

## Visualization & Journaling Exercise: Meeting Pain

1. First, have your journal handy. Get into a comfortable position.
2. Take five deep breaths, with elongated exhales, growing more calm and relaxed.
3. Visualize yourself on the shore of a lake or ocean, or in a place that is calming and comfortable to you.
4. Imagine that you see someone in the distance slowly walking, taking in the scenery, absorbing the beauty that is all around.
5. This person sees you and starts slowly, casually moving towards you.
6. What is your first impression of this person? Notice what s/he looks like. Become aware of your thoughts and feelings about this person.
7. As this person comes closer into your vision, you know this person. This person's name is Pain.
8. Now how do you react? Notice if your impressions toward this person have now changed. What does h/she look like now? Become aware of how your body reacts. Become aware of your thoughts and feelings. Are you willing or unwilling to meet this person?
9. Pain moves closer and closer towards you and then stops directly in front of you. Become aware of how you feel. Do you feel calm or anxious? Become aware of your breathing.
10. You and Pain begin to talk. What does Pain say to you? What is the first thing you say to Pain? Notice both of your body postures.
11. Dialogue with Pain. (Writing may help to generate the imagined conversation.)
12. What do you experience during the conversation? Why? What are your positive and negative thoughts? What emotions do you notice? Notice if you are feeling fearful of pain.
13. Imagine that Pain tells you, "I am not a monster or enemy. I am just a sensation." How do you respond to this statement? What emotions and thoughts come up?
14. Now ask Pain, "What is it like being Pain?"
15. Ask, "How you can I help you? What do you need?"
16. Pain now asks you, "How it can help you? What do you need?" Notice your answers.
17. Now, consider Pain's point of view. How do you think your initial reaction affected Pain? What emotions were behind your reaction? How did your perceptions and attitudes make Pain feel? What could you have done to make Pain feel better? How can you act more positively towards Pain?
18. You may meet with Pain anytime you need to understand it better. Pain is always willing to sit down and talk with you if you are. The next time you meet Pain, what can you do differently? Will you approach Pain first? Will you perceive pain differently – not as an enemy or someone purposely trying to harm you? Will you feel less scared and remain calmer with Pain? Will you perceive yourself as a victim of Pain or someone who is in control?

Perhaps how you first envisioned Pain is really your perception of your own pain. How you meet and interact with "your" pain may be projections of your fears, frustrations, anger, etc. In addition, how you interact with pain may determine how it responds to you, just like a person. Can you react, and interact, with pain differently?

