

# Well-Being - Just Imagine!

By Judy Westerfield, M.A., M.F.T., CH

## **Dx: HWS**

I developed fibromyalgia in 1996. Those were the days when fibromyalgia was diagnosed as a middle-aged **H**ysterical **W**oman's **S**ndrome.

Well, I WAS middle-aged! And I WAS near hysteria! And my hysteria grew with doctor after doctor patting me on the head, telling me nothing was physically wrong and suggesting I needed psychological help. Psychological help! I was a psychotherapist! Talk about adding insult to injury.

I tried everything from yoga to green algae. All of the tens of thousands of dollars worth of tests I took came back "normal" and I too began to be skeptical there was anything physically wrong.

I admit I am questioning by nature. I've always been skeptical of anything I can't see, hear or touch. And no one, no test could see, hear or touch fibromyalgia. Maybe I did have "HWS".

## **Skeptic or believer?**

Hypnosis & Interactive Guided Imagery(sm)\* also fell into my *Be-skeptical-be-VERY-skeptical* category. I began studying them, over 20 years ago, not because I thought they worked but because I needed continuing education credit. Hypnosis & guided imagery looked like a lot more fun than abuse, neglect or trauma workshops.

My skepticism about guided imagery (hypnosis is another story for another time) started crumbling when a woman I'd been seeing for 3 years for a horrible trauma no longer had nightmares after one imagery session.

And the more I used Interactive Guided Imagery(sm) with clients who were anxious, depressed, in pain; clients who were stuck, sick, confused or simply wanted to feel better the more I realized that even if I couldn't see, hear or touch the images in their mind's eyes, they could.

So when I developed fibromyalgia I started using self-hypnosis & guided imagery on myself. Even if I did have Hysterical Woman Syndrome I figured it couldn't hurt. It was non-invasive, I didn't need a Rx, it was free and I didn't have to see a psychiatrist!.

Now, self-hypnosis & guided imagery haven't cured me. I'm still working on that. But I credit them with helping me stay off pain medication, work and have a life. I was finally a believer.

## **Turning you into a Believer!**

So now I'd like to help you learn how to see & hear your own mind's eye images to feel better. We'll start with imagery in this article because it can be fun and I don't have to do lots of explaining. You already know how to image. As my colleague David Bresler, PhD. Says: "If you can worry you can image. Worrying is just a form of imagining what isn't there!"

Most people think of guided imagery as sitting with your eyes closed, in a dim lit room and a person with a voice like butter reciting a script that tells you where to go in your mind and what to do when you're there. The guided imagery I'm going to explain to you is not passive. You are actively engaged and in control. Your eyes can be closed or open. You can even do it in public and no one will know. Dim lit rooms are optional.

### **Natural Language of Your Brain**

If you think about it imagery is the natural language of the conscious mind. We all could image long before we could speak. You knew the sound, the touch the sight of a familiar face long before you could understand language. It's also the preferred language of the unconscious mind – ever dream?

Once considered an "alternative" "or complementary" approach, guided imagery is finding widespread scientific and public acceptance. It's used to teach relaxation, alleviate anxiety and depression, relieve physical and psychological symptoms, overcome health-endangering habits, and help patients prepare for surgery and tolerate procedures more comfortably.

Want to hear an example of how a client uses \*Interactive Guided Imagery(sm)?

### **Bobbie & the Bees**

Stage IV ovarian cancer, a British dog named Bobbie and a Queen Bee named Latifa.

"Interesting", you say.

Every day my client watches as Queen Bee Latifa outfits her worker bees with round magnets on their feet. Latifa instructs them to swarm in and attract all the cancer cells on their magnets, fly to England and dump the unwanted cells into a big hole that Bobbie the Brit has dug. Once dumped Bobbie makes sure the cells are dead and then buries them in the hole.

"Impossible!" You think.

Several months ago a woman came to me for Interactive Guided Imagery(sm). She wanted to activate her own mind-body healing while she was undergoing chemotherapy to help her body rid itself of the cancer cells that had invaded her abdomen

During our imagery session I helped her access her own images that only **her** brain and body understand. When asked for an image that could help her a swarm of bees appeared. I asked what was happening and she said the bees were swooping down picking up cancer cells with magnets on their feet. The queen bee appeared to tell my client that her name was Latifa and she would direct her swarm.

Bobbie is a beloved dog that actually does live in England. But why bees? Why magnets? That's the beauty and wonder of Interactive Imagery (sm). None of the images or actions came from me. All sprung spontaneously from my client's own unconscious language of imagery. I just helped her explore and communicate with her images.

Now, daily, on her own, my client checks in with Bobbie & the Bees. She relaxes and watches the Bees collect cancer cells with their magnets and Bobbie bury them. Day by day Queen Bee Latifa calls in fewer and fewer bees to pick up fewer and fewer cancer cells. Amazing.

A few weeks ago I spoke with my client: *"Bobbie & the bees helped!"* She was delighted. "The scan shows my abdomen is clear."

I'll never know if it was the chemo-therapy or Bobbie & the Bees or both. Only the Queen knows. But my client is a believer.

Now, I'll show you how you can do your own imagery without me as a guide.

### **Your Own Imagery**

We all have many parts: parts that are happy, sad, hopeful, despairing; parts that know what it's like to feel good and parts that feel bad. For now we'll ignore the part of you that feels sick & tired and focus on the part of you that used to feel good or is **capable** of feeling good. I'll call that part "Well-being". I don't want to give it a name, like Henry or Abby because when you talk to your own "well-being" part it can pick it's own name. I know it's beginning to sound strange, talking about your "Well-Being" like a person or presence but stick with me, it works.

### **Easy to do:**

Find a place where you won't be disturbed. (Once you learn to do this you can do it anywhere – in the grocery check out line if you want). Close your eyes or keep them open (In the grocery check-out line, keep them open so you don't lose your place!)

Better yet, do it now while you are reading my directions. If you want, you CAN do both at the same time.

**1. In your mind focus on how it felt when you were pain free and had energy.** If you can't remember a time when you felt really good just pretend or imagine someone else who you remember seemingly full of energy and life. It still works.

You might remember having a sense of well being a long time ago or maybe the other day for even a few moments in time.

**2. While you are imagining feeling good "invite" an image to appear in your mind's eye that represents your "Well-Being".** Engraved invitations aren't necessary – just a mind-set of openness and curiosity. You may actually see it or you'll just intuitively know what shows up. "Well-being" can appear as anything – a real or imaginary person, someone who is living now or lived a long time ago, an animal, a wizard, a sail boat, ANYTHING. It may come to you as an action figure, a famous celebrity, a reptile, a bug, a sports hero, anything that catches your attention. My own "Well-Being" came to my mind's eye as a big round brown bear.

**3. When you have an intuitive sense of what your “Well-Being” looks like, ask it what its name is.** Still with me? . . . a name or word, or phrase will pop into your mind. Just accept that’s what your “Well-Being” wants to be called whether or not it makes sense to you.

So far, so good? Just dialogue with your “Well-Being” like you would a new acquaintance.

**4. Here’s where you can ask or tell your own “well-being” anything you want.** Here’s where you can give information, get answers and help to feel better more of the time. When you ask questions just allow an answer to intuitively come to your mind, just like you let your image of “Well-Being” and its name intuitively come to you.

**“Barry-Well, thank you”.**

I’ll share with you what happened the first time I met my “Well-Being”. I focused on what I vaguely remembered as feeling well - years ago when I was a jogger. And as I focused on that I asked (silently) for an image to appear that represented that state of “Well-Being”, that state of fitness and energy. I was expecting a famous athlete, or at the very least a leopard. But the first thing that came to my mind was a big brown bear. (When I image I don’t actually SEE anything in my mind – I just have an intuitive KNOWING) He was BIG, and lumbering and seemed very tired. I was certain he had never jogged a 10K and certainly couldn’t outrun a leopard.

Judy: What’s your name?

Bear: Barry. (*Maybe it’s Beary? I’ve never asked him.*)

Judy: If you represent my feeling well you don’t seem very energetic.

Barry: Grrrrrrrrr. (*I intuitively knew he growled, even if I didn’t literally hear it*)  
I was sleeping

Judy: I wanted an image that would make sense.

Barry: I was sleeping. (*He turned his back. I’m not sure if he was hurt or disgusted*)

Judy: I want to feel better.

Barry: (He turned around and looked at me)

Judy: I want to feel better. What can I do?

Barry: Stop staying up so late. Hibernate!

Judy: That’s all?

Barry: Eat berries (*I assumed he meant the fruit and not his own kind*)

And he disappeared.

I was a bit disappointed I admit. My “Well-Being” was a gruff, tired old bear. I had hoped for a more profound image. And Barry’s advice seemed rather elementary. But it was definitely something I needed to do to have a healthier lifestyle. After that initial meeting when I start pushing myself to do just one more thing before bed or reaching for that donut I would imagine him growling in my mind’s eye.

And as I became wiser about my condition and took better care of myself Barry too grew wiser and gentler. I continue to meet with him and he’s given me lots of good information. Much of the information is a confirmation of what I consciously or unconsciously know – after all he is one of my parts. Some of his information has been unexpected, sometimes he’s silent and sometimes we just hang out.

How does this actually make me feel better? How does this work in your brain? We know from brain research that when you think certain thoughts or imagine certain images neurochemical feelings are released in your brain. So when you talk to the part of you that represents your "Well-Being", when you hang out with that part, the neurochemistry of feeling better actually is released into your brain.

On my worst days, when I just can't motivate myself to exercise, eat right, think positively, much less get enough energy to get out of bed I can hang out with Barry. I don't have to go anywhere, buy anything, wait for someone else to help. It's something I have control of to help me feel a better. I won't lie to you. Sometimes Barry has little patience with me sometimes all he does is sleep. But just by his presence Barry reminds me that I have many parts and one of them is "Well-Being".

Give it a try. It can't hurt. Trust me, your "Well-Being is there, even if it is hibernating.

\*Interactive Guided Imagery(sm) is Service Marked **by The Academy for Guided Imagery**, a teaching academy for health care professionals. [www.academyforguidedimagery.com](http://www.academyforguidedimagery.com)

Judith Westerfield, M.A., M.F.T. CCH, specializes in using hypnotherapy & Interactive Guided Imagery(sm) to help people feel better, do better and be better, fast! As a faculty instructor for The Academy for Guided Imagery she has taught hundreds of health care professionals across the United States & Canada in the use of Interactive Guided Imagery for health and wellness. Besides her dog Max, her passion is the use of creative expression for healing. Max now has two web-sites: [www.CreativitytotheMax.com](http://www.CreativitytotheMax.com) and [www.HypnosistotheMax.com](http://www.HypnosistotheMax.com).  
Woof!

