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Pain

Welcome to this healthy living to go podcast from Kaiser Permanente, Designed to fit the way you live and the way you learn. Listen, live well and thrive.

[Music]

I'm Belleruth Naparstek and this is guided imagery that I've designed for people who want help dealing with pain. It's not a substitute for medical treatment but a compliment to it. More and more people are finding that using guided imagery, which you could call a kind of deliberate directed daydreaming helps them to relax, feel stronger and heal faster. In fact recent research has shown that imagery can alleviate pain as well as depression, anxiety and even phobias. Other studies have found that it actually helps your body heal physically. For instance, imagery can help boost the immune system, reduce high blood pressure, and minimize allergic reactions. And certainly, we've known for some time that when you take a more active part in your health and well-being, you generally feel better and do better. In the program we have several mind body principles into its narrative. It begins by helping you to relax and clear your mind. Then it calls upon your senses and memory to engage your imagination. And finally, it evokes very specific images combined with breathing and touch that are designed to reduce your physical and emotional discomfort. The program ends with an extended period of just the music alone to give you time to continue with your own imagery or to just relax and rest. You can use your mind to alleviate pain in two very different ways. You can turn your attention away from it, sort of take a vacation from it, which is often what we want to do for chronic pain. Or you can focus your attention into it, breath into it and soften around it which is preferable for acute pain. Most people develop their own combination of these two approaches. Whatever you do, try not to resist your pain, fighting with it, tensing up around it, getting angry at it, and trying to hold it away from you will only intensify it. The imagery on this page gives you a simple and workable alternative to stiffening up against your pain. Some of the images will be more meaningful to you than others. Some you may find unsuitable. Let your mind change your [inaudible] as it sees fit. It will anyway. You may find that as you use this over time, it has a stronger and stronger effect. Sometimes the images just naturally shift and change at their own accord. Don't get concerned about whether or not you're listening attentively enough. Relaxed concentration is best. But over time, the words and images that are good for you will seep in anyway. If you notice your mind wandering, you can gently guide it back. And because the imagery encourages a dreamy kind of awareness, please don't play it while driving. Every now and then this will bring forth unexpected emotion. If this is the case with you, see if you can allow the feelings to just come up and move through you. Seeing it as a necessary kind of rinsing that's taking place. It won't hurt you to do this, and it may in fact, be very good for you. The second segment has about 20 minutes of affirmations. These are positive statements that can be very useful in the healing process. A sort of reprogramming of your unconscious mind to combat negative thinking. For some people, affirmations are more effective than guided imagery. With any of this, take what is useful and leave the rest. If there is an image or phrase that is especially meaningful to you, try to play it over in your mind several times a day. When you brush your

teeth, stop for a red light, or even better, just as you enter that twilight zone, just before falling asleep, an especially powerful time to do this. Listen to this as often as you like. Most people do well listening twice a day, morning and evening. After several weeks you may want to put it aside for awhile, try some others and then come back to it. Every now and then you may want to review these instructions as a way of keeping yourself on track. So see if you can take this next while to commit yourself to this process of engaging the power of your imagination to help ease your pain. By gently immersing yourself in this safe and easy process. All you have to do is settle in, relax and let yourself listen.

[Music]

To begin with, see if you can position yourself as comfortably as you can, shifting your weight so that you're allowing your body to be well supported. You might even want to take a moment to really feel the support beneath you and to just let your body relax and settle into it. If possible, try to arrange it so that your head, neck and spine are straight. And taking a deep, full, cleansing breath, inhaling as fully as you comfortably can, breathing way down into your abdomen if you can, and breathing all the way out.

[Music]

And, again, breathing in. And, as you breathe out, letting any unwelcome thoughts that may come to mind, float out with your breath, released with the exhale so that, for just a moment, your mind is empty. For just a split second, it is free and clear space. And you are blessed with stillness. And any emotions that are rocking around inside, those too can be noted and acknowledged and sent out with the breath so that your emotional self can be still and quiet like a lake with no ripples. And now, see if you can imagine a place where you feel safe and peaceful and easy. A place either real or imaginary, maybe somewhere from your past or a place you've always wanted to go or a place you visit now. It doesn't matter, just so it's a place that feels good and safe and peaceful to you, and allowing the place to become real to you. Looking around you, taking the place in with your eyes, enjoying the colors, the scenery, taking in every detail with your eyes. And looking over to your right, and over to your left and listening to the sounds of the place, whatever they might be. Perhaps the music of moving water or the sound of the wind and trees, maybe birds or crickets singing. Just so your ears can become familiar with all the sounds of your place that is so safe and peaceful to you. And feeling whatever you're sitting against or lying upon, whether it's sand or grass, a pine needle forest floor, or you might be indoors in a cozy armchair or maybe outside sitting on a nice, warm rock in the sun. And feeling the air on your skin, either brisk and breezy, crisp and dry or soft and balmy and wet. Maybe there's just the subtlest caress of a fragrant, gentle breeze. Or, perhaps, you're indoors and feeling the warmth of a cozy fire on your face and hands. Wherever you are, just letting yourself enjoy the feel, the presence of your place on your skin. And smelling its rich fragrance whether it's the soft, full scent of flowers, the sharpness of salt sea air, the heavy sweetness of meadow grass or maybe the pungent smell of peat moss in the woods. Whatever it is, just taking it all in, soaking up the richness of your special retreat with all of your senses. Becoming more and more attuned to it, feeling thankful and happy to be there. Feeling the healing vibrance of the place penetrate all the way into you, soaking into your skin all the way through layers of tissue and muscle. All the way to the bone down into each and every cell. Softly seeping into the places that are tight or tense or sore, gently entering the places where pain is stored and feeling the beginnings of a subtle shift deep inside. A softening, a gentle releasing. And breathing into the pain, you can feel the soft energy of the breath moving all around and through it. The warmth of the in breath massaging and opening tight, trapped energy. And releasing it with the out breath. And, again. Breathing into the

heart of the pain with care and concern for that part of your body. Gentle and easy. Letting the soft energy of the breath open and release it and breathing it out. And, again. Breathing in with all the focus and care and attention you can bring to bear. And perhaps, this time, putting one or both of your hands over the place that hurts, if that's possible. And letting the warmth from your hands move softly and easily down into the pain along with your in breath. Encouraging the hurting places to open to it, to loosen and soften. And, again, breathing it out. Feeling the warm, vibrating softness from your hands, gently loosening the pain, slowly and steadily moving deeper and deeper into the core of it. Gently releasing as it goes so you can sense the density of the pain starting to thin out as it floats free, moving out with the breath. Sensing the intelligence of the body as it softens and opens around the pain, giving it more room. Easing the jagged places, relaxing constricted muscle, reviving frayed, weary nerve fibers. Sloughing off irritants and toxins and replacing weary cells with strong, resilient new growth. So just taking a moment to appreciate all the ingenious ways that the body has to repair and renew itself. And continuing to breathe deeply and easily. And feeling a kind and gentle softness toward yourself with compassion for the aching, weary places in your body. With respect for your own forbearance and gratitude for your steady courage. Taking deep satisfaction in your ability to be so present even under these trying circumstances, so focused and aware and fully alive. Grateful for this ingenious mechanism of the breath, always available to you any time and any place. Knowing you can always focus on the breath as it moves into the pain on the inhale, softening and releasing it. And then, with the out breath, feel it lift and carry it out of the body. Grateful for the soothing warmth of your own hands. Thankful for their ability to send solace and comfort directly into your body whenever you need them. And grateful, too, for the reach and magic of your own mind, knowing it's there to guide you back to the peaceful stillness at your center. Taking you to a place deep inside yourself where it's soft and peaceful and nourishing. Where you're safe and steady and centered, attuned to the beauty of your own being and humming with your own vibrant healing energy. And so feeling peaceful and easy, you can once again look around your beautiful, special retreat enjoying its fragrance, its colors, the sounds and the feel of the place, soaking in all of its richness and beauty, knowing you can call forth this place, the comfort of your hands, the power of your breath, whenever you choose to do so. And so wishing your special place goodbye for now, still breathing rhythmically and easily, very gently and with soft eyes, you can let yourself come back into the room whenever you are ready, knowing these powerful resources are yours to use whenever you wish. And knowing you're better for this. And so you are.

[Music]

Affirmations are positive statements designed for repeated listening that overtime will combat negative thinking and create positive changes in your attitude. For some, affirmations are more effective than guided imagery. Often people find them easier and less demanding. For one thing, they don't require the same degree of sustained attention, and you can easily listen to them while you're getting dressed or driving or while you're engaged in some other activity. See if you can listen to each statement in a state of open, relaxed attention, breathing deeply with each one and repeating it softly to yourself, either aloud or in your mind. I know there are times when I'm frustrated, fearful, angry, or sad, and I acknowledge and accept what I feel as my inner truth at the moment. I know that the more I can acknowledge and accept my feelings without criticism or blame, the more I assist my body's natural tendency to feel well and be well. More and more, I can see that when I soften and let go of harsh expectations of unrealistic demands on myself and others, I give my body peace and comfort. I know that when I can forgive myself and others for errors of the past, I give my body peace and comfort. More

and more, I see that when I can love and appreciate myself, take time to care for myself, I am giving my body a powerful message of peace and comfort. I understand that the time to be motivated by guilt, fear, or resentment is over. Now is the time to do things out of love and celebration and of joy and self-expression. More and more, I can appreciate my body, be conscious of it, and fully inhabit it. More and more, I can consider possibility that my body is teaching me something useful, that this pain is strengthening my heart and my mind. I know that the more I can accept my body as it is, without criticism or blame, the more I assist its natural tendency to feel well and be well. More and more, I appreciate my body for what it truly is, my oldest friend, and my steadiest companion. More and more, I can let go of worrying out things I can't control and focus on my own inner peacefulness. More and more, I see that I can train myself to manage this pain in my body. More and more, I see that I can focus my attention wherever I wish it to go. I understand that when I stiffen against my pain, argue with it, blame it, and trying to push it away from me, I only make it bigger. Understand that when I can soften into my pain, allowing room for it, and breathing gently into it, I can make it smaller. I know that when I can turn my attention away from my pain and focus on the things that bring me peace and joy, I can make it smaller I know that with or without this pain, I am strong, vital, and whole. More and more, I can see the beauty of my own being. More and more, I can see the beauty of others and the beauty of my surroundings. More and more, I understand that I'm becoming a true warrior of the heart, able to use this pain to strengthen my mind and my spirit. I call upon my intention to free myself from any limiting assumptions that I might have about this pain. I engage my powerful will to assist me in doing this. The blueprint that I hold in my mind's eye is a picture of myself, strong, vital, and active; focused, joyful and fulfilled. I invite assistance from friends and loved ones, past, present, and future, to lend me their support and strength. I see myself as surrounded by their love and caring, and I feel it all over my body like a warm wave. I can see and feel radiant sunlight entering and warming my body, penetrating into the places that hurt, loosening, dissolving, and dispersing the pain. I can see and feel a powerful blue-green wave of pure healing washing through me from head to toe, carrying pain and discomfort out with the tide. I can see and feel a warm, pulsing, glowing blanket of magical comfort surrounding me, enveloping me with peace and safety, soaking the healing energy into me and easing the places that hurt. I thank the medicines and procedures designed to help my body's natural tendency to heal and comfort itself, and I join my strength and purpose to theirs. I thank my own courage, strength, and resourcefulness and salute my willingness to learn, change, and grow from these challenging circumstances. I know that I have things to do, gifts to give, purpose is to accomplish. I require my energy, strength, and peace of mind for this. More and more, I can feel the peaceful stillness at my center, soft and strong and steady. I know there are times when I am frustrated, fearful, angry, or sad, and I acknowledge and accept what I feel as my inner truth at the moment. I know that the more that I can acknowledge and accept my feelings without criticism or blame, the more I assist my body's natural tendency to feel well and be well. I know that when I can forgive myself and others for errors of the past, I give my body peace and comfort. More and more, I see that when I can love and appreciate myself, take time to care for myself, I am giving my body a powerful message of peace and comfort. More and more, I can consider the possibility that my body is teaching me something useful. That this pain is strengthening my heart and my mind. I know that that more that I can accept my body as it is, without criticism or blame, the more I assist its natural tendency to feel well and be well. More and more, I appreciate my body for what it truly is, my oldest friend, and my steadiest companion. More and more, I can let go of worrying about things I can't control and focus on my own inner peacefulness. More and more, I see that I can train myself to manage this pain in my body. More and more, I see that I

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