

# RESTORE YOUR BALANCE: IMAGERY & MUSCLE RELAXATION

## IMAGERY

Consider your five senses- what are they? Sight, touch, smell, sound, taste. Our senses are the gateway to our memories and offer us an opportunity to relax quickly in a moment of distress. Imagery is a relaxation skill where we call into mind as many sensory experiences as we can to visualize a relaxing environment.

Imagery is one way to relax quickly. Our brain has the capacity to create a change in emotional reactions, based entirely off of thought and imagination.

- You will need a few minutes.
- An image of a relaxing place, experience, person, or thing.
- Use all of your five senses to explore your experience (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell). What do you hear? What do you see? What do you feel?
- Imagine every detail and create a vivid experience



## PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PMR)

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in the body. We do this by slowly tensing and relaxing each muscle group. It is a skill that can provide immediately relief and relaxation and is best practiced on a regular basis. Continued practice will bring increased awareness to where we hold tension in our bodies and give you an accessible tool for quick relaxation.

During this exercise each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation.

When our body is under stress, we can expect an automatic response of muscle tension. PMR allows us to pay attention to the tension we are carrying in our bodies and use an intentional practice to observe and release this tension.

Tense each muscle briefly and then release the tension, observing the feeling. Here are a few practice examples:

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- Tense the muscles in your shoulders by trying to touch your shoulders to your ears. Pretend you are a turtle tucking your head in your shell. Hold for 5 seconds and slowly release.
- Tense the muscles in your hands. Squeeze your hand muscles to make a fist. Imagine you are squeezing lemons. Hold for 5 seconds and release.