

Finding Your “Happy Place” Exercise

By Beth Brown

The goal of the workshop is to create/remember a safe, happy environment to use in focusing when life gets stressful.

Structure of the session

Introduction: (5 minutes)

Have the moderator introduce the writer. The writer should begin by talking *briefly* about how we all have stress, and one way to deal with that stress is going to our “happy place”. Ask participants if they have ever heard the saying “I’m going to my happy place”. While it is usually said as a joke, it works! Have the writer tell participants that he/she has realized that lately that she needs to use the outlet of his/her “happy place” in her life and wondered if others do, too. Then, have them tell the participants that today they are going to find that place.

** It is important to not focus on the “stress” part of the exercise too much. While a “happy place” is something to turn to in times of stress, the exercise itself is meant to be happy, peaceful, and uplifting!*

Icebreaker: (15 minutes)

Have the writer lead participants through a focusing exercise. With calming, classical music playing softly in the background, have your writer lead the participants through the following focusing exercise:

“We’re going to start in the quiet this morning. Everyone close your eyes. We are going to imagine the happiest place on earth – FOR YOU. This can be a real place or an imaginary one. I will walk you through it. First, imagine that you are in a blank place. There’s nothing there. It’s silent. Then you start to hear sounds that make you feel good. What are they? Birds chirping? Your friend calling? A cat’s meow? Listen to that. Then you see the things around you that make you feel the most comfortable. What do you see? A comfy chair? Books? A table spread with your favorite foods? A garden of flowers? Let yourself imagine all those wonderful things. Now breathe deeply. You smell something that calms you. Is it something baking? Fresh soil? The ocean? Wait. There’s someone coming. Who is that? It’s someone you love to be with. Is it your dog? A beautiful horse? Your child? A friend? They are with you now, enjoying this perfect place. This is your happy place: these sounds, sights, smells, and feelings. Look around one last time. Open your eyes.”

For the icebreaker prompt, ask participants to **give that place a name and write down a few descriptors about the place**. Tell participants to jot down their ideas to be expanded upon during the writing exercise. Then, have the participants share their place and descriptors.

Writer introduces the topic (about 5 minutes):

After the icebreaker, have your writer introduce the following writing prompt and write it on the board:

“Write a story about your happy place. It can be a memory of something that happened at your happy place or something totally made up. It can be as fanciful as you would like.”

Emphasize that their happy place may be completely made up. It does not have to be based in reality and should be whatever they want it to be! Tell the participants to use as many descriptors as they can to make the best story.

Writing (about 5-10 minutes)

Have participants write their story about their “happy place”.

***This exercise is very representative of the creative writing nature of Living Words, because many of the participants will create a fictional place rather than writing down a memory.*

Sharing (about 10 minutes)

After about 10 minutes of writing, have the writer ask the participants to share their writing. Once the participants have shared his or her “happy place” story, various individuals may want to share some of their reflections about the exercise. Invite them to do so.

Thanks/Goodbye (2-3 minutes)

Have your writer thank the participants for their writing and willingness to open themselves to experience their “happy place”. Have him or her invite the participants to reflect on their writing and think about our perfect place to become calmer, more relaxed when life gets stressful. Once the moderator has thanked the writer, tell the participants want to look forward to for the next writing session before dispersing!