

## *Imagine That!*

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Have you ever considered the power of your imagination? Some believe it is a person's least utilized health resource. Dr. Martin L. Rossman, Cofounder of the Academy for Guided Imagery states that the imagination "can be used to remember and recreate the past, develop insight into the present, influence physical health, enhance creativity and inspiration, and anticipate possible futures."<sup>1</sup>

Actively using your imagination is a technique called *imagery*. There are three proven characteristics of imagery that make it such a valuable technique to use and to master:

1. It directly affects physiology (i.e., how your body functions).
2. It can provide insight and perspective into your health.
3. It has an intimate relationship with the emotions, which often underlie or are the roots of many common health conditions.

Imagery of various types has been used and shown to positively affect heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory patterns, brain-wave rhythms, gastrointestinal issues, sexual arousal, levels of hormones and neurotransmitters in the blood, immune system functioning, physical discomfort (e.g., neck, back, and joint pain), allergies, urinary complaints, sprains, strains, infections, flu symptoms, broken bones, and more! Research continues to confirm the many benefits of imagery. In addition to being used to explore diseases and symptoms, it is also proving useful for enhancing tolerance to medical procedures like MRIs and surgery.

What's more, using your imagination is easy to learn and to do. It can quickly become a wonderful and effective part of your self-care regimen.

Here's a simple, but effective exercise that uses imagery to calm your mind, release tension, quicken your spirit, and help your body cleanse itself of harmful toxins. Used in conjunction with a good detoxification program, this exercise in imagery can improve your health and quality of life. Be sure to read the following instructions several times before trying this exercise, so that you don't have to stop and interrupt your experience. And remember – the key to successful imagery is to make your imagination as vivid as possible: See colors and shapes, feel sensations, smell aromas, etc.

## **Imagine Yourself Healthy**

1. Get comfortable, either lying down or sitting up. Take the phone off the hook and close the door if you need to in order to ensure you are not bothered during this short time.
2. Take a few deep breaths. With each in-breath imagine that you're breathing in calmness, stillness, and peacefulness; each out-breath carries with it any tension, discomfort and worry you may have. Breathe this way for several minutes. When you feel calm and free of tension, proceed to the next step.
3. Now, invite your body to detoxify itself. Imagine that each in-breath you take delivers clean, pure energy to all the cells of your body, inside and out. You can begin with your feet and work your way up to your head, or simply imagine that with each in-breath you experience energy filling your body like a cloud of bright, healing light. When you breathe out, imagine toxins leaving your body like a cloud of inky, black smoke and soot. Do this for several minutes, breathing in healing light and breathing out the murky clouds of toxins. When you feel that your body is light and energized, and when it becomes difficult for you to imagine clouds of toxins leaving with your out-breath, continue with the next step.
4. With each full breath (in and out), imagine peace and light filling your body and extending from you into the world. Breathe in and you are full of peace and light. Breathe out and it expands outward to bless all the earth. Do this for several minutes, then proceed to the next step.
5. Whenever you are ready, simply allow the images to fade. Take all the time you need to bring yourself back to your surroundings. Open your eyes slowly and gently stretch if you would like to. Take a moment to thank yourself for doing this great work. Then rise and continue with your day.

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<sup>1</sup> Goldberg, Burton, *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ©2002, pg. 245