

Safe Place Guided Imagery for FLC

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Tips for the clinician: Take it slow, allow the person time to follow the prompt before moving on to the next, use invitational language when possible (examples: *if you're ready, when you're ready, if you'd like, I invite you to, I suggest to, if it works for you, for as long as you'd like, etc.*) in addition to command-like language (examples: *close your eyes, breathe, open your eyes, etc.*).

[First, explain why we are offering the guided imagery]

In a moment I will ask you to close your eyes. If that doesn't feel comfortable, I can suggest to lower your eyes and gently gaze at something still in front of you. You are safe and in control of this safe space guided imagery. If you feel uncomfortable in any way or feel like you want to pause or stop, I invite you to you can open your eyes or ask for me to pause. Don't worry if you get distracted during this activity. If that happens, you can simply and kindly pull your attention back to my voice or your breathing. I won't be staring at you during this, I will either also close my eyes or read from this guide if that's okay with you.

[Make sure they understand]

OK, we will start now. Please sit in a comfortable and relaxed position. When you're ready, please close your eyes and put gentle attention on your breath without changing it. [Pause] If it feels comfortable, you can somewhat slow down your breathing, taking slightly longer inhales and exhales.

[Pause]

I'd like to invite you to begin creating a safe space in your mind. It can be somewhere familiar, or somewhere you have made up. Begin to explore what you can see in this place. [Pause] Maybe you are outside and you can see plants, animals, water, the ground under your feet, sky. Maybe you are inside, and see comfortable furniture, familiar items, or pretty decorations. Maybe you're floating on a cloud and you can observe a dreamy atmosphere. [Pause] Notice what other details you can see in this place. [Pause] As you do, you notice you feel calm and safe.

[Pause]

When you're ready, take in and let go a slow breath [wait for them to do this]. Now I will invite you to notice what you can feel in this space. Notice the ground under your feet. Maybe you can feel wind in your hair. If there is water nearby, can you feel its temperature? Perhaps you can run your fingers over the clothing you are wearing, or something you are holding, or maybe you feel the fur of a pet. [Pause] Take another moment to notice what you can touch. [Pause] As you do, notice you feel peaceful and comfortable.

[Pause]

When you're ready, take in and let go a slow breath [wait for them to do this] and now I invite you to notice what you can smell in this space. You may smell any plants, ocean air, a perfume, or your favorite food. [Pause] Maybe the smell is strong or light. Maybe there is no smell at all. [Pause] Take another moment to notice what you can smell. [Pause] As you do, notice you feel safe and protected.

[Pause]

When you're ready, take in and let go a slow breath [wait for them to do this] and now I will invite you to notice what you can hear in this space. Perhaps you hear running water or crashing waves, the wind, rain, or other nature sounds. [Pause] Maybe you hear music, wind chimes, or animals chirping or squeaking or running around. Or maybe it is a very quiet place. [Pause] Take another moment to notice what you can hear. [Pause] As you do, notice you feel in control and peaceful.

[Pause]

When you're ready, take in and let go a slow breath [wait for them to do this] and now I will invite you to notice anything you might taste. You might taste salty ocean air, or your favorite food, or there may not be a strong taste in this safe space. [Pause] Take another moment to notice what you can taste. [Pause] As you do, notice you feel in safe and relaxed.

[Pause]

When you're ready, take in and let go a slow breath [wait for them to do this] and now I will invite you to notice all around you in this safe space you created: what you can see, smell, touch, hear, and taste. [Pause] You know that this is a place of safety and security, and you feel gratitude that you can return to this place whenever it is necessary or desired.

Tips for the clinician: *At this point you can bring them back into the room (say: "Now, as you're ready, bring your attention back to your breath [pause] and begin to notice things in this room, like any noises, and your feet on the ground. Take your time here, and whenever you're ready to rejoin me, you can show me by slowly opening your eyes and saying you're ready") and reflect on the meditation, or you can go ahead into picturing their childhood using the following prompts.*

[Pause]

If it's okay with you, I would now like to step away from this safe space place and explore other places. Would that be okay with you? [Wait for them to affirm]

Okay. Remember that you are in control, and we can stop at any time and return to this safe space.

When you're ready, take in and let go a slow breath [wait for them to do this] and now I will invite you to notice a doorway nearby. Imagine you are entering the doorway into your childhood... [and go on from there using sensory cues on the FLC]

Tips for the clinician: *If at any point in the FLC process – sensory guidance, discussing the timelines, or discussing parenting – you notice the parent’s emotional, cognitive, or physical state or attention is changing, you should gently check in with them and offer to return to the safe space they created. You can simply ask them to picture, the space, or if you need prompts, use the following:*

Together we will return to your safe space. If you feel comfortable you can close your eyes or keep a soft gaze. When you’re ready, imagine walking through the doorway back into your safe space. You are leaving the memories, images, and senses of that space behind and you gradually begin paying attention to your safe space. [Pause] You begin to notice with more detail what you can see, touch, taste, smell, and hear. [Pause] As you do this, a sense of security, safety, and control is coming back. You may notice tension leaving your body, or your breath feeling even. [Pause] If you’d like to, you can take in and let go one last slow breath. [Pause] Take your time here, and whenever you’re ready to rejoin me, you can show me by slowly opening your eyes and saying you’re ready.