

## Visualization Exercise: Beach Theme

The purpose of this visualization scenario is to provide you with a scene that completely absorbs your attention and distracts you away from your anxious thoughts. As you become absorbed in the scene you will deepen your state of relaxation and will notice physiological changes. Your muscles will become less tense, your heart rate will slow, and your breathing will deepen. In this scene, you will imagine yourself relaxing on a peaceful beach.

Begin by finding a comfortable position either sitting or lying down in a location where you will not be interrupted.

Take a deep breath through your abdomen, hold for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. As you breathe, notice your stomach rising and your lungs filling with air.

Breathe in...and out

As you exhale, imagine the tension in your body being released and flowing away.

Inhale... exhale. Feel your body already relaxing.

As you go through each step, remember to keep breathing.

Inhale...exhale

Feel your body releasing all the tension, becoming relaxed, calm, peaceful. Feel the weight of your body, the limpness of your arms and legs. A wave of relaxation is flowing from your head, down to your neck, chest, back, arms, legs, and feet.

Now imagine yourself walking towards a quiet, inviting beach. You notice the white sand stretching along the shoreline as far as you can see.

You begin to feel the warmth of the sun across your face. You stand there a moment and just take in the warmth, you feel it flowing all through your body.

Breathe in...and out

As you walk in the sand, you feel its warmth on your feet, while at the same time feeling the coolness of the ocean breeze on your skin.

You gaze at the ocean and see a deep shade of blue with white crests of waves sweeping towards the shore. You take a moment to watch the beauty of the ocean.

You hear the calm breaking of the waves. The waves are washing up onto the sand and receding back towards the ocean...washing up...and flowing back...washing up...and flowing back. You listen to the calming rhythm of the waves.

You take a deep breath in and can smell the cleanness of the salty air...and exhale.

You allow yourself to appreciate the soothing scent of ocean air.

You begin to walk slowly towards the water. As you step closer to the ocean, you can feel the firmness of the wet sand. The cool, soft ocean water sweeps across your feet, relieving you from the heat of the sun. With every touch of water to your skin, you feel more and more relaxed.

Breathe in...and out

You begin to leisurely walk along the shoreline. As you walk, you notice a soft beach chair resting lightly in the sand. You lay in the beach chair, taking a deep breath, and enjoy the warmth of the sun, the coolness of the breeze, and the pleasant sound of the waves.

You lay there a moment and allow yourself to sink into the comfortable chair, feeling more and more relaxed.

You feel totally relaxed. All of your tension has melted away.

Breathe in...and out

*Pause for a few seconds*

Breathe in...and out

*Pause for a few seconds*

When you are ready to return from your vacation, do so slowly. Gently bring your attention back to the room, still feeling relaxed and comfortable. As you bring yourself back to a level of alertness, keep that relaxation in your mind and body. Open your eyes, stretch, and feel refreshed.

You can practice this visualization exercise whenever you need to take a mental vacation. Visualization is a skill so the more you practice it, the more effective the scene will be.