Explorations in Mindfulness

beach visualization

# Beach Visualization: Exploring the Senses with Gratitude

By: Danielle Palli (14 minutes)

For this visualization, led by Danielle Palli, we explore calling to mind our main senses of sight, sounds, taste and smell, as well as where we are in space. Not only is this a powerful mindfulness tool, but it also encourages us to notice sensory experiences that bring us joy. This may include simple things such as digging one’s toes in the sand at the beach, or the smell of the Earth after it rains. When we tune in to those senses and savor them, we can experience gratitude in a deeper and more frequent way. The benefits of a grateful life include greater longevity, a better immune system, and better overall wellbeing.

The Process:

1. For this meditation, I invite you to get comfortable in your seat. You might choose to sit tall, but if you prefer to sit back and relax, that is totally up to you. Close your eyes or gaze gently at the floor, your hands can be resting in your lap or on your knees. You might find it helpful to bring the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth. It just helps people sometimes take deeper breaths. Mouth is closed, jaw relaxed. And we simply begin by drawing our attention to our breath … Inhaling and exhaling through the nose … not trying to control the breathing in any way … For some people it is helpful to notice the tip of their nose, the cooling sensation as you inhale, and the warming sensation as you exhale … or you may choose to follow your breath, inhaling to the back of the throat, drawing the air down into the belly, noticing the belly and rib cage expand … and exhale out. … Keep going for just a few moments ...

2. So, I would like you to imagine I'm going to take you on a little beach adventure. Imagine that you just arrived, and it is a perfect day. Not too cool, not too hot. The sun is shining, and you've just reached the actual beach and you slipped off your shoes and are stepping barefoot into that cool sand. It is real sugary sand that feels good on your feet.

3. Can you imagine, as you start walking along the beach, the feel of your foot pressing into the sand?... Feeling the sand give a little as you step ... What do you notice around you? What do you hear? … Perhaps the ocean waves … seagulls flying by … perhaps you hear children playing or music playing. Just keep walking, feeling your muscles move, feeling the gentle warmth of the sun ... You might notice the sun on your face depending on where the sun is and what time of day you've chosen … Take in all the sounds and start to take in all the sites. What else are you seeing around you? Do not worry if you cannot visualize perfectly, just get a sense of the beach.

4. Perhaps you walk all the way down to the water … and you start to smell the salty air ... Notice how the bottom of your feet feel as you step into the water right where the sand and the water meet … You might notice the waves lapping around your ankles ... How does the water feel, is it gentle? Is it cool? Then take in the feelings and any of the smells … the sounds … the sights. You might even be able to taste the salty air ... Notice where you are in space … for example, where other people are … where the birds might be … you might even see a turtle nest ...

5. Now you have discovered you are a little bit hungry, so you walk up the beach, walking on the cool sand, noticing your muscles moving … Noticing the feeling of the air on your skin …Taking a moment to see if it's breezy out, or if it's calm. You reach a blanket that someone has set out for you. There is a big blanket and a picnic basket. Go ahead and take a seat near the basket. Take a moment to feel how your body feels as you sit on the sand on this blanket, you might even reach down and touch and feel the texture of the blanket. And whenever you are ready, I would like you to open the basket and inside is your favorite food. It can be from anywhere in the world. It is right there in front of you. And there are no calories during this meditation, so go ahead and reach in, take it out. And as you unwrap it, feel the texture or unpack it and go ahead and take a bite … and truly savor whatever it is … Is it salty or sweet or maybe savory? … See if you can call to mind what that food smells like … the texture of the feel of it on your tongue ... Go ahead when you are ready and set that down on the blanket and reach back into the basket and pull out your favorite beverage ... It might be in a thermos and it could be cool or warm or room temperature. Take a sip, feeling the liquid, the heaviness on your tongue … savoring the flavor. You might even notice the feel of it as you swallow and it goes down your throat and warms or cools your throat ... Notice any aromas. Go ahead and set the thermos or container down.

6. Now you have invited someone to join you on your lunch. So, I would like you to bring that person in, they've just arrived. Take a moment to observe them. What do they look like?... What are they wearing?... Are there any scents associated with them such as a cologne or perfume? … And what does their voice sound like when they talk?... Notice how you feel about this person. They have taken a seat down near you … and you are offering them some of the food and drink from the basket ... And I'd like you to pause here ... and one more time take it all in … first noticing what do you see around you? … Add in what you hear around you … Add in any tastes you might notice, such as the salty air or remembrance of the beverage you just drank …What kind of smells do you notice? …Perhaps from the food, the drink … perhaps the air around you? What do you physically feel in the ground beneath you and your hands, however you are sitting? Notice where you are in space compared to the other person … And notice how you are feeling physically and emotionally.

7. And as you notice this experience, just open up to that feeling of gratitude that you have eyes that can see and hear, and you can touch and taste and smell … That you can be in an experience of having someone with you with whom you are grateful ... So just take a moment to express a little gratitude toward that person who is joined you …Perhaps calling to mind something that they've done that you're grateful for … Perhaps you've done something for them, and you feel really good about how they took that opportunity ... So, you are sending a little gratitude toward that person, a little gratitude for just being in that experience … and a little gratitude to yourself for engaging in this practice.

8. So now I would like you to return to your breath, simply noticing the inhalation and the exhalation ... If thoughts come to mind, gently turn them into clouds and let them float by … and draw your awareness back to your breath. And if you are in the place to do so, feel free to lose the breath awareness and just be in this moment. When you are ready, you can slowly open your eyes in your own time.