Guided Imagery

The Integrative Health Coordinating Center is charged with examining the utility of many complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches (e.g., acupuncture, meditation, use of herbal supplements) in the management of chronic conditions and providing guidance to the field about which approaches have the best evidence of effectiveness and the most potential to be helpful to Veterans.

Guided imagery is one treatment technique that shows promise as part of a CIH treatment plan to address common conditions, such as pain, anxiety and sleep problems. It entails the use of verbal instruction to generate mental pictures and corresponding sensory perceptions (such as sounds, tastes, smells, and the sensation of physical touch or temperature) to address a specific health concern and support overall well-being.[1] It is widely used within VA [2] and evidence is accumulating to support the effectiveness of guided imagery and other mind-body therapies as part of a whole person approach to care.[3][4][5][6][7]

VHA actively encourages the use of promising mind-body practices such as guided imagery as part of a Veteran-centered approach to care and health promotion, particularly when conventional treatments alone cannot fully address a Veteran’s individual health needs or treatment preferences. Guided imagery has no known risks or adverse side effects and
devices used to deliver guided imagery are considered safe. As needed, facilities can choose to provide commercially available resources, such as guided imagery recordings or pre-programmed guided imagery devices, out of facility funds if it is felt that these materials will enhance the clinical benefit of incorporating guided imagery into the Veteran’s treatment plan.

Additional Resources:

- **Guided Meditation Podcast: Paced Breathing (7:50)**
  This podcast describes the "power of the mind" as it is used as a complement to healing. This podcast also includes a breathing exercises to promote mind-body well-being.

- **Guided Meditation Podcast: Mental Muscle Relaxation (5:01)**
  This podcast continues the guided mediation series and includes a guide to decrease stress and increase overall relaxation. List to this mind-body exercise as a simple and effective way to enhance your well-being.

- **Guided Meditation Podcast: Mini Mental Vacation (7:39)**
  This podcast takes the listener on a "mini mental vacation," designed to settle the mind and increase a sense of relaxation and peace.

References:


