



COMMON LANGUAGE for PSYCHOTHERAPY (clp) PROCEDURES
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GUIDED IMAGERY

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Definition: While the patient relaxes the therapist encourages him/her to explore particular images that s/he had reported and guides him/her through the experience.

Elements:

1. Relaxation induced by the patient's imagery which is guided by the therapist.
2. Visualization: transform sensations and emotions into visual representations.
3. Verbalization: verbally describe imagined scenes.
4. Operate in fantasy: modify past memories.
5. Problem solving: use imagery to explore and find new solutions and strategies.

Related procedures: *Image rescripting therapy, exposure in imagination, problem solving, mindfulness training, autogenic training, hypnosis.*

Application: In individual or group therapy for clients who can't express their feelings easily. Not advised when imagery and feelings are strong and hard to control.

1st use? Leuner (1969)

References:

1. Borgo S (1994) The use of images in therapeutic communication. In Borgo S, Sibilia L (Eds.). *The patient-therapist relationship: its many dimensions*. Roma: CNR.
2. Borgo S (2001) Immaginazione guidata (Guided Imagery), in: Borgo S, Della Giusta G, Sibilia L. *Dizionario di psicoterapia cognitivo-comportamentale (Dictionary of cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy)*, 145-146. Milano: McGraw-Hill.
3. Leuner H (1969). Guided Affective Imagery. *Am. J. of Psychotherapy*, 23, 4-22.
4. Walrond-Skinner S (1986). Guided Fantasy. In *Dictionary of Psychotherapy*, pp.163-164, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Case illustration: (Borgio, unpublished)

Ivan, aged about 55, was a psychologist working in the army. He sought treatment for occasional neck stiffness, dizziness, nausea and vomiting which disabled him for 2-3 days at a time. X-ray showed age-related cervical arthrosis said to be mainly 'psychosomatic'. He had not improved with 'many psychotherapies' and thought his problem was caused by his responsible attitude, rigid working context, and demanding family (wife and two sons unemployed who depended on him economically and psychologically). He felt like 'Atlas holding the world on his shoulder'. On hearing about Guided Imagery he wanted to try it. The therapist asked him to imagine a meadow for a minute and then to describe what he was seeing. Ivan saw a country walk: on one side was a fence and beyond, a strong horse looking at him sadly. Therapist: "How high is the fence?" Ivan: "Not very high". Soon after Ivan said he saw the horse jumping over the fence and galloping freely in the fields. His facial expression changed from worry to smiling. At the end of the session (45' overall including 10' guided imagery) the therapist advised Ivan to continue to imagine the same scene at least once every two days for the next two weeks. From then on Ivan felt much improved in his main complaint.