

THE VALUE OF RELAXATION & GUIDED IMAGERY FOR CHILDBIRTH, COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY, POST-PARTUM DEPRESSION & REDUCED HOSPITAL STAYS

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Relaxation and Guided Imagery (GI)

Relaxation and Guided Imagery (GI) are gentle, yet powerful mind body techniques that teach people how to become deeply relaxed and then to use sensory images to promote well-being, healing and problem solving.

A User-Friendly Method

- ◆ GI is a natural, non-invasive, empowering method that can improve Quality of Life and promote patient adherence and acceptance of necessary, healing processes.
- ◆ It is versatile, inexpensive, practiced anywhere, except driving, and portable.
- ◆ It is easily taught over the web, live, one on one, in patient groups or alone.
- ◆ It is easily incorporated into a variety of nursing protocols, home visits, pt groups, Helplines, life coaching, injection protocols, clinical trials, MRI scans or reducing stress for caregivers at home.

A Versatile Intervention

- ◆ GI can be used by almost anyone, including those with mild to moderate dementia.
- ◆ It does not matter what level of education or what kind of religious/ethnic background participant possesses.
- ◆ You do not even have to be a believer for it to work
- ◆ The more you practice it, unlike addiction, the less you need.
- ◆ It is fast and powerful in its effects and, for most Westerners, it is easier to use than traditional meditation as it requires less time and discipline to develop a high level of skill.

Patient Empowerment

- ◆ Using GI creates a locus of control within us.
- ◆ This lowers a sense of helplessness and reactivity and increases responsiveness.
- ◆ It creates an atmosphere of allowing yourself to find responses to things rather than forcing yourself or commanding yourself to cope or heal.
- ◆ It enables us to rehearse and prepare for challenging or painful events.
- ◆ It can produce radical shifts in attitude, coping and receptivity to problem solving which, in turn, increases treatment compliance and positive coping.

Efficacy of Guided Imagery

- ◆ GI has been an integral part of Holistic Nursing Practice for many years and is a well regarded complementary therapy.
- ◆ Well-designed research studies have shown GI to:
 - 1) Reduce anxiety and depression (McKinney et al, 1997);
 - 2) Shift pain experience, eliminate headaches, reduce arthritic pain (Sharpe et al, 2001) and fibromyalgia (Whiting et al, 2001);
 - 3) Improve immune function (Gruzelier, 2002).

Efficacy of Guided Imagery (cont.)

- 4) Increase adherence to therapies and drug therapies (Franco, 2008; Mohr et al, 1997).
- 5) Lower MRI-related anxieties (Thompson and Coppano, 1994).
- 6) Lower blood pressure (Herman, 2002).
- 7) Prepare for surgery/chemo, reduce length of hospital stay post surgery (Dreher, 1998; Halpin et al, 2002).
- 8) Improve memory rehearsal in post stroke patients (Page et al, 2001).
- 9) Accelerate post surgical wound healing (Ginandes et al, 2003).

Guided Imagery Studies and Childbirth

Many studies have examined effects of GI on

- ◆ Reducing complications of pregnancy (Mehl, 1994; Torem, 1994)
- ◆ Reducing hospital stays and fewer surgical interventions (Martin, Schuable et al, 2001)
- ◆ Reducing anxiety & stress during pregnancy (Bastani et al, 2006)
- ◆ Managing Labor Pain (Smith, Collins et al, 2003)

Reducing Complications of Pregnancy:

Harmon, Hynan & Tyre, 1991

- ◆ Studied 60 pregnant women, half of whom received imagery suggestions for enjoyable childbirth, deep relaxation and glove anesthesia
- ◆ Treatment group had quicker progress through Stage 1 of labor, less reported pain, less use of medication and their babies had higher Apgar scores at 1 and 5 minute

Reduced Hospital Stays

Martin, Schuable et al, 2001:

Studied a group of 22 women who learned guided imagery in a 4 session program had shorter hospital stays and fewer surgical interventions than a matched control group who received psychosocial counseling sessiona

Reducing Complications of Pregnancy

Mehl, 1994:

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Used Guided Imagery with 100 women whose babies were in breech positions at 37 to 40 weeks' gestation; Compared them with a matched comparison group; In Treatment Group, 81% of the babies spontaneously "turned" to the proper position compared with 48% of comparison group

Reese, 1995:

Guided Imagery was effective in improving post-partum anxiety, depression & self-esteem

Reducing Anxiety & Depression During Pregnancy

These techniques are effective across cultural lines

Bastani, Hidarnia et al, 2006:

Study of Iranian women using relaxation techniques had significantly reduced low weight births, cesarean sections and or instrumental extractions

Smith, Collins et al, 2003:

Women using Guided Imagery more satisfied with management of their labor pain than other forms of alternative methods

The ABCs of Relaxation and Guided Imagery

- ◆ **How does it work?**
 - ◆ **First**, learn how to become deeply relaxed, while conscious by use of diaphragmatic breathing and body scan, then imagine with your senses letting go of tension in the body.
 - ◆ It is not necessary to work at relaxing, it is impossible to maintain a state of relaxation and a state of tension at the same time.

Multisensory Imaging

- ◆ Once relaxed, sensory images are added to the experience, e.g., guiding someone to go to their ideal place of relaxation or a safe place.
- ◆ Under these conditions, our bodies do not discriminate between sensory images in the mind and what we call reality.
- ◆ Our bodies treat the imagined image as if it is happening and these effects reverberate, like depth charges, within the body.

The Neurochemistry of Guided Imagery

- ◆ Parasympathetic functioning is increased, promoting, rest and energy renewal, relaxed blood flow, lower muscle tension and reduced bracing and stiffness.
- ◆ Heightened Right Brain Activity is increased and stimulates increased intuition, symbolic reasoning, sensory processing, creativity and receptivity.
- ◆ Our own natural pharmacy is “turned on”-- neuropeptides, short term immune function, neurotransmitters flush through the system longer and their effects more sustained.

A Focused Reverie, Being in the Zone

- ◆ In this relaxed meditative state, the emotions, mood, physiologic state associated with the idea or image appear very vivid, very immediate and the place or event is experienced as a whole person, whole body state.
- ◆ Sensory images experienced in this relaxed state create a “lived experience” and effect more powerful change than analyzing one’s attitudes or behavior

A Focused Reverie, Being in the Zone

- ◆ This allows people to discover personal meaning and increase their understanding of how to cope with less reactivity.
- ◆ Can shift our attitudes, perceptions rapidly, practice strategies that work and promote self efficacy.
- ◆ When we apply this to a specific focus, we have an awesome ally, a way to experience a source of internal strength and skill in approaching a goal.