



Introducing Participants to Guided Imaging

The [Introduction to Foresight](#) presentation raises the point that foresight draws on our mental movies. For participants new to foresight, a general guided imaging exercise can demonstrate our capacity to envision the future through our mental models. As participants tap into their intuition and imagination to explore plausible future outcomes, they realize in a tangible way that foresight is not about forecasting trends. (For information on how guided imaging is used in foresight studies, see the Guided Imaging Facilitator's Guide (forthcoming).)

SHORT GUIDED IMAGING EXERCISE (5 MINUTES):

If you would like to provide a simple demonstration of a guided imaging exercise, this may prove useful:

- Ask participants to shut their eyes and observe how the mind answers certain general questions. Keep the questions simple, such as:
 - “How many doors are in your home? How many windows are in your kitchen?”
 - Ask participants to observe what happened. We are not looking for the specific number of windows or doors here, only a demonstration that they use visualization in every aspect of their lives and that it is a natural and common tendency, even if we are not aware that we are doing it.
- Another simple question is:
 - “Picture someone is in the kitchen with you. Ask them a question about something you would like to know.”
 - Notice that we often use such mental movies to inform our actions. Before an important conversation, we can anticipate likely responses and then decide how we want to approach the subject.

LONGER GUIDED IMAGING EXERCISE (15 MINUTES):

This longer guided imaging exercise allows participants to experience how completely they can create a world in their mind starting from just a few suggestions from the facilitator. It is helpful to take a minute or so to ensure participants are sufficiently relaxed before reading the visualization

script. This helps participants to shut off the critical mind so that the imagination can run more freely.

- **Relaxation:** Use sensory images to get people to relax. Ask participants to do the following:
 - “Close your eyes and think of a place that makes you calm.”
 - “Relax in your chair, feel your back against the chair, feel your feet against the floor, and your arms at your sides.”
 - “Relax your forehead. Relax your jaw. Relax your shoulders and neck. Relax your hips.” (These are the places that hold the most tension for people.)
 - “Concentrate on your breath. Take a deep breath in. And take a deep breath out.” (Repeat deep breathing—in and out—three times.)
 - “Try to imagine that your stresses, your anxieties, your deadlines, are rolling off your head, down your shoulders, down your arms, and falling away to the floor.”
 - “Acknowledge your thoughts as they flow by, but turn your attention back to your breath.”
 - “Keep your eyes closed.”
- **Visualization:** Lead participants through a general guided imaging exercise by slowly and calmly reading a script such as the one below. Read with a long pause after each question so participants can fill in their own details. It may help to practice the pacing by recording yourself and playing it back to try the guided imaging exercise yourself; it is very easy to read too fast. Below is an example of a general script that can be used for this purpose (it is adapted from a group visioning exercise by Wendy Shultz).

Imagine that you are outside, sitting in thick grass. The sky is blue and sunny. Feel the blades of grass in your fingers. You look around and notice you are sitting on a high hill. Around the top of the hill is a neatly trimmed hedge. You smell the grass, the wildflowers, the fresh breeze. Birds sing. Standing, you walk over to the hedge, where you have noticed a white gate. Putting your hand on the latch, you lift it, and pause—anything could be on the other side. You swing the gate open, and walk into a morning in the year 2030. You begin walking down the path, each step taking you deeper into this new world in the future.

You look down the hill, and realize that the best and highest hopes that you had for the future have ALL been realized. 2030 is so different from the current year. What do you see? Hear? Smell? You walk down the hill, further into this changed world. What does a day in 2030 look like?

You are approaching a community. What does it look like? What are people doing—the

children, the elderly, the middle-aged, the men, the women? What are they wearing? What kinds of occupations do you see people in? What do you hear— voices? animals? running water? engines? Can you tell how community decisions are made, how people travel, make connections across distances? Can you smell gardens? Cooking? What else do you hear? What else can you smell? What are the textures you see?

You may be curious how technology has shaped the way these people live. What are people eating? What does health care look like? What sources of energy keep this community going?

Choose an issue that interests you and go investigate. You can explore this community to learn from its inhabitants. Who can you talk to? Find a news source; what do the headlines say? Take a few minutes to tour this community.

Perhaps there is one more place you'd like to go before you return to the present. Make that visit. When you are ready, open your eyes. Draw, diagram or verbally summarize your vision of the future on the paper provided.

At the end of the long guided imaging exercise, allow participants to share a few highlights of what they experienced. Since the aim of this activity is simply to provide new participants with an experience of guided imaging, it is not necessary to collect all points or to record them for future use.

The general guided imaging script can be tailored slightly to stimulate early thinking around the project topic. For example, if the foresight study will explore the future of artificial intelligence, some of the questions could include: how is the use of artificial intelligence shaping the workplace? How does artificial intelligence affect consumer behaviour? How are interpersonal relationships affected by artificial intelligence? This can help participants anticipate some of the kinds of questions they might research once the scanning phase begins.

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