



Train Your Brain to Relax

Use the power of your memories to help lighten the time you spend on dialysis. Practice a few mental exercises to quickly improve your mood by returning your brain to a happier place.

Visualization is the ability for your brain to remember something pleasant. This could be the memory of a person, a pet, an object, an activity, or a place. You can use your own power of visualization by recalling pleasant memories to sooth your brain when you are in a bad mood, or upset, or stressed.

Try this exercise:

1. Find a place that has been calming and soothing to you, one where you can actually visit. This could be a landscape, lakefront, a park, or your own backyard.
2. While gazing at the place intently, spend 30 seconds or more committing the view to memory.
3. While still at the place, practice thinking of the image over and over again, in your mind.
4. Later, practice recalling this image when you are somewhere else. Practice this recalling exercise many times until you can bring up the calming scene to your mind whenever you try.
5. Finally, when you are feeling negative thoughts or emotions, close your eyes and remember the relaxing image you saved in your memory through visualization.

By practicing this exercise of visualization, you can save a soothing image in your brain whenever you find a new image that soothes you. With practice you can expand your images to include more relaxing places as you discover them, such as your pet, your child or grandchild.

Information for this visualization exercise was taken from *Using Visual Memories to Create an Inner Safe Base of Resilience* by Linda Graham, MFT. Graham is a licensed marriage and family therapist who specializes in helping people reverse the impact of stress and trauma, and to manage anxiety and depression. More about her work can be found at: lindagraham-mft.net/.

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