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Heart Health

Welcome to this Healthy Living to Go Podcast from Kaiser Permanente. Designed to fit the way you live and the way you learn. Listen. Live well. And thrive.

[Music]

I'm Belleruth Naparstek, and this is guided imagery designed to help you maintain a strong heart and healthy arteries. I hope you find it to be a powerful stress reducer and motivator. It's not a substitute for smart eating or regular exercise. But listening to this once or twice a day will reinforce any heart health program you are already on. The guided imagery has been very carefully researched and written. Every word, image, phrase and idea has a good reason for being here. Try to listen once or twice a day for several weeks. Over time, it will have a stronger and stronger effect. Usually different parts of this will capture your attention at different times. Always feel free to ignore or change what doesn't suit you. Your mind will probably do that for you anyway. You don't need to pay perfect attention for it to work. In fact, as you relax you'll probably drift in and out, and that's fine. Especially if you listen repeatedly. If you notice your mind wandering, you can gently guide it back. And because the imagery is deliberately designed to help you relax, you shouldn't play it while you're driving or operating machinery. The second segment is affirmations and those you can listen to any time. If possible, try to position your hands the same way each time you listen. Over time, this will become a kind of conditioning queue that helps you immediately move into a place of deep inner relaxation. And finally, don't worry if this sometimes brings forth some unexpected emotion. If you find that happens, it just means the imagery is working for you in a deep way. So see if you can take this next while to commit yourself to this process of engaging the power of your imagination by gently immersing yourself in this safe and easy process. All you have to do is settle in. Relax. And let yourself listen.

To begin with, see if you can position yourself as comfortably as you can, shifting your weight so that your body is well supported and gently allowing your eyes to close, arranging it so your head, neck, and spine are straight, and letting your hands rest comfortably somewhere on your body, on your chest, or midriff, or abdomen so you can feel the rise of your body when you breathe in and the way it settles back down when you breathe out, becoming more and more attuned to the feel of your breath moving in and out of your body.

[Music]

And now, taking a nice, deep, full, cleansing breath and breathing out fully and completely, feeling the expansion of your belly with each breath in and the way your body subsidizes with each breath out.

[Music]

And again, breathing in, and this time, imagining that you're sending the warm energy of your breath to any part of your body that's sore or tense or tight, and releasing the tension with the exhale so you can

feel your breath going to all the tight tense places, warming and loosening and softening them, and then gathering up the tension and breathing it out so that more and more, you can feel safe and comfortable, relaxed and easy, watching the cleansing action of your breath. And any unwelcome thoughts that come to mind, those, too, can be sent out with the breath, released with the exhale, so that for just a moment, the mind is empty. For just as split second, it is free and clear space and you are blessed with stillness. And any emotions that are rocking around inside, those, too, can be noted and acknowledged and sent out with the breath so that your emotional self can be still and quiet, like a lake with no ripples. And now, if you would, see if you can imagine a place where you feel safe and peaceful and easy. A place you used to go or somewhere you go to now or a place you've always wanted to be. It could be by the ocean or in the woods or up in the mountains or desert. It doesn't matter. Just so it's a place that feels good and safe and peaceful to you, and allowing the place to become real to you in all its dimensions. Looking around you, enjoying the colors, the scenery. Looking over to your right and over to your left.

[Music]

And feeling whatever you're sitting against or lying upon. Maybe you're leaning against a friendly oak tree or lying on sweet meadow grass. Or maybe you're walking in the woods on a slippery carpet of scented pine needles. Or you might be at the shore, with cool wet sand oozing between your toes and gentle waves lapping at your ankles. Or maybe you're just sitting on a nice warm rock in the sun.

[Music]

And listening to the sounds of the place, birds singing, or the rustling sounds of a soft wind through the leaves or the powerful rhythmic crash of ocean waves or the gentle soothing sound of a bubbling brook. Just so you're letting your ears become attuned to all the beautiful sounds of this place that is so safe and peaceful to you.

[Music]

And smelling its rich fragrance, whether it's the sharp bracing scent of salt sea air, the sweet heavy fullness of flowers and grass, the pungent dark green smell of peat moss in the forest. Sometimes the air is so rich and redolent you can practically taste it on your tongue.

[Music]

And noticing the feel of the air on your skin as it caresses your face and neck. And it might be crisp and dry or balmy and wet. So you're just letting your skin enjoy the wonderful presence of this place that is so safe and peaceful to you.

[Music]

And letting its healing presence soak into your skin. Letting it feel you. Feeling it permeate muscle and tissue and bone, all the way down into each and every cell.

[Music]

So with every breath in, you're inhaling the nourishing beauty of this place, bringing it into your chest, breathing it into your heart. And with each exhale, you're more and more able to release worry and

care. Able to feel the beauty of the place tingle and vibrate all around you, as if it were surrounding with a gently vibrating cushion of energy, softly enveloping and protecting you.

[Music]

A cushion that becomes more and more palpable and perhaps even seeing its sparkling dots of dancing color. Feeling it tingle on your skin or hearing its gentle humming sound.

[Music]

And inside the cushion, you can feel safe and easy, knowing you're able to take in whatever is nourishing to you, but insulated from whatever you don't want or need.

[Music]

And now, see if you can imagine that this cushion of energy is drawing to it all the love and sweetness that has ever been felt for you by anyone at any time. Feeling it pull in all the caring, all the love and kindness that has ever been sent your way. Every prayer and good wish, every smile and gesture of thanks, permeating and filling the field of energy all around you, pulling it all in like a powerful magnet, calling every good wish home. And so increasing the powerful protective field all around you.

[Music]

And perhaps even sensing the presence of those who have loved or cared for you, those who love you now, or who will love you in the future. Just the ones you want with you. And sensing them around you now. Perhaps even catching a fleeting glimpse of somebody. Maybe noticing an old familiar scent or hearing the familiar tambour of a dearly loved voice. Possibly feeling a presence at your side or just behind you. Or the soft weight of a gentle hand on your shoulder.

[Music]

People from your life, alive or long gone. There might even be a dear old pet, a guardian angel, a powerful ancestor, an old teacher or guide, sweet spirits, magical beings. Perhaps familiar, perhaps not. It doesn't matter. Just so you feel their protection and support. And breathing in all that love and care, deeply and fully, all the way into your heart.

[Music]

Aware, perhaps, of the warmth gathering in the center of your chest, very soft and rich and full. All around and through your heart, infusing each chamber with soft waves of gentle pulsing warmth, restoring vitality to weary tissue. Sending reinforcement and healing to each and every cell as your heart grows stronger and fills with gratitude.

[Music]

Aware of the warmth in your heart, pulsing life and strength and healing to every part of your body. Infusing your whole being with comfort and peace, spreading widely and evenly, like ripples in a pond. And you might even see this spreading as a beautiful color infusing your whole body.

[Music]

Liberating tiny clever proteins and releasing them into the blood stream so they can surround the tiny globules of fat and enclose the waxy particles of cholesterol. Tiny protein-coated capsules transporting them safely back to the powerful filter of your liver, where receptors can greedily soak up the fatty particles so they can leave the body altogether or be recycled for more efficient use. And draining the tiny pockets of fatty material that may have begun to appear inside the artery walls, reducing any fatty streaks, healing any tiny ruptures or lesions, shrinking and breaking down any plaque that may have started to form. So that more and more, the insides of the artery walls can return to their original, elegant, open smoothness, like pristine tunnels, shining like lacquered tile, with blood flowing easily past slick, clean surfaces. Keeping the arteries flexible and strong, supporting the clever mechanism that knows when to widen the artery walls and when to contract them. Keeping the blood supply strong and steady and even. Maintaining the generous flow of nutrients that bring just what is needed, no more, no less, to muscle and tissue for heat, warmth, motion, and strength. Keeping the body in smooth and easy motion and knowing that it is not just the blood that is cleansing and clearing inside of you. Not just the muscle of the heart that is lightening its load, but that you, too, are dispersing the sludge of long-held hurts and resentments, breaking up ancient clumps of pain and grief, forgiving yourself and others for disappointments of the past. Draining away pockets of sorrow and remember instead the cushion of love and protection surrounding you, breathing it in deeply and fully, and breathing out any heaviness you may want to discard. Knowing you can be strong and productive, steady and even, able to do whatever you need to do with grace and ease. No push, no pressure, just a walk in the park, with your heart lighter, your body stronger, your spirit freer. Aware of the openness in your heart and all the peaceful power that resides there. Knowing that your heart is your home, the seat of your strength, the source of the generosity you were born with. Sensing in the vast space of your heart the presence of the unseen web that connects us all, one to the other. Luminous, pulsing, invisible strands that converge in the divine nexus of the heart. Knowing that you hold the whole world there, lightly, gently. And suddenly, you are certain. You know in your whole being that your heart can heal with the energy of its own loving kindness, that whatever seemed to be lost to you still abides there. That whatever you felt to be shattered by grief is still whole here. That whatever you thought was unforgiven has already been redeemed here. That there is nothing in this world that can't be healed in the vast richness and power of your own open heart.

[Music]

And so, breathing in the power of this awareness and breathing out your own gratitude, still aware of all the loving energy around you, knowing it is yours whenever you choose to notice it, you can once again become aware of your special place, although perhaps the colors around you are brighter, the sounds more vivid, the air more intense. Again, aware of your breath moving in and out of your belly. Aware of your hands and feet. Grounded in the support of the earth beneath you. Very gently, with soft eyes, allowing yourself to come back into the room, knowing in a deep place that you are better for this.

[Music]

And so you are.

[Music]

Affirmations are positive statements designed for repeated listening, a sort of reprogramming of your unconscious mind to combat negative thinking. Over time, they can help you make some fairly profound

changes in your attitudes. For some people, affirmations are more effective and appealing than guided imagery. See if you can listen to each statement in a state of open, relaxed attention, breathing in deeply with each one and repeating it softly to yourself either aloud or in your mind.

[Music]

I know there are times when I become worried, fearful, impatient, anxious or sad, and I accept what I feel as my inner truth of the moment.

[Music]

I know the more I can acknowledge and accept what I feel, without criticism or blame, the more I assist my body's natural tendency to repair and heal.

[Music]

More and more, I can soften around my feelings and release them, breathing in to soften them, and breathing out to release them.

[Music]

I know that when I let go of harsh expectations and unrealistic demands on myself and others, I assist my body's natural tendency to repair and heal.

[Music]

More and more, I can allow myself to let go of worrying about things I cannot control and refocus my attention on my own inner peacefulness.

[Music]

I know that the time to be motivated by a need to prove myself is over. Now is the time to do things out of love and celebration and the joy of self-expression.

[Music]

I know that when I can let go of impatience and hurrying and appreciate the beauty of the moment, I assist my body's natural tendency to repair and heal.

[Music]

More and more, I can forgive myself and others for errors of the past.

[Music]

I know that when I can let go of old pain, anger, resentment and fear, I lighten my heart and free up my life.

[Music]

More and more, I understand that the time for reinjuring myself by revisiting old wounds is over. Now is the time to open my heart to feelings of peace and love, and the freedom of forgiveness.

[Music]

I can see myself becoming more and more patient with myself and others.

[Music]

I know that I am learning to listen to my body and sense what it needs.

[Music]

More and more, I can consider the possibility that my body is my ally, my oldest friend and my steadiest companion.

[Music]

I know that when I appreciate my body, respect it and take good care of it, I assist its natural ability to repair and heal.

[Music]

More and more, I can take the time to touch a leaf, smell the morning air and receive the caress of a soft breeze on my face.

[Music]

I know that when I take time to appreciate the beauty and sweetness all around me, I give my body a powerful message to be strong and well, and to stay strong and well.

[Music]

I thank the medicines and procedures designed to help my body's natural tendency to repair and heal, and I join my strength and purpose to theirs.

[Music]

I can sense my blood becoming clearer and stronger, flowing freely, energized and mobile.

[Music]

I sense my body releasing protective proteins into the blood that surround and transport tiny particles and fat and cholesterol safely out of my arteries back to the powerful filter of my liver.

[Music]

I can sense the shrinking of any fatty streaks that may have begun to form inside the lining of my arteries.

[Music]

I can sense the gentle mending of any tiny ruptures or lesions inside the lining of my arteries.

[Music]

I can sense the reduction of any plaque that may have started to form inside the lining of my arteries.

[Music]

I can see the inside of my arteries becoming more and more open and smooth, looking like a shiny tunnel layered with lacquered tiles.

[Music]

I know that my arteries are able to widen when needed, and contract when needed in perfect keeping with what my body needs for itself.

[Music]

I can see and feel radiant sunlight entering and warming my body, sending comfort and solace deep into my heart.

[Music]

I can see and feel a powerful blue green wave of healing washing through me from head to toe, clearing away any unwanted debris and taking it out with the tide.

[Music]

I can see and feel a warm, pulsing, glowing blanket of magical comfort surrounding me, enveloping me with peace and safety and soaking its energy into me.

[Music]

I can feel my body tuning up, becoming more and more efficient, humming with power, vibrating with its own vital energy.

[Music]

I can see myself more and more willing and able to move and stretch, enjoying the feel of my body in smooth and easy motion.

[Music]

The blueprint that I hold in my mind's eye is the picture of myself vital, healthy and strong doing what I love to do without a thought.

[Music]

I am beginning to understand that I can be strong and productive without pushing or pressuring myself, that I can achieve much with simple grace and ease.

[Music]

More and more, I can open my heart to my own feelings of love, peace and gratitude.

[Music]

More and more, I can cleanse and clear the sludge of long-held hurts and resentments.

[Music]

I welcome this new awareness of the peaceful power in my own open heart, the seed of my strength and the home of my spirit.

[Music]

More and more, I know that my heart can heal with the energy of its own loving kindness.

[Music]

I welcome the idea that there is nothing in this world that can't be forgiven, healed or redeemed in the vast space of my own open heart.

[Music]

I invite assistance from my friends and loved ones, past, present and future to lend me their support and strength. I see myself surrounded by their love and caring and feel it all over my body like a warm wave.

[Music]

More and more, I can sense that I am cushioned and protected by all the love and sweetness that has ever been felt for me by anyone at any time.

[Music]

I can still feel around me a cushion of all the prayers, thanks and kindnesses that have ever been sent my way from anyone at any time.

[Music]

I salute my own courage, strength, endurance and resourcefulness in my efforts to take charge of my health and well-being.

[Music]

I know that when I let go of harsh expectations and unrealistic demands on myself and others, I assist my body's natural tendency to repair and heal.

[Music]

More and more, I can allow myself to let go of worrying about things I cannot control and refocus my attention on my own inner peacefulness.

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[Music]

I can still feel around me a cushion of all the prayers, thanks and kindnesses that have ever been sent my way from anyone at any time.

[Music]

I know that I have things to do, gifts to give, purposes to accomplish. I require a strong, healthy body and a clear peaceful mind for this.

[Music]

More and more, I know I am held in the hands of God and I am perfectly, utterly safe.

[Music]

And so you are.

[Music]