

# Imaginary Safe-Place

In times like these you might feel more anxious or restless than usual. In order to help yourself, you can activate an important resource that you have with you all the time: your own imagination. Imagination exercises are used in psychotherapy, but also as a technique to relax or as a method to boost your energy. There are a number of detailed imagination exercises like “Your Inner Child”, “The Inner Observer” and many more. In this leaflet we will briefly describe the “Safe-Place” exercise.

## How does it work?

- This method is not recommended for people with a tendency to dissociate or with acute psychosis.
  - When used for therapy, a therapist will guide you through imagination exercises. However, when using this method as a way to relax or energise yourself, you can also use imagination exercises on your own.
  - If desired, you can also listen to relaxing instrumental music.
  - You can create the imagery of the “inner safe place” with the VAGOK-scheme.
  - You can establish your own personal “expressway” to get there very fast by linking the safe place imagination to a symbolic image or action: imagine a combination lock, a key to your safe place, or use a “magic” gesture etc.
  - You are the only person in your safe place - this place is only yours!
- Do you hear birds? Or maybe sea waves? Or are you enjoying a peaceful silence?
  - Are you drinking or eating something there? How does it taste? If you are at the beach maybe you can taste the salty air
  - What can you smell?
  - Remember you can adjust everything according to your wishes, everything is possible as long as you feel relaxed, calm, happy, safe, energised.
  - Are you walking, swimming, (sun)bathing, standing, lying on a lounge chair?
  - When your safe place is exactly how you want it, take a moment and just enjoy, relax, get your strength from it.
  - Take your time.
  - Remember that you have an expressway to come here anytime you want.
  - Come back to where you are sitting or lying in the room.
  - Take some deep breaths, reorient yourself, maybe stretch a bit, stand up.
  - Once you are fully “back” in the room enjoy the positive feelings in your mind and body.

## VAGOK – 5 senses to guide you

- Visual: what can you see?
- Acoustic: what can you hear?
- Gustatory: what can you taste?
- Olfactory: what can you smell?
- Kinaesthetic touch: what can you feel on your skin (this is called tactile sense in medicine and biology)

## Safe Place – Step by Step

- Sit or lie comfortably.
- Firstly, try to get a clear picture of your “safe place”.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Relax your whole body.
- Close your eyes or fixate a point in the room.
- Use your personal expressway to get there.
- Explore your safe place with the VAGOK-scheme and design the place however you like.
- Are you seeing palm trees, flowers, meadows, mountains or a lake, a sea, a beach, a forest?
- Can you feel the sand touching your toes? What season is it? Is it sunny? Do you feel the sun caressing your skin? Is it winter? Do you enjoy the blinking snow and the fresh air? Is the temperature okay? You can make all the adjustments you need or want.

## References and Resources

- [Video](#) (external link) with a guided exercise (German).
- [Exercise](#) from a private UK-based self-help website (English).

### Further references/media:

- Reddemann, L. (2016). *Imagination als heilsame Kraft: Ressourcen und Mitgefühl in der Behandlung von Traumafolgen* (21. Auflage). Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta
- Reddemann, L. (2004). *Dem inneren Kind begegnen* (Hör-CD). Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta
- Reddemann, L. (2003). *Imagination als heilsame Kraft* (Hör-CD). Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta

## Any Questions?

If you have further questions, please see the contact details for mental health support that are listed in our leaflet „[Mental Health Support](#)“, as well as the references and links in this document. Please note that while we select links to external websites carefully, we cannot guarantee for the accuracy or quality of these websites.

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