

Visualization

If you have been diagnosed with panic disorder, then you have likely experienced constant feelings of fear and anxiety. Research has shown that using relaxation techniques can help reduce nervousness and improve your relaxation response. By enhancing your relaxation skills, you can lower your [flight-or-fight response](#) that is often triggered during times of increased anxiety and panic attacks.

Some common relaxation techniques include [breathing exercises](#), [progressive muscle relaxation](#), [yoga](#), and [meditation](#). These techniques are relatively easy to learn and can be practiced on a daily basis to assist with [getting through panic attacks](#).

What Is Visualization?

Visualization is another powerful technique that can help you unwind and relieve stress. Visualization involves using mental imagery to achieve a more relaxed state of mind. Similar to daydreaming, visualization is accomplished through the use of your imagination.

There are several reasons why visualization can help you cope with panic disorder, panic attacks, and [agoraphobia](#). Consider how your thoughts wander when you feel panic or anxiety. When experiencing a panic attack, your mind may focus on the worry, the worst things that can happen and other cognitive distortions that only add to your sense of fearfulness. Visualization works to expand your ability to rest and relax by focusing your mind on more calming and serene images.

Before beginning any of these visualization exercises, make sure your environment is set up for your comfort. To better relax, eliminate any distractions, such as phones, pets or television. Try to find a quiet place where you will most likely be undisturbed. Remove any heavy jewelry or restricting clothing, such as tight belts or scarves. Get ready to relax by either sitting or lying down in a position that feels most comfortable to you.

To begin, it can be helpful to slow your breathing down with a [deep-breathing technique](#). Close your eyes and try to let go of any tension you may be feeling throughout your body. To relax your body and mind even further, it may also be beneficial to try a [progressive muscle relaxation exercise](#) before you begin your visualization. Try to set aside about five to 15 minutes to visualize.

The Serene Beach Scene

The following is a beach scene visualization exercise that you can practice on your own. Beach scenes are one of the most popular visualizations due to their calming and tranquil impact. Feel free to change it to better suit your needs and imagination. Use this visualization to relax, unwind and briefly escape from your day-to-day tasks.

To get started, begin by imagining that you are resting on a white sandy beach. The water is turquoise and the sky is clear. You can hear the soft waves of the water as the tide gently rolls in. You feel safe, calm and relaxed. The weight of your body sinks into your chair. You can feel the warmth of the sand on your feet. A large umbrella keeps you slightly shaded, creating just the right temperature that you prefer. You relax your face. Notice how you are able to let go of tension in your forehead, between your eyebrows, your neck, and your throat. You soften your eyes and rest. There is no effort to be here. Spend some time just taking it all in. Allow your breath to slow down and match the rolling waves of the water.

Once this relaxation feels complete, imagine that you get up and slowly walk away from the beach. Remember that this beautiful place is here for you whenever you need to come back. Take your time and slowly open your eyes.

Use Your Own Creativity

If the beach scene doesn't really fit you, try coming up with your own visualization. Think of a place or situation that you find to be very relaxing, such as lying down in a large field of flowers and grass, or enjoying a beautiful view of a mountain or forest. When visualizing your calming scene, think about what you are experiencing through all of your senses. Notice what you hear, smell, taste and how your body feels. When you feel ready to leave your relaxation scene, take your time and gradually return your mind to the present.

To get better at visualization, try practicing at least several times a day. Relaxation techniques tend to be more helpful if you first start practicing at a time when you are not experiencing high anxiety. Through regular practice, you will more easily be able to use visualization when you really need it, such as when you start feeling the [physical symptoms of panic and anxiety](#).