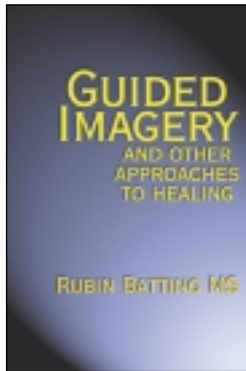


GUIDED IMAGERY

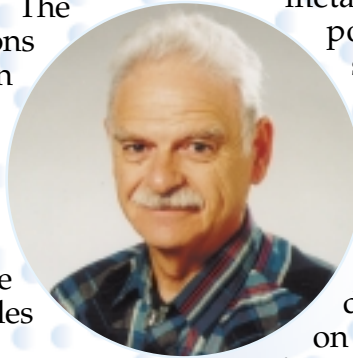
by Rubin Battino MS, acclaimed author of *Ericksonian Approaches* and
Guided Imagery and Other Approaches to Healing



GUIDED IMAGERY has become popular as a method for helping people who have life-threatening diseases, as well as for enhancing skills.

This brief introduction to the subject (see **Guided Imagery and Other Approaches to Healing** for a more complete

treatment) will emphasize its role in healing. It is useful to distinguish between a *disease*, which is the physical manifestation like cancer, emphysema or a broken leg, and an *illness*, which is the cultural interpretation of what the disease means to the person. Diseases can be *cured*, that is, eliminated with the body being brought back to health. Illnesses are *healed*, that is, healing has to do with the *spiritual* and *religious* and *meaning* aspects. It is fascinating to note that some level of curing often accompanies healing via mind/body interactions. The scientific evidence for these interactions comes from the research done in psychoneuroimmunology (PNI). Studies in PNI show that the brain is not some passive computer, but an active synthesizer of what are called "messenger molecules" that have profound effects on bodily functions. The brain is also a receptor for these molecules produced in other parts of the body.



Guided imagery is designed to enhance mind/body interactions for healing. First, the person is calmed using any relaxation method. Relaxation is important for two reasons: first, the mind is more receptive to suggestions in the relaxed state; second, there is evidence that the immune system is enhanced in that condition. Although the word "imagery" is used for this kind of work, the "image" need not be visual, i.e. it can also be auditory or kinesthetic. It is important to tailor the healing imagery to the person. To rid the body of cancer some people prefer powerful images like fierce predators or ray guns or other destructive devices. If you are a pacifist or spiritual, then an angel who gently persuades cancer cells to leave the body may be more appropriate. One friend who loves reading westerns has a posse of cowboys riding through his body who shoot up any cancer cell that dares to appear. A religious friend has a personal angel who removes recalcitrant cancer cells by swathing them in a cocoon of love and escorting them from the body. In the relaxed state the specific imagery that

the client requests is used to help them heal themselves. Suggestions are made that this healing can go on just as fast as the body can get rid of the debris. Additional suggestions are made about the person being able to continue this healing imagery work on their own after the session. Audio tapes are often produced for listening to at other times. Guided imagery work is also enhanced by the use of hypnotic language forms (see *Ericksonian Approaches: A Comprehensive Manual* by Thomas L. South and myself for details on the use of hypnosis and on language for hypnosis). General audio tapes for healing are sometimes useful, but the listener needs to listen to a variety before settling on one that is right for him or her.

Guided imagery should be part of a more complete approach to healing which includes dealing with unfinished business, hopes and dreams, meaning, and coping skills. The work of David Spiegel, who used group psychotherapy with fourth stage metastatic breast cancer patients, is a case in point. He found that women in the support group lived on average twice as long from the start of the study as women in the control group. Psychotherapy can and does have profound physical effects. A multi-modal approach to working with people who have life-challenging diseases is the subject of my new book on guided imagery for healing. The work of Lawrence LeShan demonstrated that psychotherapy with "terminal" cancer patients generally led to healing, and with surprising frequency also led to some level of curing. LeShan wrote about helping people to "sing your own unique song," or in Joseph Campbell's words, "find your bliss," or in Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, find the meaning in their lives.

Guided imagery can be a powerful tool for health ... as you sit there reading this, just relax even more, and imagine a Healing Presence with you and within you, adjusting, altering, fixing, healing ...
Thank you.

Rubin Battino MS

Rubin Battino MS has a private practice specializing in very brief therapy in Yellow Springs, Ohio. He teaches courses in The Department of Human Services as an adjunct professor at Wright State University, and is president of The Milton H. Erickson Society at Dayton. Ruben currently serves as a facilitator of The Charlie Brown Exceptional Patient Support Group at Dayton, Ohio.