

Visualize

Visualization, also known as guided imagery, can be as simple as a golfer imagining what the perfect drive might look like and then rehearsing it in his or her head, or as complicated as a breast cancer patient imagining her immune-system firing up to aid a course of chemotherapy. Guided imagery has been used successfully to help professional athletes play better—and to help average people overcome all sorts of health problems from cancer to chronic pain.

According to Belleruth Naparstek, an author and expert on the subject, “just ten minutes of guided imagery a day can reduce blood pressure, lower cholesterol, and heighten short term immune cell activity. It lessens headaches and pain, reduces anxiety, and even reduces the adverse effects of chemotherapy.”

Your body can't tell the difference between when you are imagining something and when you are actually doing it. If you vividly imagine climbing up a rock ledge, your body will release some of the same stress chemicals it would if you were actually climbing that cliff. So, in order to use visualization to lower your stress, you'll want to **IMAGINE** something **VERY** relaxing. Since everyone experiences stress and relaxing events differently, you will need to customize this exercise to your own needs. (Some people find beaches relaxing, other people don't.)

Read the directions below before starting this exercise, and customize it to suit your needs. Just imagine yourself relaxing deeply in whatever scene you choose.

VISUALIZATION EXERCISE

A lot of people need help visualizing, so if you are one of those, keep a picture of your favorite vacation spot on your desk or workstation. (Or use the picture you see here.) In any case, lock this image into your mind. It could be a beach or on a dock by a lake, or in the mountains or walking through your favorite park.

Close your eyes now, and put yourself in your favorite relaxing spot. This is your private place and no one will disturb you here. Breathe in deeply. If you're on a beach or in the country, it may help to imagine the sounds of the waves lapping up on the shore, the birds crying out in the distance and/or the crickets humming in background.

There's a gentle breeze blowing and the air is the perfect temperature. You can feel the warm sun on your face. You notice the leaves swaying in the breeze and you feel just a hint of coolness across your forehead. Breathing in again, feel yourself relax into the cozy comfort of your protected place.

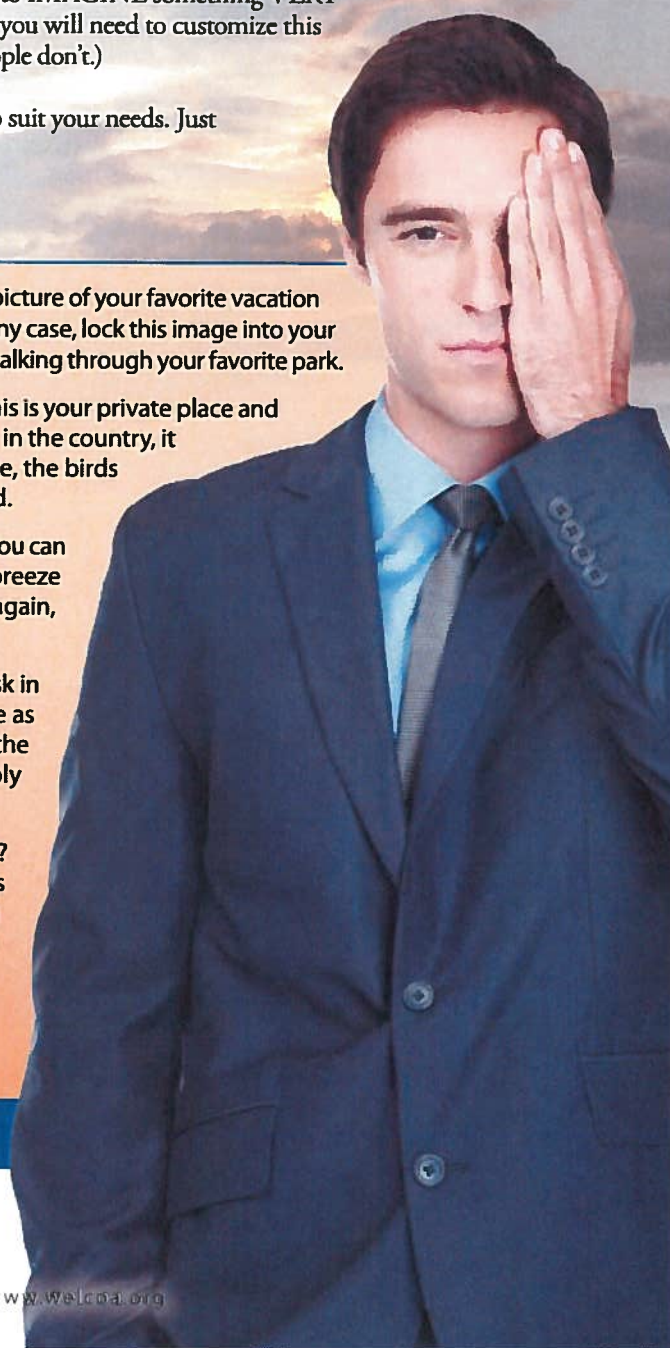
For the next few minutes, you're free to explore this special place. Bask in the warm sun, or take an imaginary stroll, or feel the wind in your face as you float along. Really inhabit this place in your mind, knowing that for the time being, you are completely safe from anything that could possibly harm you or bother you.

When you feel totally at ease, notice your breathing. How does it feel? Notice the air around your skin. How does that feel? Notice sensations inside your body. How does that feel? Focus on the relaxation growing throughout your whole body from your head to your toes. Let it wash over you leaving you feeling deeply, deeply relaxed.



TOTAL TIME:
5 minutes

What is your stress number now?





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Stress management programs

Coping Techniques	Relaxation Techniques
Reframing	Physical Exercise
Comic Relief	Hatha Yoga
Time Management	Tai Chi
Communication Skills	Meditation
Information Seeking	Diaphragmatic Breathing
Journaling	Progressive Muscular Relaxation
Social Engineering	Guided Mental Imagery
Hobbies	Music Therapy
Social Support Groups	

Source: Seaward, Brian L., Letting Go of Stress, Coping with Change at the Worksite. 2010 Wellness Council of America.

Defining Stress

Prevalence & Causes

Impact

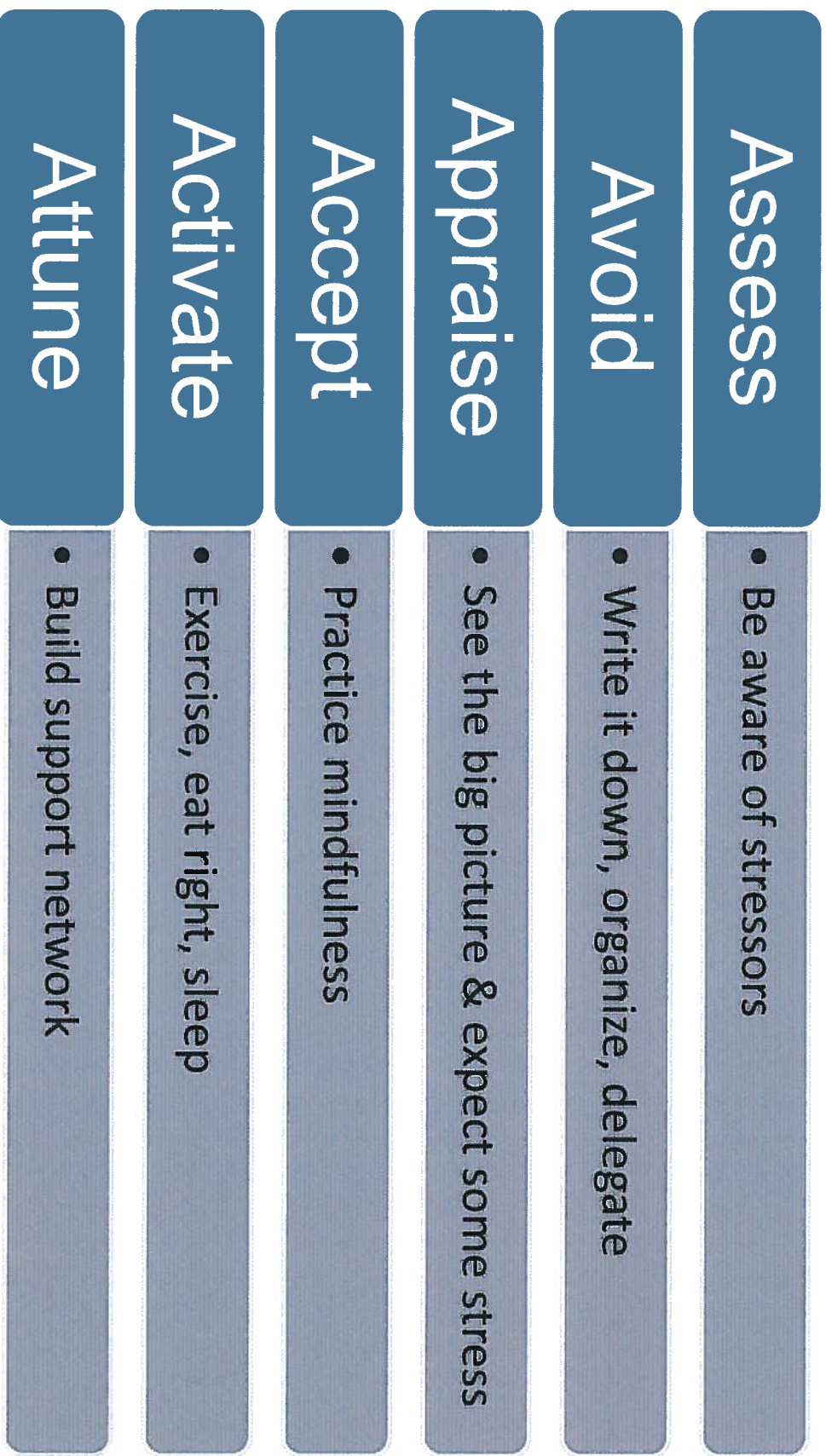
Reducing Stress

Thank You



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Stress Prevention Model



Source: Porter, J. *Preventing Job Stress*. WELCOA's 2014 National Training Summit: Stress @ Work, March 2014. Copyright James E. Porter 2014.

Defining Stress

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Impact

Reducing Stress

Thank You