



This week...

Take 10 and escape!

Have you spent most of the morning dealing with interruptions, reading the latest update from the local health authority, and reviewing emails? Are the unopened emails in your inbox numbering in the 100's? Stop the toil, and for 10 minutes, enjoy some spoil!

Try guided imagery.

Guided imagery is a gentle but powerful technique that focuses the imagination in proactive, positive ways. With guided imagery, you utilize all of your senses — vision, taste, sound, smell, and touch.

Guided imagery is based on the concept that your body and mind are **connected**. Using all of your senses, your body seems to respond as though what you are imagining is real. An example often used is to imagine an orange or a lemon in great detail — the smell, the colour, and even the texture of the peel. Continue to imagine the smell of the lemon, and then visualize taking a bite of the lemon, feeling the juice squirting into your mouth. Many people salivate when they do this. Guided imagery can also stimulate changes in heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory patterns, because of the deep, physical mind-body connection.

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 can aid healing, learning, creativity, and performance. It can also help you feel more in control of your emotions and thought processes, which may lead to improving your attitude, health, and sense of well-being. Just as with any [mindfulness](#) practice, *the more you do it, the more natural it becomes.*

But does it *really* work?

Research shows that less than 10 minutes of guided imagery can produce many benefits. So, feel free to set a timer for the amount of time you have available.

Guided imagery has been found to provide significant stress reduction benefits, including physically relaxing the body quickly and efficiently. The studies demonstrating the health benefits of imagery are so numerous that many hospitals are incorporating imagery as an option to help with treatment. Fortunately, it's a simple enough technique that it can be used at home as well, with positive results.

Give it a try! Follow these steps:

1. Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes.
2. Start by taking a few deep breaths to help you relax.
3. Picture a setting that is calm and peaceful. *This could be a beach, a mountain setting, a meadow, or any scene that you choose.*
4. Imagine your scene and try to add some detail. *Is there a breeze? How does it feel? What do you smell? What does the sky look like? Is it clear, or are there clouds?*
5. It often helps to add a path to your scene. For example, as you enter the meadow, imagine a path leading you through the meadow to the trees on the other side. As you follow the path farther into the meadow, you should feel more and more relaxed.
6. When you are deep into your scene and are feeling relaxed, take a few minutes to breathe slowly and feel the calm.
7. Think of a simple word or sound that you can use in the future to help you return to this place. When you are ready, slowly take yourself out of the scene and back to the present. Tell yourself that you will feel relaxed and refreshed and will bring your sense of calm with you.
8. Count to three and open your eyes.

Notice how you feel. When you are just starting out, you may find it helpful to have an instructor or audio recording to follow. You can find some free guided imagery exercises online. YouTube and mindfulness apps, such as Headspace, will also have

guided imagery meditations to follow. The voice of the narrator needs to feel relaxing for you, so you may need to try a couple until you find a good fit.

Below are some short, online exercises to get you started with guided imagery. Choose whatever scene is more pleasing to you.

- [5 minutes | Guided Imagery for Relaxation \(Beach Scene\)](#)
- [10 minutes | Guided Imagery \(Ocean Escape\)](#)
- [13 minutes | Guided Imagery \(Forest Scene\)](#)
- [5 minutes | Guided Imagery \(Pond and Beach Scenes\)](#)

Take whatever time you can spare to try guided imagery to regulate, relax and just escape for a few precious moments. You may be quite surprised about how good you feel when you are done!

If you would like to contribute, or have ideas about what you would like to see in the [ReFresh](#) series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

Sources:

1. <https://www.verywellmind.com/use-guided-imagery-for-relaxation-3144606>
2. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/aa84044spec>
3. <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/guided-imagery>
4. <https://www.healthjourneys.com/guided-imagery-101>