

## **Preparing for Surgery with Deep Imagery**

**Jenny Garrison, RN**

When you know you will be facing surgery, imagery can be used to prepare the way. Imagery helps you “gather your forces”...to align with all of your helpers in the unseen world. Thus you are buttressed with help from the spiritual and subconscious realms. Imagery helps you prepare you for the experience by taking away the edge of fear and inner constriction. Imagery also helps you facilitate a positive effect, allowing you to be an important player in this dramatic event. It does this by using your wishes and desires to prepare you for an optimum outcome in the surgical experience. Imagery also helps you in the recovery process too. However, the focus of this essay is on the preparation.

### **Gathering Your Forces**

Preparing yourself for imagery is akin to calling out for all available inner resources. Close your eyes and surround yourself with prayer. Allow several minutes for the mind to become quiet. As you do this your body will relax. Next, invite the image of a “safe place” to come into your imagination. Look around for a moment. Adjust to being there by noticing what you are wearing and everything around you, including how you feel. When it feels right, invite an Inner Healer to come forth.

The Inner Healer may be represented by any myriad of images such as human, animal and inanimate objects. Ask the image if it is here to help you heal. If the image feels right, trust that the image will give you healing information. Spend some time getting to know the Inner Healer (what do they look like, what are they wearing, how do they feel to you.) Then ask the Inner Healer, “What needs to happen?” Go with the flow of images as you follow what needs to happen next.

You might want to invite the Inner Healer to be with you as you visit the part of the body that will be operated on. Notice how this part of the body shows itself to you (realistic or symbolic images). Ask this part of your body if it has a message for you. Dialogue with your body and share any thoughts or feelings that you have with this part of yourself. Ask the Inner Healer for help and guidance as you do this. Tell this part of your body what is going to happen and what you expect of it. If there is going to be removal of a part, ask that your body release the part easily into the hands of the surgeon. Be honest and don't stifle emotion if it is present. Tears are healing and express deep caring.

When you feel done, return to special place with your Inner Healer. You may want to ask other helpers to come forward; those inner helpers who would be with you in love, healing, and support as you prepare for surgery. Like the Inner Healer, these helpers may come in many forms...angels, animals, saints, spiritual masters. Greet and welcome those who come forward. Ask them how they would like to support you as you prepare for surgery.

Often, there is a long (it seems quite long!) period of waiting before surgery. You may be on a stretcher waiting to go into the operating room. This is the perfect time to have your helpers present, to gather your forces, to have them with you in invisible and silent support.

Spend time with your inner healer in the days and weeks before surgery. Check in with him/her daily.

### **Letter to Your Body**

Another powerful support involves writing a letter to your body. Tell your body what is going to happen. Thank it for its faithful service. Ask it for its co-operation. There is a brief window of time as you are “going under” with general anesthesia that you are very, very receptive. Take advantage of this receptive time by including in your letter to your body all the suggestions that you would like to manifest post operatively, even if they are not about the specifics of the surgery. For example, my life is full of friends and laughter; I enjoy opportunities to travel; I eat healthy foods that nourish my strong and slender body; I engage in meaningful and fulfilling work.

In the days before surgery, read your letter to your body often. As you are waiting for your surgery, bring all your healing helpers to mind and heart. Let them be with you. Let the inner healer be with you and imagine your surrender covers you in blessings.

Keep these suggestions in a safe place so you can refer to them if future surgery is needed. Ask in prayer that your surgeon and his/her assistants may be the hands of God as your time of surgery draws near. Know that you have done your part to prepare, and let go in trust. May blessings follow you and surround you as you move toward, into, and out of the time of surgery

The following imagery experience was part of the surgical preparation that I did prior to a hysterectomy and operative repair procedure. A childbirth related weakness in my pelvic floor had gradually worsened necessitating this fairly major operation.

*“As I go to the healing place, I am aware of a stream and sand. The sun is shining, and a blanket lies on the sand. I call for my inner healer. I see an Indian man with long, dark hair and an eagle mask. He has white wings and is lean and strong, with dark eyes. I also see an Elephant (an animal I have known since my first imagery experience). A dark horse with a black mane and tail is there too. They tell me they are a team, a medicine team. They invite me to lie on the blanket. The Indian takes my head and cups his hands around the base of my skull. The elephant is on my right, and is very happy. The horse is on my left and I am aware of an angel at my feet who is not fully visible. The angel and the Indian are working together, supporting the deep rhythms of my body. I feel myself surrender to what they are doing. They tell me they will do this before, during, and after the surgery.*

*“I ask them to be with me as I look into my body, into my pelvis. I see the image of a mortar and pestle (the bowl and wand used traditionally for grinding*

*herbs). It is made of stone. I sense a weakness at the very bottom of the bowl or mortar, as if it were crumbling. I ask to see the image that would represent wholeness and healing, and I see the same vessel with a re-plastering of masonry that has rebuilt the wall. I then ask my body what it wants to tell me. I hear, "Someone needs to do the work." I sense a blessing for the upcoming surgery. I use my hands to bless my body and bless the medical team that will do the work. I feel the blessing move forward to the time of the surgery. I sense my helpers around me, the Indian, Horse, Elephant, and Angel. I am asked to hold the image of the medical personnel being blessed. All four directions where my helpers stand are being blessed. Then I hear the words... "repair and artistry." I see an image of the Sistine Chapel, the beauty of that repaired chapel with the restored painting on the ceiling. I know everything will be all right. I am told to hold the image of this part of my body as a chapel. I know that my four helpers will be with me during the surgery, surrounding me and protecting me, seeing that all goes well."*

When I had this imagery experience, I had not yet met my surgeon. When I did meet him, I looked at his hands. They looked like an artist's hands. Months after a successful procedure, I lay on his examining table, and he looked at the barely visible scar from the incision he had made. The nurse by his side leaned over and said to me, "He's really an artist you know."

### **Healing Imagery Journey**

1. Protect the space with prayer.
2. Quiet your mind and relax your body by using your breath.
3. Imagine yourself in a healing place, a special place where you love to be. Ask, "Does anything need to happen here?"
4. Invite your Inner Healer to come forth. (Greet and thank your inner Healer for coming. Ask, "Do you have a message for me?" "Is there anything you need?" and "What needs to happen?")
5. Ask your inner healer if he or she would accompany you as you look at your body or the part of your body in need of healing.
6. Call out inside and ask the part of your body where you are experiencing dis-ease to reveal itself to you as an image.
7. Carefully observe the image that comes as a symbolic representative of your illness or problem.
8. Begin dialogue with the image. Request the participation of your inner healer. Ask, "Do you have a message for me?" "Is there anything you need?" and "What needs to happen?"
9. Now, ask the image to show you what it would look and feel like if it were whole and healthy. Request the inner healer's presence and participation as this image reveals itself to you.

- Ask this image of wholeness if it would offer a gift in the

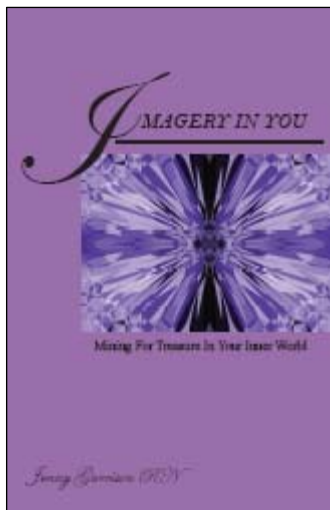
form of a healing image that you can work with.

- Ask, "Do you have a message for me?" "Is there anything you need?" What needs to happen?"

10. Thank the images that have come to you as you say good-bye.
11. Take your time returning to the physical world focus upon your breathing.
12. Record your journey.
13. Create ways to integrate your journey and work with the healing images you have been given.

### Writing a Letter to Your Body

1. Begin your letter as though you were writing to a dear friend. Speak to your body with loving words (ex: dear, beautiful, beloved, cherished).
2. Tell your body what is going to happen, to the extent that you know.
3. Let your body know what you need it to do and what you expect of it. Include your deepest hopes.
4. If you so desire, write your innermost hopes, including what you wish for your body.
5. Read the letter out loud to your body. Read as though you were reading the letter to a dear friend. Read it often.



**Jenny Garrison, RN** is the author of *Imagery in You: Mining for Treasure in Your Inner World*, and the audio CD *Gentle Yoga with Jenny Garrison a Deep Imagery guide*. She is a Kripalu Yoga teacher with a professional background in nursing. Her imagery certifications are with *The Academy for Guided Imagery and The International Institute for Visualization Research*. Jenny brings to her expert guiding a clear, loving heart and a strongly spiritual base. A seasoned journeyer herself, she leads others competently and wisely. Her presentations are informal and experiential, weaving mind, body and spirit in an atmosphere of discovery and homecoming. Visit her website at [www.imageryinyou.com](http://www.imageryinyou.com)