

## Non-pharmacological Pain and Symptom Management

### CONTROLLED BREATHING and GUIDED IMAGERY

**CONTROLLED BREATHING AND GUIDED IMAGERY** – use to help reduce stress that can cause muscle tension and increase pain.

**Directions:** Use these prompts to guide the older adult through imagery.

1. Ask the older adult to assume a comfortable position either sitting or lying down.
2. Ask them to close their eyes.
3. Avoid folding arms or crossing legs.
4. Read the following out loud, slowly:
  - a. Breathe in slowly and deeply.
  - b. As you breathe out slowly, feel yourself beginning to relax; feel the tension leaving your body. Now breathe in and out slowly and regularly, at whatever rate is comfortable for you.
  - c. To help you focus, breathe slowly and rhythmically. Breathe in as you say silently to yourself, “in, two, three.” Breathe out as you say silently to yourself, “out, two, three.” Or, each time you breathe out, say silently to yourself a word such as “I am peaceful”, or “I am relaxed.” Find a word or phrase that helps you focus and slow your breathing.
  - d. You may imagine that you are doing this in a place you have previously found very calming and relaxing, such as lying in the sun at the beach. Stay with this thought for a few minutes.
  - e. Bring your thoughts back to your breathing. Take two more deep breaths in and out and allow yourself to open your eyes.

**Peaceful images may be added by asking additional questions:**

- Can you remember any situation, even when you were a child, when you felt calm, peaceful, secure, hopeful, or comfortable?
- Think of a favorite location that brings you joy.
- Do you get a relaxed feeling when you listen to music?
- Do you have any favorite music?
- Do you have any favorite poetry that you find uplifting or reassuring?
- Are you now or have you been spiritually or religiously active? Do you have favorite readings, hymns, or prayers? Even if you haven't heard or thought of them for many years, these experiences may still be very soothing.

Families may record favorite music, poems, or prayers for the older adult to use.

**NOTE: The clinician should only administer non-pharmacological therapies that are within their particular scope of practice. Follow the policies and procedures of your organization regarding administration of non-pharmacological therapies.**

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#### References

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