**BEACH GUIDED IMAGERY**

Visualize yourself walking on a pier. Descending from it is a long wooden stairway. Your arms are relaxed. Your feet are bare and the damp, rough, weathered steps feel warm and comforting. With each step you feel tightness falling away from your shoulders. You approach the final step down into the sand- it covers your toes. This is your place of surrender. You look up. The shoreline stretches far into the distance. Deep turquoise waters reflect the sun, and you watch as colorful fish dart beneath waves. Pelicans swoop and dive together in an elegant dance, beckoning you closer to watch their play. Walking gently to the oceans edge, you notice the waves sweeping up the shore. The moving resonances of the sea are calming. Your thoughts still as you are present. The sun warms your skin. You draw in a long deep breath of salty ocean air... and slowly release it. You begin to match your breath with the flow of the sea. The ocean calls- pulling back the waves like an unmade bed- you inhale. The sea blows and they come rushing forward, pushing tides upon the shore. Your held breath releases. The water reaches you and you welcome its current across your feet. It glides smoothly, moving sand over and about. You stare, mesmerized, as water and sand churn, pirouetting and sweeping across your ankles while submersing your feet. It is cool and comforting, drawing you in deeper... restoring your calm. Your eyes follow its trail, pulling shells as though they were weightless, and carrying them to sea. You pause, imagining yourself weightless as the shells, and, like a child, you squat down admiring the many forms and colors, each unique but all destined to become a tiny grain of sand. The gentle breeze shifts and presses lightly against your back, and you rise to continue your walk. Traces of salt left by the briny oceans' breath, glisten on your skin. There is a drifting scent of familiar flowers. You treasure it a moment, enjoying the sweet lingering fragrance. Nearby you notice a powdery undisturbed patch of solace. You approach and sit curling your toes into the sand. Closing your eyes you settle in. Taking long deep breaths, release and exhale into the wind any remaining apprehension or fear. Allow yourself to rest. The sound of seagulls directs your eyes to the sky. You watch as they coast on currents high overhead. Rising farther away, their soft calls growing faint, you picture yourself gliding and soaring with them. You relax and rest deeper. Continue to accept this gift of peace.

When you feel ready, gently return to your presence, still relaxed, still at peace... sitting right where you are.

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**THE SCIENCE: Guided Imagery** is an independent nursing intervention that uses psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) principles to assist an individual in the management of distressing symptoms.\(^1\) Research suggests that Guided Imagery induces relaxation, and encourages the healing process. Risks associated with its use are minimal due to its non-invasive nature; this has led to substantial use in nursing. Providing a sample script and explaining how the technique can be used, provides a sense of autonomy.\(^2\) A systematic review of relaxation, meditation, guided imagery, or combinations of these strategies reduced physical discomfort and improved quality of life. Heart failure participants whose care was augmented with this modality, experienced less dyspnea and fewer sleep disturbances compared with patients receiving typical medical care. Decreases in pain and fatigue were cited by post-guided imagery participants.\(^3\) In the context of stress reduction, Guided Imagery may be useful due to proven efficacy in relieving pain and anxiety. A study conducted in the emergency department, confirmed it was easily adaptable to various environments.\(^4\) A 12-week self-guided positive imagery training showed positive effects on the psycho-emotional state of healthy subjects and was associated with an increase in functional connectivity in the brain.\(^5\)

### References

3. Kwekkeboom, K. L., & Bratzke, L. C. (2016). A Systematic Review of Relaxation, Meditation, guided imagery, or combinations of these strategies reduced physical discomfort and improved quality of life. Heart failure participants whose care was augmented with this modality, experienced less dyspnea and fewer sleep disturbances compared with patients receiving typical medical care. Decreases in pain and fatigue were cited by post-guided imagery participants.

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