

Grief

Welcome to this healthy living to go podcast from Kaiser Permanente. Designed to fit the way you live and the way you learn. Listen, live well and thrive.

[Music]

I'm Belleruth Naparstek, and this is guided imagery designed to help people with grief. More and more people find that using guided imagery in difficult circumstances helps them to relax, feel stronger and work through painful emotions. In fact, recent research has shown that using imagery can produce some remarkable changes. It can alleviate pain. Reduce depression. And boost the immune system to name just a few. The program weaves several kinds of healing principles into the story it tells. It begins by helping you to relax and clear the mind. Then it calls upon your senses and memory to engage your imagination. And, finally, it encourages you to experience a story that contains many healing images. Some of these images are physical. Others are psychological and emotional. And some you could even call spiritual. You may find that, as you use this over time, it has a stronger and stronger effect. As with other things, your capacity to respond will increase with repetition. It's likely that this will bring forth some fairly strong emotion. See if you can just allow the feelings to come up and move through you. Seeing it as a necessary kind of rinsing that's taking place. It won't hurt you to do this. And, in fact, it can help your healing a lot. Some people worry that they won't be able to stand their feelings if they let them come up because they're so intense. People who feel this way tend to do a lot of running from their feelings, which in and of itself can be exhausting. And grief is one of those things that can't be gotten around, only through. So see if you can try to stay soft and open to all of your emotions. Breathing deeply and fully if it should seem to become too painful to bear. Over time, and maybe even right away, you'll feel better for it. Don't feel you have to follow this exactly as is. You may want to stop and linger over some especially meaningful images and ignore the rest. Or you may find yourself rearranging a word or phrase that just doesn't suit you. Feel free to let your mind edit as it sees fit. It probably will anyway. And because there are many right ways to do this, you can trust your own intuition and intelligence to be your best guide. Sometimes people will hear something for the first time after weeks of regular listening. Trust your mind to notice what it needs to hear. And that can change from week to week or even day to day. People sometimes worry that they're not listening attentively enough. Or that they're not experiencing the imagery correctly. The truth is you'll probably go in and out of paying attention because of the dreamy state you're likely to be in. Some people even fall asleep the first few times. Because they're not used to being both relaxed and conscious. But over time the words and images that are good for you will seep into your awareness. Should you notice your mind wandering, you can gently guide it back. And because this deliberately encourages this dreamy kind of mind state, please don't play it while driving. The second segment has affirmations. These are positive statements that can be very useful in the healing process. A sort of reprogramming of your unconscious mind to combat negative thinking. For some, affirmations are more effective than guided imagery. With

any of this, take what is useful and leave the rest. If there is an image or a statement that is especially meaningful to you, try to briefly play it over in your mind several times a day. When you brush your teeth or stop for a red light. Or even better, just as you enter that twilight zone just before falling asleep, an especially powerful time to do this. Listen as often as you like. Most people do well listening twice a day, morning and evening. After several weeks, you may want to put it aside for a while, try some others. And then go back to it. And every now and then you may want to review these instructions as a way of keeping yourself on track. So see if you can take this next while to commit yourself to this process of engaging the power of your imagination to help you heal. By gently immersing yourself in this safe and easy process.

[Music]

To begin with, see if you can position yourself as comfortably as you can, shifting your weight so you're allowing your body to be fully supported by your chair or bed or whatever is supporting you. Try to arrange it so your head, neck, and spine are straight, and taking a couple of deep, full, cleansing breaths, inhaling as fully as you comfortably can, deep into the chest if you can.

[Music]

And again.

[Music]

And now, breathing deep into the belly, if you can.

[Music]

And again.

[Music]

And now, seeing if you can send the warm energy of your breath to any part of your body that's sore or tense or tight and releasing the discomfort with the exhale so you can feel your breath going to all the tight tense places, loosening and softening them. And then, gathering up all the tension and exhaling it so that more and more, you can feel safe and comfortable, relaxed, and easy, watching the cleansing action of the breath with friendly but detached awareness.

[Music]

And any unwelcome thoughts that come to mind, those, too, can be sent out with the breath, released with the exhale, so that for just a moment, the mind is empty, for just a split second, it is free and clear space and you are blessed with stillness.

[Music]

And any emotions that are rocking around in there, those, too, are noted and acknowledged and sent out with the breath so your emotional self is still and quiet, like a lake with no ripples.

[Music]

And now, imagining a place where you feel safe and peaceful and easy, a place either real or imaginary, a place you've been to or somewhere you've always wanted to be. Doesn't matter. Just so it's a place that feels good and safe and peaceful to you.

[Music]

And allowing the place to become more real to you in all of its dimensions, looking around you, taking the place in with your eyes, enjoying the colors, the scenery. Looking over to your right and over to your left.

[Music]

And feeling whatever you're sitting against or lying upon, whether it's sand or grass, a pine needly forest floor, a cozy armchair, or a nice warm rock in the sun.

[Music]

And listening to the sounds of the place, birds singing or leaves rustling, wind or music, a crackling fire or crashing waves. Just so your ears can become attuned to the wonderful sounds of this place that is so safe and peaceful to you.

[Music]

You might feel a breeze blowing, crisp and dry, or balmy and wet, or the warmth of a cozy fire on your face and hands. So just letting your skin enjoy the wonderful presence of this place.

[Music]

And smelling its rich fragrance, whether it's the soft scent of flowers or salt sea air, sweet meadow grass.

[Music]

And as you become more and more attuned to the safety and beauty of this place, feeling thankful and happy to be there, you begin to feel a kind of tingling, a pleasant energizing something in the air all around you. Something that contains expectancy and excitement. A sense that something wonderful is just about to happen. And you may even smile to yourself because perhaps you haven't had that feeling in a while. But now, you do know with some certainty that there is magic in this place and something wonderful is just about to happen.

[Music]

And as that certainty settles around you, you notice that the tingling is taking on a kind of a glow. That the air is alive with vibrant energy.

[Music]

And from somewhere above you, a powerful white light is softly and steadily moving down, forming a tent of tingling energy all around you, surrounding and protecting you, illuminating everything it touches with exquisite brightness, high-lit definition, vibrating color, giving everything it shines on a fresh new beauty.

[Music]

You can feel the air around you intensifying, glowing, dancing with sparkling energy. And with a sense of gentle wonder for such stunning beauty, you feel the warm energy of the light moving down into your body, softly entering your head and neck, filling your shoulders and your chest, gently penetrating into the tightness around the heart, soft and easy, massaging and opening. Steadily surrounding and softening and soothing the pain deep in the heart.

[Music]

And continuing down the spine, filling your back and torso, penetrating into the layers of tissue, deeper and deeper. Slowly and steadily moving into every organ, cleansing and clearing. Sending a warm vibrating softness into any heaviness or tightness in the belly. Gently massaging and opening, filling it with powerful reassuring softness, and moving down into your legs and filling your feet, all the way to the tips of your toes.

[Music]

So just letting yourself feel the vibrant healing energy of the light working its magic deep inside your body, moving with deliberate intelligence to the deepest places where pain is stored and feeling the spaces begin to open up as you breathe into them, fully and deeply, sensing the beginnings of their softening, the beginning of the heaviness starting to lift.

[Music]

You suddenly realize you're not alone, that you can sense a warm presence all around you, and looking around, surprised but not surprised, you see that you are surrounded by gentle loving beings immediately recognizable as allies, smiling and nodding in the soft beauty of the light, warming you with their protective presence.

[Music]

One of them softly approaches you and with a deep gentle look directly into your eyes gently touches the center of your chest with a warm gentle hand, sending comfort and solace deep into your heart. Soft waves of nourishing loving comfort right into the heaviness of your heart.

[Music]

Soothing the torn jagged places, warming and softening all around the pain. And you can breathe more deeply, filling your whole body with this generous healing energy, perhaps letting the tears begin to melt the armor around the heart as the kind eyes gently looking at you nod and smile, showing you that it is understood how much hurting you have done. The stony cold aloneness you have felt. The wordless ache of longing. The stinging regret.

[Music]

The disappointment of interrupted dreams. The pain is understood, breathtakingly intense at one moment and heavy and dull the next. It is understood. All the fear, the anger, the pain. All of it is understood.

[Music]

You feel the warmth begin to collect and radiate through your entire chest, sending compassion and forgiveness and reassurance to every corner of your being. Soft and easy, reach and full as you breathe into the opening spaces of your heart, softened by the gentle warmth of the healing hand.

[Music]

And suddenly, you are certain, you know with your whole heart, with your whole being, that there is a place where nothing is lost, where all the love and sweetness, direct or disguised, that ever passed between you is still alive. That all the love you have ever felt for anyone at any time is alive and well in the vast richness of your heart, placed there forever, rich and nourishing and boundless, forever available to sustain and nourish you whenever you need it. Breathing in to touch it, breathing out to let it move through you. Feeling the body soften, release, and replenish. Sending a gentle healing forgiveness all through you, a new compassion for yourself, a fresh way of looking.

[Music]

You understand that you are being shown that even this terrible pain might be a teacher showing you something you need to know about yourself, about who you are, who you are becoming. You understand that even this will look different to you in time, when you know more about who you have become, when you are connected to your life in a new way and the pain has permanently softened. When this, too, has become part of the depth and richness of the texture of your being.

[Music]

You see in the deep gentle warmth of the eyes that look at you that it is understood that you have seen this, that you have had a glimpse of your own healing, that nothing has been lost to the vastness of the heart. The whole world spins there. And so, you can begin to return to the peaceful stillness at your center, breathing in the gentle soft compassion for yourself and others that resides in the wide spaces of your own open heart.

[Music]

And as your gentle band of allies smiles and nods, your special one says to you remember, we are always here. It is you who come and go. Call for us any time and we will come. And gathering up a handful of the glowing vibrating light, places it in your heart for safekeeping. Your own special supply to use as needed. And so, feeling peaceful and easy, you watch as the light slowly begins to withdraw, returning to wherever it came from until it is gone altogether for now, knowing it is yours to call forth again whenever you wish. And taking a deep full breath, feeling the widened spaces that are now opened, you once again see yourself in your safe and peaceful special surroundings, feeling relaxed and safe and easy, although perhaps the colors around you are brighter, the air more alive. You might feel that something powerful has happened, that a major shift has occurred and will continue to occur with or without your conscience working on it. And you see very clearly that you can call forth this place, the powerful healing light, the special ones, whenever you wish to further the work you have already done. And so, feeling yourself sitting in your chair or lying down, breathing in and out very rhythmically and easily, gently and with soft eyes, coming back into the room whenever you are ready. Knowing in a deep place that you have done important healing work, that you are better for this. And so, you are.

[Music]

Affirmations are positive statements designed to counter negative thinking that you may have. See if you can listen to each statement, take it in, and maybe even repeat it to yourself. For some, affirmations are more effective than guided imagery. So once again, taking a couple of deep full cleansing breaths, see if you can settle in comfortably and just let yourself absorb what you are about to hear.

[Music]

I know there are times when I become frightened, despairing, angry, regretful, or sad. And I accept what I feel as my inner truth of the moment.

[Music]

I know that when I can accept and allow what I feel without criticism or blame the more I can let myself heal.

[Music]

More and more I can open to the times when pain and grief wash through me like a huge wave instead of trying to resist.

[Music]

More and more I can soften around my feelings and release them, breathing in to soften them, and breathing out to let them go.

[Music]

I know that when I can soften toward myself, when I can accept myself without criticism or blame, I allow myself to heal.

[Music]

More and more I can let my heart stay soft and open, even in the face of this pain, in the interest of my own well-being.

[Music]

I know that when I send the gentle warmth of the breath into the tightness around my heart I allow myself to heal.

[Music]

More and more I see that when I can soften and let go of harsh expectations, unrealistic demands on myself and others, I allow myself to heal.

[Music]

I know that when I forgive myself and others for errors of the past I allow myself to heal.

[Music]

More and more I can love and appreciate myself, take time to care for myself, and stick up for myself.

[Music]

More and more I know that even in this vulnerable time I am able to appreciate my body, stay conscious of it, and look after it.

[Music]

I call upon my intention to maintain good health and recover my sense of wellbeing. I engage my powerful will to assist me in doing this.

[Music]

I call upon my memory to gather and store everything worth remembering for my future sustenance and guidance.

[Music]

I call upon my dreams to bring me what I need to heal as I lay sleeping.

[Music]

I invite assistance from my friends and loved ones, past, present, and future, to lend me their support and strength. I see myself surrounded by their love and caring, and I feel it all over my body like a warm wave.

[Music]

I thank my own courage, strength, and resourcefulness, and salute my willingness to learn and change and grow through these difficult circumstances.

[Music]

More and more I know that even this terrible pain can be a good teacher.

[Music]

I can see and feel radiant sunlight entering and warming my body, sending comfort and solace deep into my heart.

[Music]

I can see a magical blue-green wave of pure healing washing through my body from head to toe, clearing away any unwanted debris and taking it out with the tide.

[Music]

More and more I can see that releasing and letting go of this grief is neither abandonment nor betrayal. It is simply holding my love in a different way.

[Music]

More and more I know that there is a place where nothing is lost.

[Music]

More and more I know that all the love I have ever felt is alive and well in the vast richness of my own heart.

[Music]

More and more I know that this pain will permanently soften, that it will add to my wisdom and compassion.

[Music]

More and more I can return to the peaceful stillness at my center.

[Music]

I know that I have things to do, gifts to give, purposes to accomplish. I require my strength and health and peace of mind for this.

[Music]

I know that I will move away from despair when I rediscover the joy in living and that the timing of this will be exactly as it should be.

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I know that I will move away from despair when I rediscover the joy in living, and that the timing of this will be exactly as it should be.

[Music]

More and more, I know that I am perfectly, utterly safe.

[Music]