and bring your attention back to the room you are in. But you know that you will not lose the ability to return to the peace of this place anytime that you want to. The peace is always within you.

When you open your eyes, rate your anxiety level again. Write your number here: ____

more to do

Describe what it was like for you to do this exercise.

Tell how you chose this place over any other and why this place is peaceful for you.

Look at your anxiety-level ratings from before the exercise and after the exercise. Tell how your anxiety level was affected by the exercise and why you think that happened.

Sometimes people feel uncomfortable with this exercise because they are not used to closing their eyes and picturing things in their mind. Describe any discomfort you may have felt while you were doing the exercise.

You might want to try this exercise picturing a number of different peaceful places. See which one helps you feel the most peaceful. If you practice this exercise on a regular basis as prevention, your everyday level of anxiety will be lowered. If you find your anxiety level rising at some time during the day, try to take a minute to close your eyes and picture yourself in your peaceful place, bringing your body and mind back to a deep state of relaxation. It can help you to practice intervention when your anxiety level is getting too high.