Methods of Relaxation for Chronic Pain

by YVONNE BANKS

Using Daydreams to Control Chronic Pain

When a person experiences constant pain, it can be agonizing. You can only take so much medication to help alleviate it but that doesn't mean it takes care of it all. Other techniques of coping need to be implemented in order to have adequate pain control. One such way is using your mind. This is a useful tool for pregnant women who try to cope with labor contractions without pain medication. Using methods of relaxation and "daydreaming" works on the mind by distracting it to think about more pleasurable experiences.

How to Dream Away the Pain

You will need to set your environment up to have maximum relaxation. A dark room where you can sit in a relaxed position is optimal. You can also be in a quiet room with your eyes closed or focused on a certain point. When you are so used to being in pain, it may take practice just to release muscle tension and let yourself go.

Slow your breathing and breathe deeply. Think of a word and repeat it if you find yourself distracted or your mind is wandering. Do this for a few minutes. If you feel like you are relaxed enough, you can start to use any of the following imagery techniques:

- **Focus on a part of your body that isn't in pain.**
  This method of imagery has you focusing on a place on your body that experiences no pain. Then you begin to imagine it having an altered sensation. You can imagine your hand warming up, for instance. This is to help your mind to focus on something else other than the painful area of your body.
- **Dissociation from the pain.**
  You imagine the painful part of your body as separate from the rest of you. If you have a painful leg, you think of it as sitting on the other side of the room, away from you. You keep it in your mind that it is not a part of you.
- **Splitting up the sensations felt.**
  If you are experiencing several types of sensations with your pain, like pins and needles with a burning feeling, you may try separating them. Then, just focus on the lesser of the two. Maybe you can deal with the sensation of tingling more so than the pain. Just focus on the tingling instead.
- **Pretend to have anesthesia.**
  In this imagery, you see a doctor inject a numbing medication to your area of discomfort. You can feel the pain subsiding.
- **Go back to when you were pain-free.**
  Take yourself back to a time when you were young and carefree. You can remember those times when you never felt any pain when you walked or played. This exercise has you remember those times so that you can "feel" what it was like not to have pain.
- **Positive imagery.**
  This is a popular fantasy where you are somewhere else where it is enjoyable and relaxing. You see yourself moving freely without any pain to get in your way.

Relaxing Through the Pain

It is recommended that you should work on mental exercises to cope with pain at least 30 minutes at a time, at least three times a week to benefit from it. The mind is an amazing thing and to use it to control the pain and discomfort is short of miraculous. These techniques have been found to be effective in pain control and will lessen the dependence on addictive medications.