

## Handout E – Guided Story

Source: <http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/topics/techniques/relaxation.html>

In this technique, the emphasis is on the mind rather than the body. The worker tells a story or describes a tranquil situation to get the child or young person to imagine and remember scenes and sensations that are likely to be relaxing.

Again start by finding a quiet, warm, comfortable space where the young person can lie down on a mat or carpet with a cushion or pillow under their head. This exercise can also be done stretching out on a comfortable arm chair that supports their neck.

When telling the story, the worker should be relaxed, avoid fidgeting and speak in a clear, slow and calm manner. Allow plenty of pauses to give them time to imagine the scene and associated pleasant sensations.

They should be instructed to remove their shoes, glasses and loosen tight clothing.

Ask them to close their eyes and relax for a couple of minutes.

It is easiest to pick an experience or situation that you (the worker) can recall well. This way the story or scene described will flow without much effort.

The story should be general enough to allow the child or young person to relate their personal memories and imagination to it. For example, if setting the story at the seaside, avoid being specific about which town or beach the story relates to in case they have never been there or have unpleasant memories about that place.

Do include detailed description such as the color of the sky, the feel of the warm breeze or the time of day. But again avoid naming specific things that might be matters of personal taste, for example, describe them eating their favorite food rather than assuming they enjoy fish and chips.

You can include details such as a beach hut or sailing boat, as most people can conjure up such an image. Encourage them to use their mind's eye or imagination during this exercise.

Start by setting the scene, for example:

*"You are on a camping trip in the mountains with your best friends. It is late in the evening. The air is warm and full of beautiful scents of pine trees and heather. The stars are coming out and starting to twinkle as the sun sets over a glorious red and purple horizon. There is a pleasant smell of wood smoke from the camp fire as it gently drifts into the night air. You are sitting staring at the flickering orange and yellow flames in the fire as they dance around the logs and embers. There is the sound of an owl hooting in the distance and the gentle splashing of the*

*water in a near by stream.....etc. You are totally relaxed and at peace, able to face whatever challenges life brings with confidence. When ever you feel tense or worried you can remember the calm feeling you have right now and recreate it with ease by imagining a smell, sound, sight or touch from this story”.*

*“It is the middle of the summer holidays and you are at the beach with your closest friends...”*

*“You are walking in a lovely forest. It is early morning and the air is crisp and clear...”*

*“You wake up and look out of the window to discover it has been snowing over night...”*

*“It is Christmas Eve and you are lying in a warm and cosy bed...”*

Remember that the detailed description within the story is very important.

It is also important to anchor the pleasant scene and its associated feelings of calm and control in the mind of the young person by suggesting they use one of the sensations they are imagining or remembering to recall the whole feeling. They should be encouraged to practice recalling the pleasant sensations conjured up by the guided story by using an anchor word from it that has strong associations for them. For example from the story above, 'wood smoke' might be something that they find easy to imagine and that reminds them of the full calming experience of the story