The Wise Self

Imagery for Accessing Inner Wisdom

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

This imagery facilitates connection with an inner Wise Self or Wise Figure -- a part of the person that holds perspective, calm, and the capacity to see clearly even in the midst of difficulty. The script then guides the person to identify the specific quality that allows the Wise Self to remain unshaken, and to borrow and embody that quality.

Clinical Note:
The Wise Self is particularly useful for clients who are caught in cognitive loops -- rumination, catastrophizing, or chronic indecision. It accesses a different mode of knowing than the analytical mind. If the person cannot develop a Wise Self, they may use a Wise Figure -- a teacher, mentor, elder, or fictional character who embodies wisdom.

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Script

[Instruction] The Wise Self may appear as an older version of the person, a mentor, a teacher, an ancestor, a fictional character, or an abstract presence. It may not have a visual form at all -- it may be a voice, a feeling, or a quality of stillness. Let the person find what arises naturally.

Allow yourself to be comfortable...either lying down or sitting up -- with your back, neck and spine fully supported. Knowing that you will not be interrupted for the next little while, begin by gently closing your eyes.

[Instruction] Breathe audibly with the exhalation longer than the inhalation

Now begin to bring your attention to your breath -- the direct experience of your breath -- however it is...and however it changes. Allow yourself to softly focus your awareness on the breath that is arising right now...the in-breath and the out-breath...the rising and the falling. If you can, try to follow one full cycle of the breath -- from the beginning of the in-breath, through its entirety...the beginning of the out-breath through its entirety. Allowing yourself the time and the space to be in direct contact with the breath throughout one entire cycle.

[Instruction] Breathe audibly with the exhalation longer than the inhalation

As you continue to pay attention to the breath, you may notice distractions that arise. Just allow yourself to notice...those distractions...any bodily sensations...any thoughts that may arise. If possible, allow yourself to become aware of the separateness of those bodily sensations -- notice how those sensations are separate -- distinct from your thoughts, your ideas and your words.

[Instruction] Breathe audibly with the exhalation longer than the inhalation

We'll begin now with a deep breath in through your nose...inhaling slowly and deeply. Exhale through pursed lips until all the air has been released.

[Instruction] Breathe audibly with the exhalation longer than the inhalation

Now I would like you to imagine that somewhere -- perhaps in your comfortable place, perhaps somewhere else entirely -- there is a figure who embodies wisdom. This is not intellectual knowledge. This is the kind of knowing that comes from having lived, from having suffered, from having come through the other side of difficulty and found something solid to stand on. This figure may be an older version of you. It may be someone you have known -- a teacher, a grandparent, a mentor. It may be someone you have never met but can imagine clearly. Or it may simply be a presence -- a quality of calm certainty.

[Pause — 15 seconds]

When you have a sense of this Wise Self or Wise Figure, take a moment to notice how it holds itself. There is something about the way this figure exists in space that is different from how you feel right now. It is not anxious. It is not rushing. It is not trying to figure anything out. It is simply present -- fully here, fully settled, fully at ease with not knowing everything.

[Instruction] Breathe audibly with the exhalation longer than the inhalation

Now bring to this figure something that has been troubling you. Not the worst thing -- just something that has been taking up space in your mind. A worry. A decision. A feeling you have not known what to do with. You do not need to explain it in words. Simply bring it -- as a feeling, an image, a weight -- and set it down between you and the Wise Self.

[Pause — 10 seconds]

Now notice the Wise Self's response. It is not overwhelmed. It is not frightened. It does not rush to fix. It simply sees what you have brought and holds it in awareness without being destabilized by it. Notice that. This figure can look at what troubles you and remain steady. What quality allows that? Is it perspective -- the long view, the knowledge that this too will change? Is it acceptance -- the willingness to let things be as they are without needing them to be different? Is it trust -- the deep sense that you will find your way, even if you cannot see the path right now?

[Pause — 10 seconds]

Name that quality to yourself.

[Pause — 5 seconds]

Now imagine stepping into that quality. Not thinking about it. Stepping into it -- the way you would step into a warm room on a cold day. Feel it surround you. Feel it settle into your body. Notice what changes. Does your breathing slow? Does your jaw unclench? Does the thing that was troubling you look any different from inside this quality?

[Instruction] Breathe audibly with the exhalation longer than the inhalation

This figure is made of every wise person who ever held you, every moment of clarity you have ever had, every time you knew something was true before you could explain why. It is not separate from you. It is a part of you that has been waiting to be consulted.

[Pause — 15 seconds]

Before you leave, you may wish to ask the Wise Self one question. Not a complex question. A simple one. And then listen -- not with your analytical mind, but with the part of you that already knows. The answer may come as a word, an image, a feeling, or simply a shift in your body. Whatever comes, receive it.

[Pause — 15 seconds]

And when you are ready, gently bring yourself back to the room by counting up from one to five. When you reach the number five, your eyes will gently open. You will be awake and alert, and feeling only peace. One....Two....Three. Take a deep breath....Four....And five.

[Instruction] Allow the person to sit quietly. The Wise Self exercise often produces a sense of calm clarity. Do not rush to process verbally -- the insight may still be arriving.

"The Wise Self" by Linda Curran

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