

Social and Emotional Learning

Lesson Title: Calming Through Guided Imagery

Grade Level: High School

Project and Purpose

Students practice calming their bodies and minds through a guided imagery exercise and then create their own scripts.

Essential Question

How does guided imagery bring us a sense of calm?

Materials

- Student and leader chairs
- Paper and writing tools OR writing program on computers
- Guided Imagery script and/or access to Internet for video examples of guided imagery
- **Note:** If comfortable, teachers may choose to use the script provided to narrate a guided imagery experience or use a guided imagery video or recording, many of which are found online. One highly suggested video, often used by teachers with students, can be found at the website www.thestresscoach.com. Click on RELAX NOW! on the navigation bar, then scroll down to the Guided Imagery DIY video.

Teacher

1. Ask students to discuss the contrasting concepts of stress and calm.
 - What are their stressors? How do they know when they are stressed? What are the signs?
 - What calms them? How do they know when they are calm? What are the signs?

Consider having students create a private list for their own consideration or a journal entry to share with those they choose.

2. Explain that everyone will try a method experts in stress reduction call “guided imagery.” Guided imagery is a two part process: relaxation and mental visualization. First one concentrates on breathing to relax, then one uses the mind to visualize a scene, a picture, or a place that helps to relieve stress and bring a positive feeling to both the mind and the body. Sometimes people use slow, instrumental music in the background, but a relatively quiet space is all it really requires.

Guided imagery has been called the most assessable stress-reliever method known as it can be done by almost anyone almost anywhere—for free. Remember, all it takes is a quiet space and an active imagination.

3. Invite students to sit in their chairs or on the floor in their own space, not too close to anyone else, leaving at least a hand-span of space between the people around them. As a leader, you can sit in a chair and demonstrate, or you can quietly move around the room as you narrate the exercise.
4. Narrate the experience using the script below OR use the suggested video from The Stress Coach. (**Note:** Each ellipses indicates where narration should pause to allow time for visualization.)

- Get into a comfortable position and slowly close your eyes...
 - Be aware of your breathing. Take a breath in through the nose, and exhale through your mouth. Listen to the rhythm of your breathing... Is it short and choppy? Or is it deep and relaxed? ...
 - Lengthen the breath. Take a slow, deep breath in through the nose and imagine the air flowing through your body all the way down to your toes. Exhale through the mouth.
 - Imagine you are in a field full of grass and wildflowers for as far as you can see... You walk slowly through the field, running your hands across the tops of the soft petals and the gentle tips of the tall grass...
 - Listen to the delicate crunch of dried grass under your feet as you walk and the wind as it rustles everything in the field...in a distance, you hear the gentle buzzing of dragonflies fluttering over the field...
 - The sun is shining brightly, warming your body...feel the warmth on your shoulders...on the top of your head...on the back of your neck...
 - Turn your face to the sun and soak in the warmth...
 - Take a deep breath in and imagine that warm feeling spreading throughout your body...from your face to your neck...to your chest...down the right arm...and the left arm...to your hands...and your fingers... Imagine that warm feeling in your belly...spreading to your hips...down your right leg...and your left leg...to your ankles and feet...and your toes...
 - Your whole body feels warm...flowing with warmth from the sunlight...Take a deep breath in...a slow breath out...You love the sun and how it makes you feel...Inhale...Exhale...You feel calm and warm all over...
 - To prepare to depart, I will begin counting back from 10. 10...9...8...take a deep breath and exhale...7...6...get ready to open your eyes...5...4...prepare to return to the room...3...2...1...slowly open your eyes.
5. Give students a minute of silence to return to the space before beginning the debrief. Ask:
 - How did they feel during the guided imagery?
 - What was challenging about participating in this exercise?
 - What effect did it have on your stress level? How did it bring about calmness?
 - How might they use an experience like this in “real life”?
 6. Discuss how a good guided imagery script attempts to include all five senses and ask how they saw evidence of any/all of the senses in the experience.
 7. Ask students about other places they would “go to” in a guided imagery piece of their own design. Would they use the field again? A stream? The ocean? A mountain top? A desert? Does a quiet place have to be outdoors? Can it be a special room? Where would that be? Would it be some place real or imaginary?
 8. Tell students they will create their own guided imagery narrations using a location that works for them. (NOTE: If you use the Guided Imagery video from The Stress Coach, Dr. Friedman encourages people to do this and record it for themselves.) Determine if they may record their guided imagery scenarios using approved classroom technology and/or write them. Be sure to demonstrate the use of ellipses to indicate pauses in the narration for writing a script.
 - Sound images: what do they want to hear in the environment?
 - Tactile images: what do they want to feel in the environment? Consider heat and cold, wind, rough and smooth, etc.

