

Use Your Imagination to Unwind



Imagination can make a cloudy day sunny—and overpower stress. Here are three ways to create mental pictures that offset daily stressors.

Music.

Choose a recording you find soothing. Find a quiet, calming environment in which to listen to it. Feel yourself become part of this calming environment of sound, a physical extension of every note. If your thoughts stray, simply release them and refocus on the music. When the music ends, compare the way you feel to how you felt before listening to it. (You should feel more relaxed.)

Colors.

Imagine two colors, one (like bright red) representing tension, and the other (like pale blue) representing relaxation. Close your eyes and imagine that your muscles are the “tense” color. Then imagine each muscle changing to the “relaxation” color. End the exercise by imagining that your entire body is now a vivid hue of the relaxation color (like vivid blue), symbolizing complete relaxation.

Paint a picture.

If you have trouble visualizing abstract concepts like tension and relaxation, substitute concrete images that connote these feelings. Use symbols that can interact, like jagged rocks to symbolize tension and rolling waves to symbolize relaxation. Then imagine the waves slowly smoothing out the surface of the rocks. An alternative: Imagine warm sunlight (relaxation) gradually melting icicles (tension) until they disappear.