Winter Restoration

A Mind–Body Hypnosis Exercise for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

About this exercise

This gentle mind–body hypnosis exercise uses the natural imagery of winter to encourage feelings of comfort, restoration and renewal. Rather than treating winter as something to endure, it invites clients to imagine this season as an opportunity to nurture themselves, reconnect with their bodies and create space for healing.

At the heart of the exercise is the idea of finding a personal point of healing within the body. This might be experienced as warmth, light, movement, colour or another sensation that feels meaningful to the individual. The client is encouraged to connect with this point and explore how it can become a source of comfort and restoration.

The exercise can be adapted to individual clients and used as part of a wider therapeutic approach. It is intended to support wellbeing rather than replace appropriate treatment for depression.

Practitioner Notes

Before beginning, explore how your client experiences SAD physically. They might describe heaviness in their limbs, tiredness, a lack of motivation or a general sense of sluggishness. Use their own descriptions to personalise the exercise.

The exercise includes imagery of winter landscapes, warmth, natural cycles and the body's capacity for renewal. Adapt the imagery to suit the client's preferences and experiences. Some clients may associate winter with difficult memories, so establish that these images feel comfortable before using them.

The central mind–body experience involves identifying a point within the body that represents healing or restoration. This is a symbolic experience rather than an attempt to identify a particular physiological process. Clients can choose the location, appearance and qualities of this point, allowing the imagery to develop in a way that feels personally meaningful.

Hypnosis Script: Winter Restoration

Make yourself comfortable now... and as you begin to turn your attention inwards... you can allow yourself to become aware of the natural movement of your breathing...

And perhaps you can begin to imagine a beautiful winter landscape... somewhere peaceful... somewhere that feels comfortable and welcoming... perhaps a woodland... a garden... or a favourite place in nature. And as you look around this place in your imagination... you begin to notice the particular beauty of winter... the shapes of the trees... the colours of the landscape... the quality of the light.

And you might notice how much of the natural world appears to have become quieter... the trees have released their leaves... the earth is resting beneath the winter sky... and the landscape has taken on a different quality. And yet... beneath the surface... life continues. Deep within the trees... within their roots... within the earth itself... countless natural processes continue... maintaining... restoring... preparing.

And there is something rather beautiful about this... the understanding that not all growth and change needs to be visible... that sometimes... important things happen quietly... beneath the surface.

And perhaps you can begin to think about your own body in a similar way... your body is an extraordinary living system... constantly responding... adapting... maintaining itself. And just as the natural world moves through different seasons... you can allow yourself to recognise that there are different times and different needs within your own life... times for activity... times for growth... times for exploration... and times when you might benefit from turning a little more attention towards your own comfort... nourishment... and restoration.

And as you continue to enjoy this peaceful winter landscape... I'd like you to begin thinking about the idea of healing... noticing what that word means to you. Perhaps it brings to mind a particular colour... a sensation... an image... or a feeling. And as you explore that idea... notice whether anything changes within your body... perhaps a subtle feeling somewhere... a sense of warmth... a softening... or simply an awareness of a particular place.

And you can allow your own idea of healing to begin taking shape... perhaps imagining that somewhere within your body... there is a point that represents your own capacity for restoration and renewal... a point of healing. And you can allow your attention to move gently through your body... becoming curious about where that point might be... perhaps somewhere in your chest... your abdomen... your hands... or somewhere entirely different. There's no particular place it needs to be... simply allowing yourself to discover a place that feels right for you.

And when you've found that point... you can begin to explore it... perhaps imagining that it has a particular colour... or a gentle warmth. Perhaps it feels like a tiny source of light... or a soft movement... or a comfortable sensation. And you can become curious about its qualities... its shape... its size... its temperature... and how it feels to have your attention resting there. Perhaps noticing how this part of your body feels from within... allowing the sensation to become a little more familiar.

And perhaps you can imagine that this point represents all the quiet processes of restoration that take place within your body... the ways in which your body maintains itself... responds to your needs... and continues working for you throughout every season. And you might imagine that as you give this point your attention... it begins to become a little more noticeable... perhaps the colour becomes richer... the warmth more comfortable... the light a little brighter... or the sensation simply becomes more familiar.

And as you notice these qualities... perhaps you can become aware of how the surrounding parts of your body respond... as though this feeling has a presence of its own... something you can experience rather than simply imagine.

And now... you can begin to imagine this point of healing gently extending beyond its original place... perhaps like the warmth of sunlight gradually reaching across a winter landscape... or like the roots of a tree extending through the earth... connecting with the nourishment around them. And you can imagine this feeling of healing beginning to reach other parts of your body... moving in whatever way feels natural to you... perhaps towards an area where you've been experiencing tiredness... heaviness... or discomfort.

And you can allow that part of your body to receive whatever qualities you've associated with healing... perhaps warmth... comfort... softness... or a sense of gentle movement. And you can imagine that area responding in its own way... perhaps noticing a subtle change in how it feels... a little more ease... a little more comfort... or simply the experience of giving that part of yourself some gentle attention.

And you might become aware of the space around that sensation... the way it connects with the rest of your body... the gentle movement that accompanies each breath. And you can continue allowing this feeling to extend through your body... connecting different areas... as though your body is a landscape of its own... a living system in which everything is connected.

And you can imagine this point of healing becoming part of that wider landscape... supporting a sense of comfort... restoration... and balance. And perhaps for a few moments you can simply enjoy the experience of being within your body... noticing its sensations... its warmth... its movement... and the feeling of connection between its different parts.

And as you continue to enjoy this experience... you might begin to notice the softness of the winter sunlight around you... the gentle quality of the light... the way it touches the trees... the earth... and the landscape around you. Perhaps noticing the subtle warmth of the sunlight against your skin... the pleasant contrast between the freshness of the winter air and the gentle warmth of the sun.

And you can take a little time to enjoy that feeling... allowing yourself to become aware of the way the light reaches different parts of the landscape. And perhaps imagining that same gentle warmth connecting with the point of healing you've discovered within your body... as though the warmth of the sunlight and your own inner sense of healing are becoming part of the same experience.

The softness of the light around you... the warmth within your body... the feeling of being connected to the natural world. And perhaps you can notice how your body responds to this image... how it feels to imagine the gentle sunlight reaching your skin... and that warmth becoming part of your own physical experience.

And perhaps you can imagine that each time you give yourself a little time to rest... to enjoy natural daylight... to move in a way that feels comfortable... or to do something nourishing for yourself... you are giving yourself another opportunity to connect with that feeling of healing... another opportunity to support your own wellbeing.

And just as the natural world continues its quiet processes throughout winter... you can continue finding your own ways to care for yourself. Perhaps discovering that winter can be a time for different kinds of experiences... the pleasure of warmth after being outdoors... the comfort of familiar routines... the beauty of a clear winter morning... the satisfaction of taking a little time for yourself.

And you can imagine bringing some of these experiences into your everyday life... perhaps seeing yourself stepping outside in the morning... enjoying the daylight... noticing the freshness of the air... or taking a gentle walk somewhere you enjoy. Perhaps noticing the movement of your body as you walk... the feeling of your feet meeting the ground... the freshness of the air against your face... the comfortable warmth of your clothing.

Or simply allowing yourself a few moments during the day to reconnect with that point of healing within your body... remembering its colour... its warmth... its particular qualities... and allowing yourself to experience those feelings again.

And as you think about the coming days and weeks... perhaps you can begin to imagine approaching them with a little more kindness towards yourself... recognising that your needs can change... that you can respond to those needs in different ways... and that small

experiences of comfort... nourishment... movement... and connection can all become part of how you care for yourself.

And now... take a little time to return your attention to that original point of healing... noticing where it is... remembering its qualities. Perhaps becoming aware once again of how it feels within your body... and allowing yourself to enjoy that sensation for a few moments.

And perhaps allowing it to become a personal symbol of your own capacity for restoration... something you can return to whenever you want to give yourself a little more attention and care.

And as you begin to bring your attention back towards the room around you... you can become aware of the surface beneath your body... the sounds around you... the temperature of the air... the natural movement of your breathing. Perhaps moving your hands... your feet... becoming more aware of your surroundings.

And when you're ready... opening your eyes... bringing with you whatever feels useful from this experience... and knowing that you can return to that point of healing whenever you choose.

After the Exercise: Supporting Everyday Wellbeing

Following the exercise, invite your client to describe their point of healing and the qualities they associated with it. Some clients might have experienced a particular colour, warmth or sensation, while others may have developed a more symbolic image.

Encourage them to consider how they might reconnect with this feeling during everyday activities. Perhaps they could spend a few moments focusing on their point of healing while enjoying a morning drink, sitting outdoors in daylight or taking a gentle walk.

You might also invite them to identify one small, enjoyable activity that supports their wellbeing during winter. This could involve getting outside during daylight hours, establishing a comforting routine or spending time doing something they particularly enjoy.

The exercise can be adapted into a shorter recording for clients to use between sessions, helping them reconnect with the imagery and sensations they've developed.

Remember that Seasonal Affective Disorder is a form of depression, and clients experiencing significant symptoms should receive appropriate medical or psychological support. This exercise is intended as a complementary wellbeing resource.