

A Restorative Walk Guided Imagery with Piano

Hello, I'm Claire Casselman of the Complementary Therapies Program of the University of Michigan's Comprehensive Cancer Center. Welcome to this podcast of guided imagery designed to assist you with managing the often stressful aspects of cancer diagnosis, treatment or life after treatment.

Whether you are a person with cancer, have been treated for cancer, or a friend or loved one of someone with cancer – you are aware that this time requires constant attention to the details of appointments, schedules, healthy eating, and maintaining family and work routines. More and more, research has shown the benefits of practices such as guided imagery to support a person's ability to cope, manage and heal. The good news is that you may choose when and where to use this very simple yet powerful, non-invasive strategy.

For more information about the benefits of guided imagery, how it works and tips for optimal use, please see the webpage.....

This particular imagery offers invitations to take a walk and enjoy the sensations of movement and a change in scenery. Dealing with illness, whether yours or the illness of a friend or loved one, can generate an intense awareness of our vulnerabilities or weaknesses. Sometimes we forget about our many strengths and competence and the many dimensions of our selves. This walk offers opportunities to “re-member” those qualities and aspects of ourselves that continue to support and serve us at these difficult times.

To start, find a comfortable position.....this may be sitting in a chair or lying on your back on the floor or a bed....see if you can align your head, neck and shoulders in a supportive fashion....

This is a time to be comfortable and refresh your mind and body. To begin become aware of your breathing. Notice your steady rate of inhaling and exhaling. With each breath, see if you can inch your breath lower and lower into your body....with each new breath, refreshing, life-giving air enters your body....as it circulates through your body, it gathers tension and fatigue that is released as you exhale.... Refreshing, cleansing breath in.....releasing, freeing breath out....peace and calm in.....stress, tension, anxiety out....in with comfort.....out with worry

If thoughts are competing for your attention, or if emotions surface, simply allow them to pass through....there's no need to engage or interpret....like bubbles in a glass ..just watch as thoughts or feelings bubble up and are released.....

Feel your chest becoming more soft and open....feel the calm and quiet with each new breath....you are making room, space within yourself.....space into which you can simply unwind....comfortable, worry-free softness for yourself....

As you continue to breathe in an easy and deep manner, notice any places in your body where you may hold tension or tightness.....send soothing, fresh air to those places.....gently, easily, send your warm, comforting breath into those spots...watch as it arrives, surrounds, loosens and releases the discomfort....simply carried away as you exhale.....you may find that two or three breaths will further release and carry away any discomfort.

You are comfortable...aware...softly focused....

And in this comfortable, easy state, you notice that you've begun to walk....a gentle, easy walk perhaps it's the first time you've taken a walk in a very long time.....you may not have had time or ability to walk recently, but your memory of moving and walking is serving you well as you take this stroll....Perhaps the path you're walking is familiar....perhaps it's new....

Notice your surroundings. You may be walking through a wooded or shaded area, perhaps an open area. Take note of the light. See, too, the vegetation....any flowers, trees, grasses -- or a sandy path along a beach....you are safe on this walk....free from any discomforts or harm...you're simply taking a walk....with no worries. The temperature is comfortable, you are moving easily.

With each step, any weariness or worry fades...with each step, any load is lightening.....with each step you are lighter, walking more easily, moving more freely. Notice the sensations of your arms slightly swaying at your side.....the gentle rhythm of your walkyour breath is easy and flowing.....

Feel the ground beneath you.....perhaps you're aware of the solid support of a road or path.....the softness of sand or earth beneath you feet and toes.....a breeze on your face or hands.....notice the fragrances or aromas along the way...the colors, the sensations of your surroundings...of your walk.

Sense the expectation in the air...you know that something special awaits you up ahead.....this walk leads to a treat for you....

The path, road or trail comes around a bend.....you have arrived at a clearing a wide, inviting spot....this place is safe, protected.....a place of peace and restoration. Perhaps you're in a meadow, or near a stream....maybe a pier. Allow yourself to see this place....the colors.....hear the sounds.....the smells/aromas.....the sensations.

Notice a place for you to sit or recline....You're absorbing the beauty, peace and power of this place.....this place to which you've brought yourself for your well-being and replenishment.

Perhaps you're aware of a very slight vibration throughout your body...the life-giving energy of this place....You are supported....you are safe.....you are free...allow the

gentle vibration here to comfort you.... the peace of this place to surround you.... the light to bathe you.....

Recognize the sense of ease and openness here....it may have been a long time since you've felt this.....Maybe your focus has been on appointments or decision-making or things that require your full attention and energy. In this moment, now, you are free to turn your attention to your well-being.....

Allow this "reunion" of all of who you are....you have been working hard and have been weary or worried...or disconnected from all but the most urgent.....In this moment, notice the connection or re-connection with yourself....the calm, the peace, the easiness.....

This "reunion" of all of who you are.....perhaps relaxing, fun or invigorating activities have been put on hold.... In this moment, see yourself enjoying those things.....perhaps you see yourself as artist, writer, cook, baker, musician.....a reader, a contemplator, a woodworker, an athlete....a sailor, a story-teller, a comedian.....or any other.....You're aware of the connection to the you that has perhaps been too busy to find expression.....the you that you love and cultivate....nourish and unleash...

Notice the sensations of these meaningful and fun activities. You are one who soars and centers...creates and contemplates....laughs and eats....who gives and receives.....who calms Notice this connection, this re-connection....your total being.... experience these reminders of your total being.

Feel the gentle warmth of the light....the gentle movement of the breeze as you remember your self....your multi-dimensional, loving and loveable self.....

You may make the trip to this place at any time you choose. You carry this special, restorative spot within yourself at all times. It is available at any time you choose.... Your mind and body will bring you here at your request.

Take your re-remembered, re-connected self with you from this place as you begin the brief trip back. For now, take one more look around at your lovely place of rejuvenation.....the sights....the sounds.....the aromas.....the sensations.....Perhaps there's something about this experience for which you're grateful. If so, simply take note and tuck it away for later. It will come to you when you want it or need it.

For now, begin to make your way back to this time and place. Feel yourself making the walk.....the rhythm of your walk, the ease of your way.....you know your wholeness is enriched with each trip to this special place.

And now, find yourself once again in your chair or lying on the floor or bed. You may want to wiggle your toes and fingers to find yourself here. And when you are ready, refreshed and re-connected, you are here.

