

## **Stress Management and Mindfulness**

### *Guided Imagery – Nature – INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT*

Guided imagery is a calming technique that will help you focus on the present moment – what’s going on right now. This is an effective stress reduction technique, but it can also be used if you have trouble going to sleep or if you need to slow down from a busy day. Allow this practice to help you to focus and relax.

To get the most benefit from this mindful journey, find a quiet place where you know there will be no distractions. After you settle into a relaxed, comfortable position - seated, reclining or even lying down – begin to notice your breath, slowing it down and drawing your attention to its even flow.

If it’s comfortable for you, close your eyes and begin to tune into your imagination.

I’d like to take you down a path through a forest. The path may look familiar, or it might be someplace completely new to you.

Imagine that you are standing on the edge of a grassy clearing. A short distance away, you see a line of trees. As you walk toward the trees, you can discern a path. You walk across the grass and enter into the woods.

Rays of light pierce the trees, filtering through the leaves into a soft, diffuse light. You are surrounded by the sights and smells of the forest. So many shades and textures of green, from the leaves of the trees that surround you, to the moss, ferns and undergrowth. Enjoy the smell of the trees – leaves, bark & sap – and the smell of the forest floor – the rich earthy scent of the path. Hear the crunch of your footsteps as you step on small twigs and leaves. Listen to the birds singing. See the dust on your shoes. There is a sense of stillness in the forest, but you can feel life all around you.

You look up to see the upper canopy of the trees. It almost looks like a stained glass roof. Green leaves against blue sky and white clouds. The light is soft and glowing – gentle and soothing.

The path you are following winds gently down. You begin to hear the sound of flowing water. As you turn a corner, the landscape opens up and you see a stream. While walking toward the water, you notice a large rock you can sit on. The stone is smooth and warm.

You listen to the sounds of the stream, the constant rhythm of the water. You can see the rocks just under the surface. The water swirls around the stones.

You hear birds singing and enjoy observing the birds nesting in the trees. Feel the gentle breeze and hear the flutter of the leaves. You close your eyes and enjoy the sounds and the smells around you.

After you spend enough time enjoying your surroundings, you decide that you’re ready to leave. As you walk back, you recognize the landmarks on the path. Everything seems very familiar to you. You can see the bright opening of the path ahead. Before you leave, you stop and turn back, looking toward the forest one more time. You know that you can visit this special place any time you’d like.

You exit the forest and find yourself back in the open meadow. Opening your eyes, you notice that you are relaxed and refreshed.

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Bring your awareness back into the present moment. Take a deep breath and notice your surroundings - the sights, smells, temperature and sounds. Wiggle your fingers and toes. Choose the feeling that you'd like to bring with you as we conclude our guided imagery practice. Inhale deeply. Exhale fully.