PARENT HANDOUT:

GUIDED IMAGERY

Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™



Anxiety Skill 2

WHAT IS GUIDED IMAGERY?

- Relaxation skills are ways to help relax our bodies and minds and increase feelings of calm and well-being.
- Our guide includes three different types of relaxation skills that can help your child and family. This handout provides an introduction to a skill called guided imagery.
- Guided imagery involves imagining a calm image or scene using all 5 senses (i.e., sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell), sometimes with the help of a script or recording.
- Try some of our strategies below and see if they help your child feel calmer, more relaxed, and more in control.

HERE'S HOW TO USE GUIDED IMAGERY AT HOME

- Making relaxation a family activity can help your child feel more comfortable and use their relaxation skills more consistently. Pick a time when family members can practice together (e.g., before saying goodnight and getting ready for bed).
- To set an example, you can point out to your child times when you can use guided imagery in your own life to feelbetter (e.g., "What a busy day! I need to take a mini vacation to my relaxing place!").
- If you notice your child looking anxious before or during an activity, you can also suggest they try guided imagery to see if it makes them feel better.

GUIDED IMAGERY PRACTICE

Guided Imagery Script

"Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. I want you to use your imagination to go on a vacation in your mind. Think of a calm and peaceful place. It can be some place you have been before or some place you would like to go. The place doesn't even have to be real; it can be imaginary. Spend a few moments picturing your peaceful place. Now think about the things you ***see*** in your special place. Notice the colors, shapes, and patterns. Think about how peaceful it is to see the details of your special place. Now think about the things you ***hear*** in your peaceful place. Is there music, animal sounds, or ocean waves? Or maybe you hear something different. Now think about the things you ***feel*** in your calm place. Warm sunshine on your face, grass under your feet, or something else? Notice how these feelings help you relax. Now think about what you ***smell*** in your relaxing place. The salty ocean, cookies baking, or something else? Take a deep breath of the amazing smells. Now think about what you ***taste*** in your calm place. A popsicle? Or a fresh cookie? Or something else? Think about how good it tastes. You can always take a trip back to your relaxing place if you need to feel calm. This is a tool you can always use to feel better. When you are ready, you can open your eyes."

Mini Vacation

Once you have practiced with the script above, encourage your child to close their eyes briefly and go on a mini vacation to their calm place when they feel tense or down.

5-4-3-2-1 Relaxation

Help your child relax at any time by prompting them to notice 5 things they see, 4 things they feel, 3 things they hear, 2 things they smell, and 1 thing they taste. This technique is a **grounding exercise** and can help your child feel better in challenging moments. Here's an example of using this in the kitchen: "I see my plate, the table, my sister sitting across from me, the clock, and the wall. I feel the chair, the floor, the table, and the warmth from the heater. I hear water running in the sink, water boiling on the stove, and my sister's voice. I smell cookies in the oven and the pasta I am eating. I taste the pasta."