



# Reflections on Reformulating Psychology, Guided Imagery and Integrative Medicine

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### Editorial

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### Editorial

The first step in implementing guided imagery is reflecting on its start in psychology. To appreciate this start is to give homage to “*Man and His Symbols*” by C. G. Jung, though at times a difficult read its concepts are important because Jung incorporates and discusses the role of the unconscious mind. He outlines how this part of the mind can be used to interpret behaviors and feelings. He also describes how dreams play a role in understanding interpersonal interactions and conflicts. For example, I applied Jung’s theory in my private practice with a young woman who was unhappy in her marriage and viewed her husband as emotionally and financially withholding. During our session, she described a dream she had the night before our session, and as it was explained to me I interpreted it using Jung’s theory and told her my meaning and she agreed loudly with tears; my husband is a “dream disrupter” and a “happiness buster”. This new clarity in her relationship of 27 years was profound to her which then helped her adjust her behavior toward him but more importantly, changed her mood from sadness to disappointment, which was much more manageable, which then led to acceptance that “he is who he is”. This discovery was so meaningful to her, and she began to feel psychologically unstuck.

Another influential book written by Dr. Martin L Rossman [1], the title of his book *Guided Imagery for Self-healing*. In his book, he discusses the history of imagery and describes how words impact the guided imagery experience. This

book contains easy-to-follow imagery scripts and concepts. I would be remiss if I did not include Davenport’s [2] edited book, titled *Transformative Imagery*, especially the section on health and healing, listed in section two of this book. These two resources are equally useful, especially if a person is new to the field of healing or interested in jump starting their interests in alternative interventions. They provide information that helps to frame when and how guided imagery evolved and expanded over time in medicine, *Staying Well with Guided Imagery* written by Belleruth Naparstek [3], was another jewel. This book was written in 1995 but still holds relevance to the field of psychology as it relates to health and healing. I especially enjoyed learning the script that guides an individual towards connecting to their feelings. Often, I work with clients who are disconnected from their feelings due to trauma. I believe that these guided scripts will help clients bridge their emotional gaps.

### Insights and Challenges to Consider

One major insight has been that the use of guided imagery does not require a trance-like state prior to guidance instructions. Thus, emphasizing that there is a difference between hypnosis and guided imagery. Historically, I have always started off with guided imagery but did not implement my script until a trance was developed. This approach took time and sometimes more than one session was needed to develop a therapeutic bond deep enough to trust the use of hypnosis and trust. However, guided imagery is seen less threatening knowledge, and most therapists can start this intervention much sooner and without a trance state.

The challenges that most of my clients are faced with are unresolved childhood issues, trauma, or relationship issues. I



have been practicing for over 20 years and learned that there is only a small window of opportunity for healing to take place with the help of a skilled clinician. In addition, we often only get one chance to make a good first impression, so mastery of skills is important for efficient and effective healing. Guided imagery is or can be a major player in this process. Guided imagery scripts on performance, grief release, and turning insight into action, just to name a few can be very useful to your clients. Of course, these scripts are based on the presenting problem for that session, which can change from week to week. Moreover, not every client is the same, thus client-centered interventions should be considered, even when their problems are the same, a script can be modified to meet the client's needs and cultural beliefs.

Martin Rossman has become my favorite and I believe it is because of his medical background and his ability to use medical knowledge in his teachings. I especially love it when the brain is incorporated in the presentation to explain the mechanics of guided imagery.

### Images of Wellness and Wholeness

The use of images can be powerful and impactful in creating motivation, promoting a goal or aspiring change. Images have been used in religious ceremonies, military events, wars and war heroes as a symbol of pride in our society. One example is an image of Jesus that was created with AI (artificial intelligence). This image was created with information from the Old Testament and historical artifacts. However, the image created looked nothing like the blonde hair and blue-eye Jesus that most of us have seen in churches, pamphlets, etc. He had brown skin, dark eyes, and brown wavy hair. The point here is that the historical image that most of us have seen with blonde hair and blue eyes, lines up with White Supremacy and is possibly historically incorrect and the doctrines of religion that were man-made were developed to maintain and control the overarching premise of race. This further suggests that individuals who look like Jesus are closer to Jesus and therefore are at the top of society's ladder. Conversely, if you do not look like Jesus, you must prove yourself to be worthy or deemed to be worthy by another who favors the image of Jesus, which continues to support the social construct of race. This revelation creates pause but it is worth examining the power of an image or symbol that has controlled society for centuries. Another example of the power of imagery is the discussion on the "Little Mermaid" and the notion that this fictitious figure should be White. Now this is not my thought but the thought of many when Disney re-released this movie in 2023. The movie, *Little Mermaid*, traditionally has been a White girl, and in 2023, the character was played by an

African American girl. There were many people excited to see it and many others refused to see it. In fact, argued that the mermaid is white despite the fact mermaids are mythical and not real. But the image was so powerful to make a change in her race was disruptive and shattered the image of many.

These two examples are discussed because our perceptions in the form of symbols and images are not only powerful but play a major role in how we function in the world and our daily lives. Our daily life is froth with conscious and unconscious images that impact our thoughts, feelings and behaviors that produce our overall well-being or angst. In other words, what we think and feel dictates our behaviors or choices. Consequently, it is our choices that maintain or break down our overall well-being or our sense of wholeness. Just consider the flags we wave, the Confederate Flag hung on government buildings, trucks, and billboards. Our society becomes split and froth with conflict.

### Other Integrative Approaches and my Final Reflections

Integrative interventions should always be an option when considering interventions that can improve the well-being and quality of life of our clients. I have seen firsthand that psychotherapy and medications do not always work for everyone. Most of these integrative interventions, if not all, are not invasive, and some can be taught to the client and he or she can use them without the presence of a clinician. For example, I use self-hypnosis on occasion when I feel my anxiety increasing, especially when I am facing a medical procedure. The principle of self-healing also holds true for guided imagery and other forms of self-healing. For instance, diaphragmatic breathing works to decrease the sympathetic nervous system, thus turning off the internal alarm so that a client could relax and proceed with a procedure.

Massages are also a modality discussed in the integrative medicine arena for the treatment of muscular and myofascial pain, including joint pain. These are medical conditions that are often treated with pain medications, that can lead to addictions. But massage therapy has been shown to reduce pain and increase range of motion in conditions like chronic back pain, migraine treatment, and other medical applications have been proven to be effective (Rossman,2016).

In conclusion, I believe it is up to us as clinicians to always use an integrative approach that includes traditional and less traditional methods in treating our clients. The ability for them to maintain autonomy, well-being and wholeness is part of the recipe for success!

**References**

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