

EMPATHY VISUALIZATION

Guided Visualization #1

1. **Relaxation:** Tell group, “Close your eyes, make yourself comfortable . . . Become aware of your breathing . . . Breathe deeply to a count of 4-2-4 [Inhale for 4 counts . . . hold for 2 counts and exhale for 4 counts] . . . Do this at your own pace . . . Be aware that you are breathing in relaxation and breathing out tension . . . Stay with this awareness of your in and out breath for awhile and experience yourself relaxing” . . . Say (slowly): “Now see yourself walking, there is no one else around, it is a warm, sunny day, you are feeling good. In the far distance, you see someone approaching with whom you have unfinished business or an unresolved conflict. Notice what your thoughts are, assumptions? . . . How do you feel? . . . As you come face to face, what do you say or do? . . . How does the other person respond? . . . You each continue on your way. Be aware of how you feel . . . When you are ready, return to the room and open your eyes.”
2. Put people in groups of three. For two minutes, each may share as she/he chooses: 1) what happened? and 2) how satisfied did you feel as you passed on? (Write these questions on newsprint for guidance of group in sharing.)

Stand in their Shoes

1. Pass out pencils/papers to participants.
2. Ask participants to think about the person from their visualization with whom they have unfinished business or an unresolved conflict. Tell those who didn't get a clear image in their visualization to think about someone with whom they have unfinished business or an unresolved conflict. [Give them a moment to come up with someone.]
3. [Have the following questions written on newsprint.] Tell the participants that when they are angry with someone, it is helpful to answer these three questions:
 - 1) What needs influence the other person to act this way?
 - 2) What beliefs or values influence the other person to act this way?
 - 3) What aspects of the other person's history [hurts, losses, successes, failures, rewards] influence this behavior?

Have participants copy these questions and then answer them as completely as possible. Instruct them that if they don't have all the information, to make up something that seems likely. Remind them that the purpose of this exercise is to explain the behavior they don't like from the other person's point of view. [Note: If some finish before others, ask them to sit in silence until the others are finished.]

4. After everyone finishes, have participants share in triads what this experience was like. [Give approximately 10 minutes for this.]

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Guided Visualization #2

1. **Relaxation:** Tell group, “Close your eyes, make yourself comfortable . . . Become aware of your breathing . . . Breathe deeply to a count of 4-2-4 [Inhale for 4 counts . . . hold for 2 counts and exhale for 4 counts] . . . Do this at your own pace . . . Be aware that you are breathing in relaxation and breathing out tension . . . Stay with this awareness of your in and out breath for awhile and experience yourself relaxing . . .”

2. [Read slowly with appropriate pauses.]

“You are walking alone on a warm, sunny day. You feel a slight breeze and a sense of calmness comes over you . . . As you continue your walk, you see a figure in the distance walking toward you . . . As the person gets closer, you realize that this is the person from your previous encounter . . .

“While they are still a distance away from you, practice looking at them with 'soft eyes' . . . Become aware of how this other person perceives, feels and wants differently from you . . . Become aware of a fear you have of this other person and how that affects your behavior . . . Realize there is something you want from this person . . .

“Now come face to face with this person and begin a dialogue with them . . . Start out by greeting them and telling them what they have done to cause you pain . . . State this as clearly and persuasively as you can . . .

“Now imagine yourself as the other person who has just received what you said about the pain they have caused you . . . Do your best to really become this person and try to see the situation from their point of view . . . Now as the other person, respond to the accusation and defend what they have done . . .

“After you have responded as the other person, return to yourself and the original feeling of anger or other feeling and tell them you have heard them and then expand on your original accusation and what you want from them . . . Say this firmly and respectfully with care . . .

“Once you have done this, return again and become that other person . . . Try to explain their position or viewpoint again . . . Respond as the other person defending what they have done . . . Try to truly feel what this person would feel in response to your accusations . . .

“Continue this dialogue between yourself and the other person until you both have truly expressed their feelings . . . Take some time to really hear what the other person says and try to understand the feelings behind their words . . .

“You are going to have to leave this person now . . . Your business with them is not finished, but say something to let them know they have been heard . . . Say your goodbyes and return to your walk along the path . . . Be aware of how you feel . . . observe any changes, any tension or lack of tension in different parts of your body . . . Feel the sun on your face and the gentle breeze . . . Walk a little further and when you are ready, return to the room and open your eyes.”

3. Return to the same group of 3 you were in after the first visualization. Talk about

- 1) what happened differently from the first visualization and
- 2) how you felt as you parted company this time.

Processing in Large Group

1. What was this experience like? How did you feel about this exercise? [What]
2. What did you learn from it? [So what]
3. How can you apply what you've learned? [Now what]