

Coping Skill Idea

Guided Imagery

Our minds are powerful, and with our imagination, we can visualize almost anything. This exercise uses words, images and all 5 senses to help move attention away from worry and stress to a relaxed state—which can help improve focus and learning, help your child reach her goals or help prepare her for a big event.

How to practice guided imagery

- Imagine yourself in a place where you feel comfortable, safe and happy. This might be a favorite place to go, somewhere you have seen or completely made up. It's up to you. You will use that place to help calm your body and mind. You can close your eyes or keep them open.
- Take a few deep breaths (inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth). Breathe in relaxation and breathe out any worries.
- When you have picked out a place, imagine yourself there. Think about every detail that makes this place special for you:



What do you see?



What do you smell?



What are you able to touch and feel?



What do you hear?



What do you taste?



What do you notice about how your body feels?

- Take a few moments to enjoy your time in this place. Soon it will be time to leave, but know that you can return here in your imagination at any time you need to relax or feel safe. Over the next 5 seconds, take a deep breath in and out slowly. Slowly open your eyes, feeling calm and refreshed.
- Notice how your body feels. Are your muscles relaxed? Is your mind calm? Think of times when this strategy would be helpful to use.

Remind your child that this exercise can be done at any time throughout the day, wherever he is, such as when he is feeling anxious, angry or needs to calm down before bedtime.

Tips for making guided imagery work for your child

There are many ways to modify this exercise for you or your child to keep it interesting and fun. Here are some examples:

- If your child wants to use guided imagery at the beginning of the day or before she takes an exam, you can modify the language slightly to have her imagine a positive outcome. For example: “Imagine that you have a great day at school. What will you notice? See? Hear? How will you feel?”
- If your child is nervous about a big game, you can use the exercise with modified language as well. For example: “Imagine yourself winning tonight’s game. Your coaches and teammates are excited to take the field and are giving you high fives. What will you see? Hear? Feel?”
- If you anticipate your child having a hard time thinking of a happy place, offer her some examples you think might work well, such as being at Grandma’s house, on the playground or at the beach.

Helpful Hint

It’s difficult to learn things when we are anxious, angry or too distracted, so it is important to try new coping skills during a time when your child is calm instead of during a time of stress. A skill that works one day might not work the next, so encourage your child to try different strategies to help build her coping skills toolbox. Keep in mind that your child is watching and listening to you, so it’s important that you practice with your child and role model using healthy coping skills to manage your own stress and emotions.