Holistic Nursing

FOREST GUIDED IMAGERY for RESILIENCE

To Begin seat yourself somewhere comfortably and breathe deeply. Notice your lungs expanding. Relax as you release your breath. Notice if your jaw is clenched, as you exhale imagine pain and worry exiting with the breath. Allow yourself to settle. Acknowledge your thoughts and, like a puff of smoke, permit them to pass. Continue bringing awareness to tension allowing it to melt away. You become increasingly comfortable, sitting right where you are. Take your time. Read the script slowly. Breathe and imagine.

Imagine a dirt path into a forest. You are embraced in gentle light flooding between branches and skipping about the surface of the leaves. Birds whistle and chirp. The wind ruffles about the canopy of trees releasing the rich dampness of the forest; scents of rotting vegetation and new growth pass through the air. You breathe deeply, riveting in peace of this place. You exhale, allowing your shoulders to lower and fall back into place. You notice a tickle brush the side of your bare feet and you begin to walk. The forest floor speaks with delightful crisp crackling of needles and leaves jumping from the dirt path. The fragrant wood aromas stay with you as you move. Through the trees high above you see the sun flickering in a cloudless, blue sky. Light filters down dancing about the forest floor, creating intricate patterns of light and shadow. With each breath you take in this place, you find deeper peace and relaxation. You hear a trickling of water and follow the sound. A clearing full of light arises in front of you. There, a small creek flows, cascading over colorful moss covered rocks. You approach the creek. Sparkling clear water swirls over the rocks creating whirlpools and eddies. You decide to sit and rest. Lowering yourself to the ground, your fingers graze the earth- the moss is soft and boggy. Sliding your feet into the cool water, a revitalizing energy surges upward through your limbs. You inhale a deep cleansing breath and hold it savoring this blissful restoration. You exhale, allowing any apprehension or worry to escape. Dipping your palm into the water, you splash it over your face. It's cold and awakening to your senses. Closing your eyes you pause and listen to the waters movement over the rocks. You are bathed in sunlight and soak in the warmth upon your skin, relaxing deeply. Let yourself sink further into peacefulness. If concerns or worries emerge, acknowledge them and allow them to pass as though a gentle breeze. You are completely refreshed and rejuvenated in this place. Stay in this calm as long as you wish.

When you are ready, visualize yourself rising slowly to leave the clearing. As you walk back down the path through the forest, fully take in this place. Accept that you may return at any time by taking the same path. Each time you enter this place you will feel relaxed and at peace.

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 integrative 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.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

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