



Caregiver Support Line – Relaxation Activity Transcript

Theme: Beach

Each day you give the precious gift of care and support to your Veteran loved one. We recognize the value of what you give and the sacrifices you make and want to express our appreciation to you. This brief meditation exercise offers you the chance to take a few minutes out of your routine to help you find restoration and strength.

Visualization meditation can be an extremely valuable tool to help you relax, renew, and empower yourself. Caring for a loved one can drain your energy and keep your focus outside of yourself. Your Veteran loved one may have many needs, and you want to provide the very best care. But if you stop and think about it, when was the last time you focused on your feelings, physical health, needs and dreams? Using a simple visualization story can help you take some control in a life situation that may often feel out of your control.

Visualization is something your brain does every day to solve problems. For example, if you become hungry you might think about the food you have in your refrigerator and how you will prepare it. You might think about your next trip to the store and what foods you will buy to prepare the meal you want. Maybe you will think about which restaurants are nearby and which one you will visit, how you will get there, and what food you will order. Your brain naturally visualizes or thinks through the ways to satisfy this problem of your hunger.

When you are overly stressed, tired and overwhelmed, you can use visualization meditation to take a break and renew yourself. As an example, let's take a short trip to the beach today to help you unwind from your daily cares and all of your responsibilities.

Find a comfortable place to relax and shut out all the worries of the day. Your focus will leave the worries about what has happened so far today and what tasks you still have ahead of you. For these few moments, find a comfortable, quiet place to sit. If you are able, close your eyes, as if drawing a curtain to separate you from your cares.

You are on your way to the beach. You may be reviewing your "to do" list in your mind, thinking of all that has to be done when you get home. You may have a headache, muscle pain or stiff joints from all the stress you have been under lately, but you can't help feeling a little excited about the time ahead. You glance in your rear view mirror



and see your house getting smaller as you drive away. You have a sense of peace that all will be well while you are away.

The blue sea in the distance seems to beckon you to come closer. A few turns and stretches of highway and you arrive. You pull into the parking lot, find a space, put on the brakes and turn off the car engine. You stop for a moment as if to say one last goodbye to your cares. You step out and move toward the beach. You feel the cool breeze off the water as it glides over your face, making your hair dance and flutter. Slowly, you breathe in the fresh air and let it slowly flow out along with your cares.

You take that first step onto the sand and feel it yield beneath your feet. You slip your shoes off and feel the warmth of the sand cradling your feet with each step you take. It wiggles between your toes and you feel as carefree as a child.

You shake your blanket and the breeze helps you by blowing it out straight so you can spread it over the sand. You lie down on your blanket and gently adjust your body to find just the right position to feel completely comfortable. The sand seems to give way under your blanket and it molds to fit your body.

The sun beams down on you. You can feel its warmth on your face. It wraps your tired muscles in a blanket of warmth. Any stiffness and pain melts like snow in the spring. It flows into the sand beneath you and disappears.

You hear the splash of the waves rolling onto the beach, a brief pause, and then another chases after it, making a bigger splash. The mist sprayed by the waves cools your skin. You lick your lips and taste the salty kiss the mist leaves behind. The unending stretch of blue water makes you feel small, and your cares seem small next to its vastness.

You hear the chatter of sea gulls calling out to one another; yapping and making sounds like a belly laugh. You see them glide gracefully through the air only to make a clumsy landing, shaking out their wings. They waddle around and peck at the sand, working to uncover a little morsel for an afternoon snack.

The smell of the sea fills the air. The breeze carries the scent of toasting hot dogs from the snack stand down the beach.



You smile at the sight of children digging in the sand, building castles with their shovels and pails. You hear their giggles and the patter of their feet as they run toward the sea and then turn to outrun the waves nipping at their feet.

You close your eyes to take in the sounds. The dance of the waves calms you. It comforts you. So faithful, with each one that splashes in, you can count on another behind it; so predictable, so steady. The waves seem to call out a rhythm.

Now, your focus leaves the scene around you and you become aware of each breath you take. You breathe in deeply and out slowly in... and out, in and out. Your breaths are as predictable as the waves. You are free to release each breath knowing your lungs will soon be filled with the warm sea air again. Breathe in deeply and out slowly; in deeply, and out slowly.

Your attention moves outside of you again. You focus on the sound of the waves; you welcome the sound.

You feel the soothing warmth of the sun on your skin. You welcome the comfort.

You become aware of the sand beneath you; cradling you. You welcome the support.

Slowly you open your eyes and turn to the sights around you. You welcome all the beauty you are able to see around you.

You use your muscles to sit up and then stand. You appreciate your ability to move your body.

Slowly you lift your blanket out of the sand and then give it a quick snap to shake off the sand that tries to cling to it. Methodically you fold your blanket, a long first fold, the second fold is easier, then a quick third fold, and the fourth and you are ready to go.

You take one last look at the water and appreciate the sun's warmth. Slowly you saunter back to your car. You place the blanket in your trunk and settle into the driver's seat, becoming alert and focused for the drive home.

You look in your rearview mirror as you drive away and smile as if to make a pact with the ocean to return again soon. You drive down the highway, and before you know it you reach your street. You smile as you pass familiar houses that seem to welcome you.



You pull into your driveway and feel a sense of peace that all has been well while you were away. You walk to your own door feeling refreshed. You remember the important tasks ahead. You become filled with appreciation for the special responsibility you have as a Caregiver.

Now, open your eyes as if to open a curtain to your new refreshed outlook.

How did it feel to visualize a short trip to get a rest from your cares? Was it hard to focus? Did you feel renewed? Is a trip to the beach relaxing for you? Maybe you would find a meadow more inviting. You can design your own visualization story in a setting that brings you peace. You may find the act of writing your story relaxes you.

I hope you have enjoyed this presentation and found it a worthwhile use of your precious time. Visualization meditation is a simple tool you can use to help relax and refresh yourself. You don't need special equipment and you don't even need to leave your home. You can use it right where you are, any time.

We value the support you provide to your Veteran loved one each day and hope this small token of a few moments of relaxation demonstrates our appreciation. Thank you.