

Visualisation exercise

If you've never done one of these before, here are some tips.

I have provided a ready-to-read exercise and visualisation, feel free to adjust it as you want or you may wish to make up your own visualisation. Pauses have been added – remember not to read these out!

These kind of techniques are used in drama to help actors get into character, what you are doing is helping the participants to use their imagination, and to draw on their own experiences, to understand what it might feel like to be in someone else's shoes.

Tone

Try to keep an even tone to your voice, not too loud and not too quiet, everyone needs to hear you but not be deafened by you! Try and keep it quite neutral without inflection. I like to think of visualisation as leading the imagination so you want to convey something without influencing how the participants see it.

Warm up

Everyone needs to lie on the floor, somewhere comfortable with space around them. Get them to close their eyes.

I find doing a warm-up exercise eases into the visualisation and helps concentration and relaxation.

Controlled breathing

Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth in a slow controlled rhythm. You may lead this by saying 'Breathe in (pause) and now breath out) repeat several times then lead into:

Body awareness

This exercise gets the participants to focus on one part of their body at a time. You tense and relax each part of the body from the feet upwards; you will need to lead this. A ready-to-read exercise is on the next page.

Closing

It's important to bring the visualisation to a close, don't rush it. Inform the participants that the visualisation is finishing and that they can open their eyes and sit up slowly when they are ready. Have a de-brief to close where they can share their thoughts and experiences if they wish.

Body Awareness Exercise

I want you to concentrate on your body now, I want you to feel completely relaxed, your body is relaxed. Now we're going to start with the feet, I want you to tense your feet hold and relax. Now we're moving up to the calf muscle, tense hold and relax. Now your upper legs tense hold and relax, now move up to your stomach tense, hold and relax. Now your chest tense, hold and relax. Now your hands tense, hold and relax, moving up your arm tense, hold and relax. Now your shoulders, tense, hold and relax, now your neck tense, hold and relax.

Relax your whole body; concentrate on how it feels lying on the floor, what parts of your body are touching the floor concentrate on those areas. Now relax, let your mind go blank.

Now move on to the visualisation exercise.

Visualisation Exercise – Homelessness

I want you to imagine that you are standing outside your front door and you are looking at your home. I want you to imagine that you are opening your front door and you are going into your house. You look around and you see all the things that are familiar to you.

Now I want you to walk to your bedroom, I want you to go into your room and look around. Your bed and other furniture, I want you to imagine your room exactly as it was when you left it today.

Imagine all the objects that you have around your room, maybe there are things that are very special to you, of sentimental value. Perhaps there are things you enjoy, CD's you listen to, a TV. Perhaps it's messy and you've left clothes on the floor, or it's neat and ordered. I want you to open draws and cupboards and look inside. Look at all the things you own.

I want you to stand back in the doorway and I just want you to look around your room, exactly as it is. What colour the walls are, what curtains are hanging up? Are there pictures on the wall, posters? What's on the surfaces, windowsills, table, desk? I want you to imagine all these things.

Now as you are standing there in the doorway you see that your things are starting to disappear. Slowly one by one all your items, all the things in your room disappear. Your bed and cupboards, clothes, the posters and pictures until all you have left are your favourite things they all go. Then your most prized and treasured item disappears, the room is now completely empty. There is nothing left it is completely empty.

I want you to shut your bedroom door and turn around and you find that the whole house is empty too. There are no people, no objects or things, it is completely stripped bare. Go through the house and out the front door. I want you to imagine you are standing outside your house looking back at it. What does it feel like to know that everything you own, everybody you know and you live with, or the things in your house suddenly are gone (pause). Everything is empty. (pause)

I want you to imagine that you have nowhere to go, there's no one you can ask for help or stay with. You are alone and you don't know what to do. I want you to sit down outside your house and think about what it feels like, what does it feel like to have lost your home and your family (pause).

Now I want you to stand up and turn around, I want you to open your front door and everything's returned to normal. It's exactly as you left it, your family are there and all your possessions. I want you to go back to your bedroom and open your door and everything is as you left it, everything is back. How does that feel? How does it feel to have everything you thought you had lost returned to you?

Do you feel relieved? Do you feel happy? Anxious? What does it make you feel about your possessions, your home? I want you to spend a few moments thinking about that. (pause).

Now I'm going to bring the visualisation to a close. When you feel ready open your eyes and sit up slowly.

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