

Techniques and Suggestions

Imagery and Visualization

Decades of psychoimmunological research has confirmed that guided imagery can be an effective and beneficial tool for stress and pain relief. For example, the same areas of the brain are activated while only **visualizing** an action, as when **executing** the action itself (i.e. practicing piano or tennis). Guided imagery can help the mother attain inner focus during the most intense time of labor, and be used to replace scary images or thoughts with safe images or thoughts.

Visualization can be reinforced with nourishing metaphors, such as:

- ◆ *Contractions are like the tide, ebbing and flowing. Let yourself roll through the waves.*
- ◆ *Take a breath now. Let the pain exit your body with each breath. Let all the pain float away and dissipate into a cloud.*
- ◆ *Let's imagine a container to put the pain in and seal it away and put a solution in with it that will slowly eat it up.*
- ◆ *Imagine your pain as a streak of red paint that lessens in intensity as it changes colors and morphs into a soft, cool blue.*
- ◆ *Imagine that the pain is represented on a scale (like a thermometer). Imagine bringing the intensity of pain down one degree at a time. Watch the gauge line slowly go down and with each lower degree the pain eases even more.*
- ◆ *Imagine soaking in a magical hot springs. The water has a healing balm that soothingly seeps into your body, easing out all the tension.*
- ◆ *Imagine you are being held and cuddled by the mermaids who live in the springs. They tell you to relax in their arms and they will take all the pain away.*