

SHEET 6 Helpful visualisations for pain relief

You can follow up the basic mindfulness of breathing exercises with some simple visualisations. These can be very effective in helping you reduce and manage pain.

Start with the basic mindfulness of breathing exercise or body scan. When you are feeling calm and relaxed, take yourself to the area of pain. Ask yourself some questions about the pain:

- What colour is it?
- Is it a shape?
- How big is it?
- Is it hot or cold?
- Are there any feelings associated with the pain? What are they?
- Is the pain trying to tell you anything?

When you have a visual of what your pain looks like to you, now imagine you have a magic dial that can change the pain experience:

- If the pain is jagged turn the dial so it becomes smooth.
- If the pain is large turn the dial to make it smaller.
- If the pain is black turn the dial to a different colour of your choice, e.g. golden, soothing white or whatever works for you.

If you identify emotions associated with the pain just feel free to feel them. It is not uncommon when you do this to cry or feel angry. Just feel what you feel and don't try to suppress the feelings or analyse them.

It may feel a bit 'new agey', but it is worth tuning into your body to see if your pain has a message for you. Modern neuroscience and research has shown that pain is a result of the body feeling under threat; if you can identify what the threat is and do something about it, your pain will reduce. For example, this might be taking a holiday, not working through your lunch break, or changing your job.