

Positive Imagery:

an Antidote for Stress



Sometimes we are not able to change our environment to manage stress – this may be the case when we do not have the power to change a situation or leave a work environment. Imagery is a useful skill for relieving stress in these situations.

How positive imagery works

- Particular environments can be very relaxing, while others can be intensely stressful.
- The principle behind the use of imagery in stress reduction is that you can use your imagination to recreate, and enjoy, a situation that is very relaxing.
- The more intensely you imagine the situation, the more relaxing the experience will be.
- Research has shown that by imagining a pleasant and relaxing scene (which reduces stress), you can objectively see the measured stress in your body reduce.
- By imagining an unpleasant and stressful situation, you can see the stress in your body increase.

Include all of your senses in your image

- One common use of imagery in relaxation is to imagine a scene, place or event that you remember as safe, peaceful, restful, beautiful, and happy. Bring all your senses into the image. For example, you may “see” palm trees blowing in the breeze, sea and sand around you, “hear” the waves crashing against rocks, “smell” the salt in the air, “feel” the warmth of the sun and a gentle breeze on your body, and “taste” the cool refreshing lemonade.
- You will be able to come up with the most effective images for yourself.
- The key to using this technique is to include as many of your five senses as possible in your creation of the image.

Sample steps for positive imagery

- Step 1** Vividly recall a pleasant experience
- Step 2** Recall where you were...
- Step 3** What you were wearing...
- Step 4** What you could smell...
- Step 5** What you could hear...
- Step 6** Who you were with...

Other uses of imagery

Other uses of imagery in relaxation involve creating mental pictures of stress flowing out of your body, or of stress, distractions and everyday concerns being folded away and locked into a padlocked chest.