

Creating a Peaceful Scene

After completing the relaxation procedure, it is helpful to visualize yourself in the midst of a peaceful scene. The relaxation procedure addresses particular groups of muscles; imagining yourself in a peaceful setting can give you a global sense of relaxation that frees you from anxious thoughts. The peaceful setting can be a quiet beach, a stream in the mountains, a calm lake, or anything that you have found particularly safe and peaceful in your own life. Don't restrict yourself to reality; use your imagination if you would benefit from that. You may imagine floating on a cloud or flying on a magic carpet. The important thing is to visualize the scene in detail so that it completely absorbs your attention. Allowing yourself to be absorbed in a peaceful scene will deepen your relaxation.

Here are two examples of peaceful scenes:

You're walking along a deserted beach. You are barefoot and you can feel the warm sand beneath your feet. You hear the sound of the surf. The sound is hypnotic, relaxing you. The water is a beautiful blue color. Near the horizon you see seagulls. You may also hear them calling in the distance. You can smell the salt air and feel a gentle breeze blowing against your face and slightly moving your hair around your face. Your skin glows with the warmth of the sun. Enjoy the scene.

You are snuggled in a warm blanket. Daylight is breaking in the forest. You feel the sun as it warms your face. The sky is above you, stretching out in pastel shades of pink and orange. You can smell the pines of the surrounding woods. You can hear the rushing waters of a mountain stream. The cool morning air is refreshing and invigorating. You feel warm and cozy wrapped in your blanket.

Note that the scenes are described with as much awareness of physical sensations as possible. Using these words helps increase the power of the scene and helps you to feel more present in the scenario. Remember: we want you to be transported from your normal state of anxiety or restlessness into an altered state of deep relaxation.

After you have imagined your ideal, peaceful place, practice returning to it often. You may want to practice returning to it following any relaxation or deep breathing procedure. This will reinforce the scene in your mind. After some time, it will be so firmly established in your mind that you can return to it in any anxious moment, creating relaxation instead of anxiety.

**"We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."
— Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Nigh***