

communicate with the images by asking them questions or talking to them. Jung used active imagination to help the individual appreciate his or her own rich inner life and learn to draw on its healing power in times of stress. Jungian and Gestalt therapists have since devised several stress-reduction techniques using the intuitive, imaginative part of the mind.

Visualization is practiced and studied in cancer and pain centers throughout the country. Stephanie Matthews and O. Carl Simonton, who pioneered the use of visualization with cancer patients, wrote *Getting Well Again* in 1980. Two other visualization scientists, therapists, and writers are Jeanne Achterberg, who wrote *Imagery in Healing* in 1985, and Connecticut surgeon and Yale professor Bernie S. Siegel, who wrote *Love, Medicine, and Miracles* in 1986.

Shakti Gawain, author of *Creative Visualization and Living in the Light*, states that visualization is a form of energy creating life and life's happenings. Everything is energy and our mind creates our world, much as a movie projector projects a world upon a blank screen.

## Symptom Relief

Visualization is effective in treating many stress-related and physical illnesses, including headaches, muscle spasms, chronic pain, and general or situation-specific anxiety.

## Time for Mastery

Symptom relief can be immediate or take several weeks of practice.

## Instructions

### *Kinds of Visualization*

Everybody visualizes. Daydreams, memories, and inner talk are all types of visualization. You can harness your visualizations and consciously employ them for bettering yourself and your life. Visualizations or mental sense impressions that you create consciously can train your body to relax and ignore stress.

There are three types of visualization for change:

1. **Receptive visualization.** Here you relax, empty your mind, sketch a vague scene, ask a question, and wait for a response. You might imagine you are on the beach, the breeze is caressing your skin. You can hear and smell the sea. You can ask, "Why can't I relax?" The response might surface into your consciousness, "Because you can't say no to people," or "Because you can't detach yourself from your husband's depression."
2. **Programmed visualization.** Create an image, replete with sight, taste, sound, and smell. Imagine a goal that you want to attain or a healing that you want to accelerate. Harriet used programmed visualization when she started to run. For her first race, she not only practiced, but after one run on the course, she daily would visualize her race on that course. She would feel the pressure to run up a hill, the exhaustion after several miles, the sprint to the finish line. When she ran that race she set a state record for 40- to 49-year-old women.

3. **Guided visualization.** Again visualize your scene in detail, but omit crucial elements. Then wait for your subconscious, or your inner guide, to supply the missing pieces in your puzzle. Jane imagines visiting a special place where she likes to relax. She constructs the smells, tastes, sounds, touch, sights associated with this place, a forest clearing that she used to visit with the Girl Scouts. She sees herself roasting marshmallows over a campfire at twilight. (There are no mosquitoes.) She imagines her Girl Scout leader, someone whom Jane loves, and asks her teacher how she can relax. Sometimes her leader reminds her of some songs Jane loves and tells Jane to sing them whenever she feels tense. Sometimes her leader reminds Jane of some old jokes and old times that made Jane laugh, and tells Jane that she needs to laugh more. Often the leader gives Jane a hug, to remind her that she is loved and that she needs to search for affirmations of that love.

### *Rules for Effective Visualization*

1. Loosen your clothing, lie down in a quiet place, and close your eyes softly.
2. Scan your body, seeking tension in specific muscles. Relax those muscles as much as you can.
3. Form mental sense impressions. Involve all your senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. For instance, imagine the sights of a green forest with the trees, blue sky, white clouds, and pine needles underfoot. Then add the sounds: wind in the trees, water running, birdcalls, and so on. Include the feel of the ground under your shoes, the smell of pine, and the taste of chewing a grass stem or mountain spring water.
4. Use affirmations. Repeat short, positive statements that affirm your ability to relax now. Use the present tense and avoid negatives such as "I am *not* tense" in favor of positive versions such as "I am letting go of tension." Here are some other examples of affirmations:

*Tension flows from my body.*

*I can relax at will.*

*I am in harmony with life.*

*Peace is within me.*

5. Visualize three times a day. Visualization practice is easiest in the morning and night while lying in bed. After some practice, you will be able to visualize while waiting in the doctor's office, at the service station, before going into a parent-teacher conference, or during an IRS audit.

## **Basic Tension and Relaxation Exercises**

### *1. Eye Relaxation (Palming)*

Put your palms directly over your closed eyes. Block out all light without putting too much pressure on your eyelids. Try to see the color black. You may see other colors or images,

but focus on the color black. Use a mental image to remember the color black (black fur, black object in the room).

Continue this way for two to three minutes, thinking and focusing on black. Lower your hands and slowly open your eyes, gradually getting accustomed to the light. Experience the sense of relaxation in the muscles that control the opening and closing of your eyes.

Color imagery and eye relaxation can be done when you need a technique and don't have very much time. They are designed to be fun and provide you with some alternatives to keep "relaxing" interesting. Try to slip one of these into your regular activities every now and then.

## *2. Metaphorical Images*

Lie down, close your eyes, and relax. Visualize an image for tension and then supplant it with an image for relaxation. The best images are those you make up yourself. But to get you started, images for tension might include:

- The color red
- The screech of chalk on a blackboard
- The tension of a cable
- The scream of a siren in the night
- The glare of a searchlight
- The smell of ammonia
- The confinement of a dark tunnel
- The pounding of a jackhammer

These tension images during visualization can soften, expand, fade, creating relaxation and harmony.

- The color red can fade to pale blue.
- The chalk can crumble into powder.
- The cable can slacken.
- The siren might soften to a whisper of a flute.
- The searchlight might fade into a soft rosy glow.
- The dark tunnel might open into a light, airy beach.
- The jackhammer can become the hands of a masseuse kneading your muscles.

As you scan your body, apply a tension image to a tense muscle. Allow it to develop into your relaxation image. For example, if your neck is tense, you may **visualize a tightened vise**. **Imagine the vise opening** as you say an affirmation such as "Relax," or "I can relax at will."

End by reciting your affirmation. Speak to the specific tenseness as you apply your relaxation image. Watch the tension disappear.

### 3. Creating Your Special Place

In creating your own special place you will be making a retreat for relaxation and solitude. This place may be indoors or out. In structuring your place, follow a few guidelines:

- Allow a private entry into your place.
- Make it peaceful, comfortable and safe.
- Fill your place with sensuous detail. Create a midground, a foreground, and a background.
- Allow room for an inner guide or other person to comfortably be with you.

A special place might be at the end of a path that leads to a pond. Grass is under your feet, the pond is about 30 yards away and mountains are in the distance. You can feel the coolness of the air in this shady spot. The mockingbird is singing everyone's song. The sun is bright on the pond. The honeysuckle's pungent odor attracts the bee buzzing over the flower with its sweet nectar.

Or your special place might be a sparkling clean kitchen, with cinnamon buns baking in the oven. Through the kitchen window you can see fields of yellow wheat. A window chime tinkles in the breeze. At the table is a cup of tea for your guest.

Try taping this exercise and playing it, or have a friend read it to you slowly.

To go to your safe place, lie down, be totally comfortable. Close your eyes . . . Walk slowly to a quiet place in your mind . . . Your place can be inside or outside . . . It needs to be peaceful and safe . . . Picture yourself unloading your anxieties, your worries . . . Notice the view in the distance . . . What do you smell? . . . What do you hear? . . . Notice what is before you . . . Reach out and touch it . . . How does it feel? . . . Smell it . . . Hear it . . . Make the temperature comfortable . . . Be safe here . . . Look around for a special spot, a private spot . . . Find the path to this place . . . Feel the ground with your feet . . . Look above you . . . What do you see? . . . Hear? . . . Smell? . . . Walk down this path until you can enter your own quiet, comfortable, safe place.

You have arrived at your special place . . . What is under your feet? . . . How does it feel? . . . Take several steps . . . What do you see above you? . . . What do you hear? . . . Do you hear something else? . . . Reach and touch something . . . What is its texture? . . . Are there pens, paper, paints nearby, or is there sand to draw in, clay to work? . . . Go to them, handle them, smell them. These are your special tools, or tools for your inner guide to reveal ideas or feelings to you . . . Look as far as you can see . . . What do you see? . . . What do you hear? . . . What aromas do you notice?

Now you need to find a place for your inner guide and a path from which your guide can enter.

Sit or lie in your special place . . . Notice its smells, sounds, sights . . . This is your place and nothing can harm you here . . . If danger is here, expel it . . . Spend three to five minutes realizing you are relaxed, safe and comfortable.

Memorize this place's smells, tastes, sights, sounds . . . You can come back

and relax here whenever you want . . . Leave by the same path or entrance . . . Notice the ground, touch things near you . . . Look far away and appreciate the view . . . Remind yourself this special place you created can be entered whenever you wish. Say an affirmation such as, "I can relax here," or "This is my special place. I can come here whenever I wish."

Now open your eyes and spend a few seconds appreciating your relaxation.

#### *4. Finding Your Inner Guide*

Your Inner Guide is an imaginary person or animal that clarifies and instructs. This being is your link to your inner wisdom and subconscious. Your Inner Guide can tell you how to relax and can clarify what is causing your stress. With practice, you can meet your Inner Guide in your special place whenever you want.

Perhaps you already have an Inner Guide, a deceased parent or other spiritual presence. If so, invite this person into your special place and ask him or her to show you how to relax.

Try this exercise using your tape recorder or a friend.

Relax and follow the path to your special place, as you have been doing. Invite an Inner Guide to your place. Wait. Watch your guide's path. Notice a speck in the distance. Wait. Watch your guide's approach. Listen to its footfalls. Can you smell its fragrance? As your guide gains shape and clarity, if you feel unsafe, send it away. Wait for other guides until you find one you like, even though its appearance may surprise you or seem odd.

When your guide is comfortable, ask it questions. Wait for its answers. An answer may be a laugh, a saying, a feeling, a dream, a frown, a purr. Ask your guide, "How can I relax? What is causing my tension?" When your Guide answers, you will probably be surprised at the simplicity, yet clarity of its answers.

Before your guide leaves you, or immediately after, say your affirmation to yourself. Affirm your ability to relax with a simple, "I can relax here," or "I can relax at will."

Do this exercise several times a day for at least seven days. By the seventh day, you will probably have found a guide and some answers.

A student who has lost his mother and his house and has a father unable to care for him, uses his mother as his Inner Guide. He goes to her to relax, to seek guidance when pressure from life and his peers is overwhelming. She doesn't say much, but her presence and her look of approval or disapproval is often enough.

One person's guide creates relaxation because of the emptying of the mind that occurs in her presence. Rarely are words spoken, but her actions in small stories guide her.

Each person's inner guide is different and instructs them in a unique manner.

#### *5. Listening to Music*

Listening to music is one of the most common forms of relaxation. Each person gives his own meaning to music. It is important, therefore, that you select music that you find peaceful