

Guided Visualization in Schools



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Today's Goal:

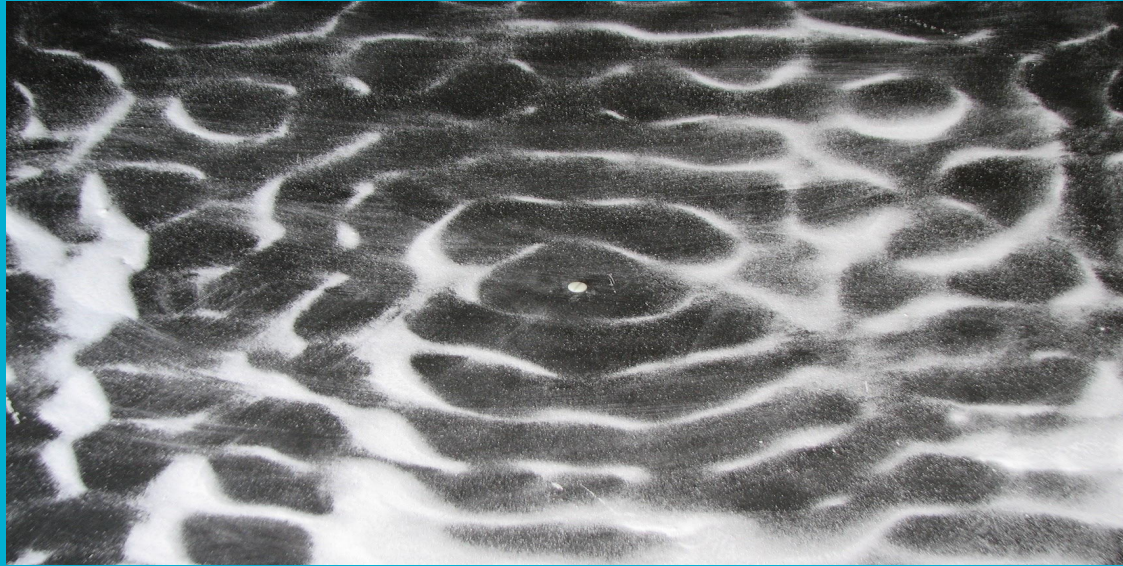
Exploring the use of guided imagery in all tiers of school counseling intervention



Knowledge check

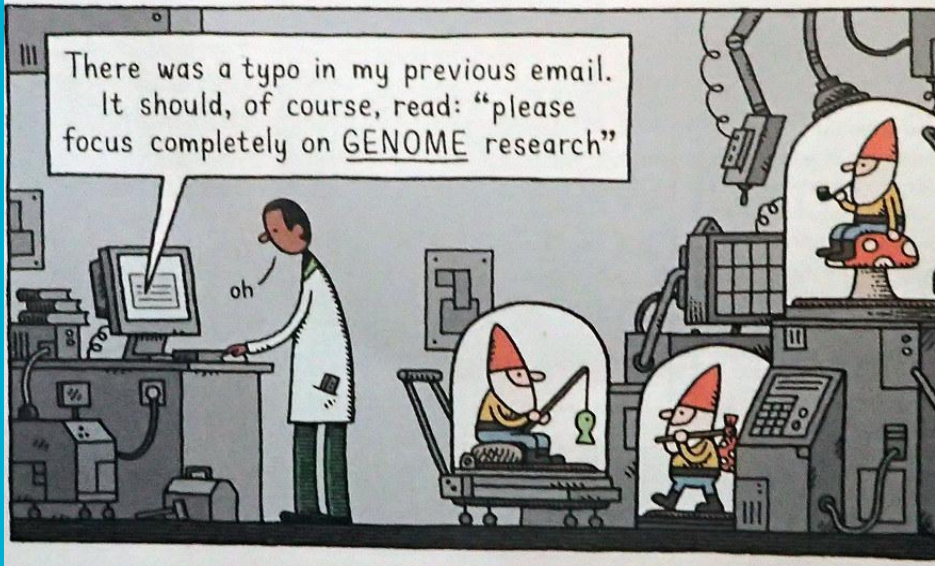


Single Tree visualization



The Why





Science Time!!!

Benefits of Nature- Based Imagery

- Guided Imagery in general is proven effective in reducing test anxiety and stress, and increasing problem solving abilities and attention control.
- Guided imagery is especially helpful for students who struggle to regulate thoughts and need structure practice in order to calm themselves. (
- Nature-based guided imagery (NBGI) is more effective at reducing anxiety symptoms than other guided imagery options.
- NBGI is accessible regardless of location or weather.
- NBGI may be more effective in anxiety reduction than actual nature experiences due to the absence of unpleasant sensations.
- Imagery impacts “perceptually based emotions” more than language.

(Nguyen, J., & Brymer, E., 2018)

Note: For 1:1 or small group work, consider assessing a student’s [Vividness of Visual Imagery](#) and [Connectedness to Nature](#)

Specific Conditions That Respond Well to Mindfulness Practice

- Inattention
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Restlessness
- General Anxiety

There is less consistent evidence that mindfulness impacts ratings for ODD, Shyness, Perfectionism, or Anti-social behavior

Elements of Guided Visualization

Physical:

- Sitting or lying down
- Eyes closed or soft gaze
- Quiet location
- Relax the muscles

Mental:

- Relax the mind
- Imagine a peaceful outdoor space
- Making the place special and protected.
- Having a guide or symbols that offer guidance.

Three Types of Visualization

1. **Receptive**- “Allows unconscious images and thoughts to surface” (Skeens, 2017, p. 95).
2. **Programmed**- a regimented practice where the person interacts with their subconscious in order to reach a goal, such as improving their golf swing. to cease smoking, or to fight cancer cells. (Skeens, 2017)
3. **Guided**- “a combination of receptive and programmed visualization” (Skeens, 2017, p. 95). It is a programmed experience that allows for images, sensory experiences, energy shifts, and thoughts to arise front he subconscious.

Elements of a “Special Place”

- A ritual of “arriving”
- Private entry, no one else can get in
- Comfortable and safe
- Contains an inner guide or symbols that have deep meaning

(Davis, M., Eshelman, E. R., & McKay, M., 2008).



The Inner Guide

While some students may find a religious or deeply spiritual guide, the idea is to access subconscious wisdom.

Inner guides can look scary, strange, or unexpected.

Inner guides might not speak. Their message may be given in symbols, gestures, energy, or silence.



Lets try it!



Follow up:

1. **Draw or write about your guide.**
You can add other elements of your experience that stood out to you.

If you are someone that finds visualization difficult, creatively draw or write about your experience during the meditation.

2. **In pairs or small groups, share some details of your experience.**



Potential Spiritual Nature of Guided Visualization

Pros:

- Many mental health models include the soul or the higher self as an important aspect of healing.
- Allows for internal sense of self.
- Allows for purpose be a personal journey.
- A connection to a spiritual self can increase confidence, stability, balance, and social connection. .

Cons:

- Any spiritual context, intended or not, can cause conflict with home belief systems.
- Students with conditions that cause paranoia or hallucinations may be triggered by the spiritual context.
- Students who have a traumatic experience with spirituality or religion may experience PTSD.

Simple “Images” to Build Visualization Skills



- Color (lighter, darker, turning from one color to another)
- Animal sounds that the student is familiar with
- Water sounds (rain, ocean, river)
- Light (brighter, darker, warmer)
- Nature smells (ocean, wet leaves)
- A rock softening into sand
- A scared cat relaxing and going to sleep
- A loud “caw” fading as the bird flies away.

(Davis, M., Eshelman, E. R., & McKay, M., 2008)

Activities to Improve Visualization Ability

1. Imagine object, draw it, observe real object, draw it again.
2. Draw a person you like while thinking positive thoughts about them while sending them good wishes.
3. Imagine breath as a balloon inflating and deflating.

(Crescentini, C., Capurso, V., Furlan, S., & Fabbro, F., 2016).



Let's try one:

1. Choose on object in the room.
2. Either draw or imagine the object with your eyes closed.
3. Observe the real object, taking in as many details as possible.
4. Either draw or imagine the object again.

Adapting to Small Groups: Target Specific Needs

The Self Esteem Companion is a great book for deeper work with small groups.

- Anchoring to good times- Dealing with Emotional or Physical Pain
- Treasure chest visualization- Challenging low self esteem
- Revisioning your infancy- Using Internal Family System visualization to wrap around feelings of overwhelm and insecurity.

Small groups are a great time to incorporate art projects or discussion to process the experience.

(McKay, M., & Fanning, P., 2016)

Rational Emotive Imagery: For 1:1 Intervention

1. Imagine the stressful event in as much detail as possible using all the senses.
2. Feel the emotional reaction deeply (ex Anger)
3. Ask yourself what deeper emotions might you be feeling (ex embarrassment, regret)
4. Notice any thoughts that pop up when the emotions transition, especially any helpful thoughts.
5. Say to yourself “I’ve successfully dealt with a strong emotion.”
6. Notice any images or feeling that come up when you feel successful

This can be paired with a tracking sheet, so that the student can track: The situation, the strong emotion, what the emotion transitioned into. The goal is to relieve emotional intensity and reinforce an internal locus of control.

For Young Children (PreK-2)

“Keep it simple.

Keep it fun.

Keep your sense of humor”

(Kaiser Greenland, 2010, p. 46).

- Use props sparingly and thoughtfully
- Start small (1 image for 30 seconds)
- Allow and build in movement related to the visualization
- Don't worry about symbols and inner guides.
- Music can be helpful



Build a Mindfulness Practice Using Videos.

- [Youtube: Relaxing Music Kiboomers](#)
- [Youtube: Yoga time Jungle Safari](#)
- [Youtube: Be the Pond](#)
- [Youtube: Cosmic Kids Balloon](#)
- [Youtube: Rainbow Relaxation](#)



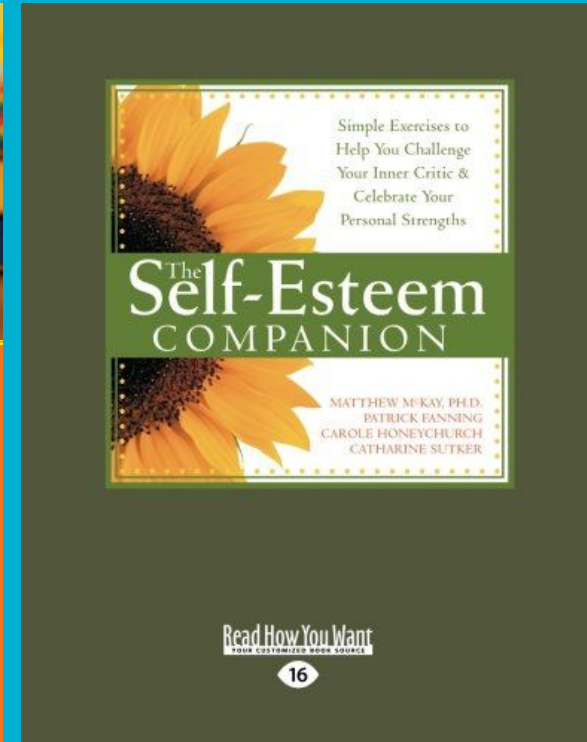
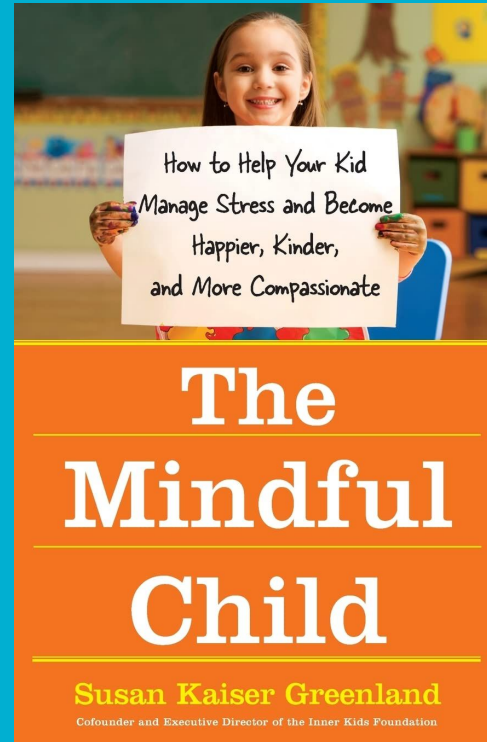
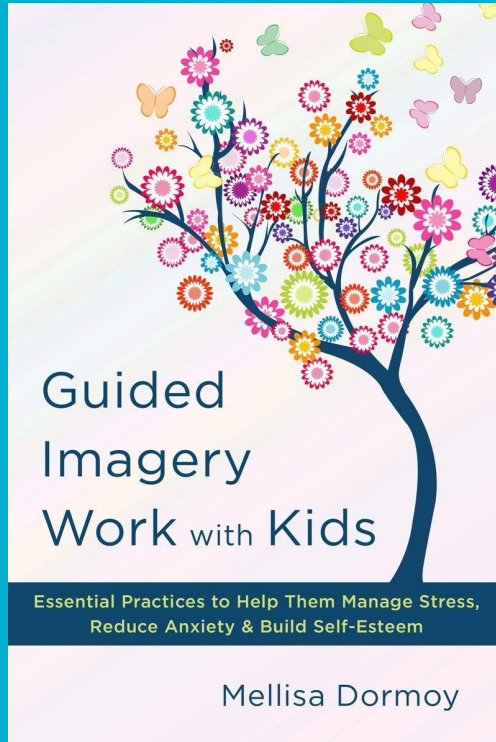
Activity: Bubbles in Space

Adapted from *The Mindful Child* (Kaiser Greenland, S., p 82-83)

Journal Article: “Guided Imagery: A Technique to Benefit Youth at Risk” article has an appendix with many Guided Imagery Scripts and Exercises.

<https://www.choc.org/programs-services/integrative-health/guided-imagery/>

Additional Resources



- Amjadi K. (2021). Exploring Factors That Influence Children's Growth and Development During a Pandemic. *Global pediatric health*, 8, 2333794X211042464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2333794X211042464>
- Crescentini, C., Capurso, V., Furlan, S., & Fabbro, F. (2016). Mindfulness-Oriented Meditation for Primary School Children: Effects on Attention and Psychological Well-Being. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, 805. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00805>
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