

Creating a Story

In this exercise we look at a piece of artwork and create a story from it, to explore the effect of imagination on our state of mind. The artwork that we are drawn to can tell us about our desires, whilst our imagination might unearth hidden thoughts and feelings.

Imagination itself is also very useful in relaxing the body and mind, with this exercise being particularly useful for people who always feel alert and stressed by their surroundings, to create some temporary retreat.

It can be done more than once, gaining a different experience with each artwork.

- Choose an artwork that portrays a scene or location, ideally a painting, though if you are limited in what's available this could be on a screen, in a book or even the view from your window.
- Position yourself in front of your chosen piece (or window frame!) at a distance which feels best for you.
- Take a comfortable, stable stance, with a relaxed body.
- Close your eyes. Take three slow, full breaths in and out, through the nose.
- Open your eyes and look into the painting, giving the eyes time to adjust to the colours and light.
- Take in the scene!

What does the colour say about the temperature? Is it cold, or warm, or hot? Is it raining? Windy? Sunny? Is it wet or dry? Start to feel what it's like to be stood in this painting. What does it smell like? What does it sound like? How does it feel to be stood here; is the ground soft, hard, crunchy, spongy, sticky?

- Play out the scene..

What happens next in this scene? Do you start to explore? Does something happen? Or does the scene stay is it is, with small movements happening?

- Close your eyes. Let the scene continue to play inside your mind, seeing where it takes you. Imagining further stimulus: smells, tastes, sounds and touch.
- Keeping the eyes closed. Become aware of your immediate surroundings. Feel your feet on the ground. Feel the muscles in your body. Feel the air around you. Notice the sounds around you.
- Take a breath in through the nose and out through the mouth. Open your eyes.
- Notice the painting and your surroundings, then make any mental notes of responses within yourself.

How does your mind feel? How does your body feel? Was it easy to imagine or difficult? Did you see anything in the painting that you didn't notice before? If you are repeating the exercise, was it easier to imagine a certain scene? Can you imagine a scene with nature easier or a scene with people?